



International approach makes hotel ‘the place’ to stay

Hotel La Place

The Hotel La Place in Marylebone has all the advantages of being a small, family-run hotel – and as a result holds the Four Diamond SILVER AWARD from the English Tourism Council – but it also has a remarkably international approach. The mother and son team who own the hotel previously lived and worked in the US, Europe and Switzerland. They now employ up to twelve staff.

‘Most of our clients come from abroad,’ says Hal Jaffer, owner and General Manager. ‘We go to great lengths to speak to our foreign guests in their own language and to understand their needs. It’s a measure of our success that we have over 85% repeat clientele’.

Recruitment and training for language success

‘Our current staff team speaks about fourteen languages, with varying degrees of fluency’, continues Mr Jaffer. ‘We keep a record at reception of the languages spoken by each member of staff, so that we can call on them if needed’. Also at reception are several foreign language dictionaries.

‘We prefer to recruit staff who speak more than one language,’ he explains, ‘especially for reception’. Mr Jaffer himself speaks six languages. Recently, he studied Japanese and attended workshops in Chinese and Russian. He is currently learning Swedish via a self-study pack and individual tuition. The hotel’s night manager also speaks several languages. ‘You don’t need to be fluent – customers make it clear that they appreciate any attempt to use their own language, even if it is only a few words of welcome. Learning five key words in the ten languages most often used by our guests is not difficult - and it makes a real difference to their perception of our service’.

Sharing our skills

Mr Jaffer and his staff share their language knowledge, so that they all learn new skills. For example, all staff can refer to a file of cultural briefings produced by Regional Language Network East Midlands. Native Polish and Russian staff are keen to share their language skills for informal practice and to help each other.

The hotel’s international approach also involves a good understanding of cultural differences. Staff are encouraged to share their knowledge as well as to study other cultures by reading magazines and other relevant materials.

International information

The Hotel La Place website has essential information about the hotel in eleven languages, including Japanese and Arabic. 'Our website highlights our international approach and shows our willingness to do our best to make overseas guests welcome,' comments Mr Jaffer.

In addition, all the Hotel's information sheets have been translated into Japanese. Breakfast menus are in three languages (English, French and German), with a separate Japanese menu.

Our international approach makes us different

'Our international approach shows our commitment to customer service and marks us out as different to other small hotels,' concludes Mr Jaffer. 'It means that we are perceived as offering a quality service – so it can be a deciding factor when choosing where to stay, even for a native English speaker. It's also one of the reasons our guests come back to us time and again'.

<p>Hotel La Place www.hotellaplace.com</p> <p>Cultural briefings www.rln-london.com/employers/culture</p>	<p>For more about RLN London go to: www.rln-london.com</p> <p>RLN London 20 Bedfordbury London WC2N 4LB</p>
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