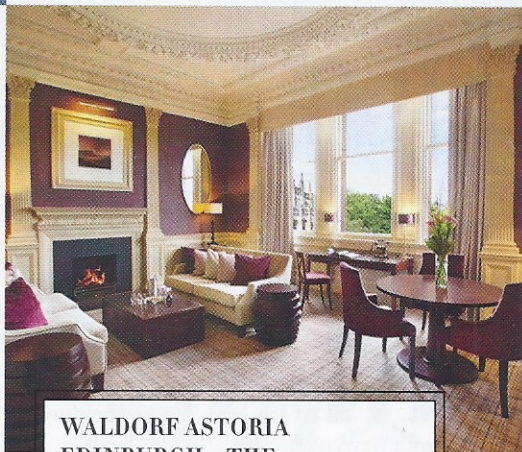




CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *The Caley's grand façade once belonged to Princes Street station; A muted palette makes for a space conducive to resting after a day's exploring; The hotel has more rooms with views of Edinburgh Castle than any other in town.*



**WALDORF ASTORIA
EDINBURGH – THE
CALEDONIAN**

Princes Street, Edinburgh, UK;
waldorfasteriaedinburgh.com

THE IT VERDICT

In the heart of Edinburgh, perfect for those wanting to experience one of Britain's great railway hotels.

LOCATION: 10 / 10 Walking distance to many of Edinburgh's attractions.

STYLE/CHARACTER: 8 / 10 History and nostalgia without being dull.

SERVICE: 9 / 10 Friendly and helpful.

ROOMS: 9 / 10 Luxe furnishings, divine bathrobe, a quiet room perfect for recuperation and rest.

FOOD AND DRINK: 8 / 10 Enjoy Scottish eggs benedict, haggis (go on, it's not that bad!) and black pudding for breakfast in the brasserie. I didn't have time to try either of the Hotel's restaurants owned by Michelin-starred brothers Chris and Jeff Galvin – the Pompadour by Galvin and the Caley Brasserie de Luxe.

VALUE FOR MONEY 9 / 10 Our Twin Premier Room with Castle View was \$325 with breakfast. Good value for a five-star hotel in central Edinburgh.

CALEDONIAN SLEEPER

Looking out to Edinburgh's most iconic landmark, the five-star Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian has a legacy all its own, which Jennifer Johnston explores.

I'm admiring the view from my hotel room window at the Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian. Clinging to the craggy outcrop of an extinct volcano are the imposing fortress and mottled sandstone buildings of Edinburgh Castle. The Caledonian proudly boasts more rooms with views of the 12th-century icon than any other hotel in town, and I'm happily taking advantage of this fact.

The Caledonian, or the 'Caley' as it's affectionately known by locals, with its grey slate roof and red sandstone façade, is another favourite Edinburgh landmark. Built between 1899 and 1903 above the old Edinburgh Princes Street station, the Caledonian was one of the original great British railway hotels that thrived in an era when travelling by steam train was popular. Eventually motorways overtook railways, forcing many railway hotels into a sad demise. Not the Caley. When the Princes Street station was demolished in 1970 (the station closed five years earlier) the hotel remained. The Hilton chain purchased it in 2000, refurbishing the classic building into the current flagship Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

On arrival, I absorb the hotel's grand entrance. Three imposing sandstone arches are flanked by paired pedestalled Corinthian columns, retained from the original station building. As I walk beneath the arches, a tartan-clad doorman extends a warm Scottish

welcome. His white-gloved hand grasps my bag, before ushering me across the foyer's polished marble floor towards reception.

My travel companion and I are escorted to our fourth-floor room with its castle view framed by three-metre velvet window drapes. The space is generous for two adults, with a subtle colour palette of muted grey walls broken on the top by gilded wall paper embossed with Scottish thistles. The substantial bathroom with bath/shower combination and Salvatore Ferragamo Tuscan Soul toiletries should restore feet wearied from walking cobblestone streets.

The legacy of a railway hotel is their access to space: exploring the hotel's amenities, I walk down a very long, wide carpeted corridor to a lift transferring me to a lower level with a gymnasium, spa and a 10-metre lap pool. I pass the Guerlain Spa, the only spa in the United Kingdom utilising the French brand. When the spa attendant suggests trying some products, I sample my favourite perfume. Nothing like smelling deliciously French when wandering the streets of the Royal Mile.

Attractions explored, I sink into one of the hotel's lounge chairs in Peacock Alley, named after the original concourse ticket office. A trio of musicians play soothing jazz tunes around the grand piano. The refurbishment has cleverly re-captured the feel of the old station. Best part, there's no rushing off to catch a train. *IT*