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Notting Hill: An insider's guide to this London neighbourhood

Where to eat, drink, stay and shop in Notting Hill - west London's most vibrant neighbourhood

BY TEDDY WOLSTENHOLME

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Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Notting Hill was cool – a small west **London neighbourhood** where those who hadn't the resources to live in Chelsea or Kensington came to lay their hats. It was cheap, it was raw and it was edgy. This was the home of the famous **Carnival**, now the largest in **Europe**, a chilli-infused hotpot of multiculturalism. It was shabby and chic. It was a place to party, to hang out at late-night speakeasy bars, to buy music and fruit, Afghan coats and dodgy antiques from the Portobello Road and the odd illicit substance from the All Saints Road, when it was lined with bobbies, not posh bathroom shops. These days, the neighbourhood is known as London's fashionable Notting Hill. But despite all the boutiques and high-brand shops, the new resident bankers (and the tourists searching for Hugh Grant's blue **door**) you can still find the spirit of the real Notting Hill. You just have to know where to look.

The best restaurants in Notting Hill



Helen Cathcart

The Walmer Castle

Independent publican Jack Greenall has form in creating refined British boozers for the 21st century. He grew up as a scion of the Greenall Whitley brewing family, cut his teeth as a proprietor of The Pheasant in Berkshire – now sold – and created the current version of Chelsea’s The Surprise. Reincarnating this 1845 vintage Ledbury Road establishment in a raffishly iconic London spot, he has unleashed considerable skills. There’s a respect shown for British suppliers, a worldly and partly organic wine list, and an understanding that a **British pub** needs to be, at its heart, unpretentious. In the kitchen, chef Ondrej Hula mans the British seasonal menu, which centres proper ingredients from quality suppliers, including Longhorn beef and Tamworth pork from The Ginger Pig and game-hung, dry-plucked poultry from Leicestershire’s Belvoir Estate, as well as daily catches from Cornwall’s Flying Fish. Whilst the menu is replete with venison carpaccio and chalkstream trout, there are pescatarian options including halibut with samphire. The Sunday menu, a suite of elegant but straightforward

food, hyper-local artisans and artists take centre stage, with furniture from Rupert Bevan on All Saints Road and antiques purloined from the dealers of Portobello Road. The walls are adorned with a frieze by Tess Newall, and generations of British artists line the walls, from Patrick Caulfield and Cornelia Parker to Yinka Shonibare. The

Walmer Castle's proprietor history of recent years has been a little stop-start, with celebrity owners such as Guy Ritchie, David Beckham and Mahiki impresario Piers Adam not going the distance. But The Walmer Castle is part of the cultural fabric of Notting Hill, so it's nice to see a takeover done properly. This owner feels like a keeper.

Lydia Bell

Address: The Walmer Castle, 58 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AJ

Website: walmercastle-nottinghill.co.uk

Kuro Eatery

It usually takes an easy-going (but exceptionally delicious) neighbourhood restaurant years to win the hearts and stomachs of its locals. But Julian Victoria and Jacob Van Nieuwkoop's Hillgate hangout Kuro Eatery achieved the impossible in a matter of months. It helped that Notting Hillites were already under the spell of neighbouring Kuro Coffee and the duo's irresistible bakery (where the vanilla blackcurrant and raspberry *sakuros* are beyond description). But this pocket-sized sliver of Scandi restraint, whose buttoned-down appeal and exquisite Italo-Japanese food pairs as beautifully as the bao-bun-accompanied lumina lamb yakitori and truffle with the Argentine pinot noir, is a real knockout.

Firstly, there's a refreshing lack of pretentious energy that seems to permeate even the most outwardly unpretentious, upcycled table joints opening up across the city – Julian and Jacob are its humble, wholly enthusiastic antithesis. Then there's the menu, a compact one-size-fits-all Mediterranean medley of goats' cheese flatbread slathered in fermented hot honey, trout where cucumber and dill balance out the salt and Trofie pasta bulked up with aged manchego and bottarga. Every morsel of food on these deftly drip-fed sharing plates has undergone some alchemic transformation – the language of our fuss-free, through wildly fussed over modern menus 'smoked,' 'fermented,' and the like. A comfortably compact wine list feels surprisingly classic for this gently off-beat neighbourhood haunt – an Australian Shiraz would qualify as left field. And with the Italo-Japanese foodie show closing on a bitter-sweet note – the joy crammed into our strawberry beignets with basil erred on celestial – it makes an easy case for returning to the bakery branch of the Kuro triumvirate the following morning.

Rosalyn Wikeley

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