

City living

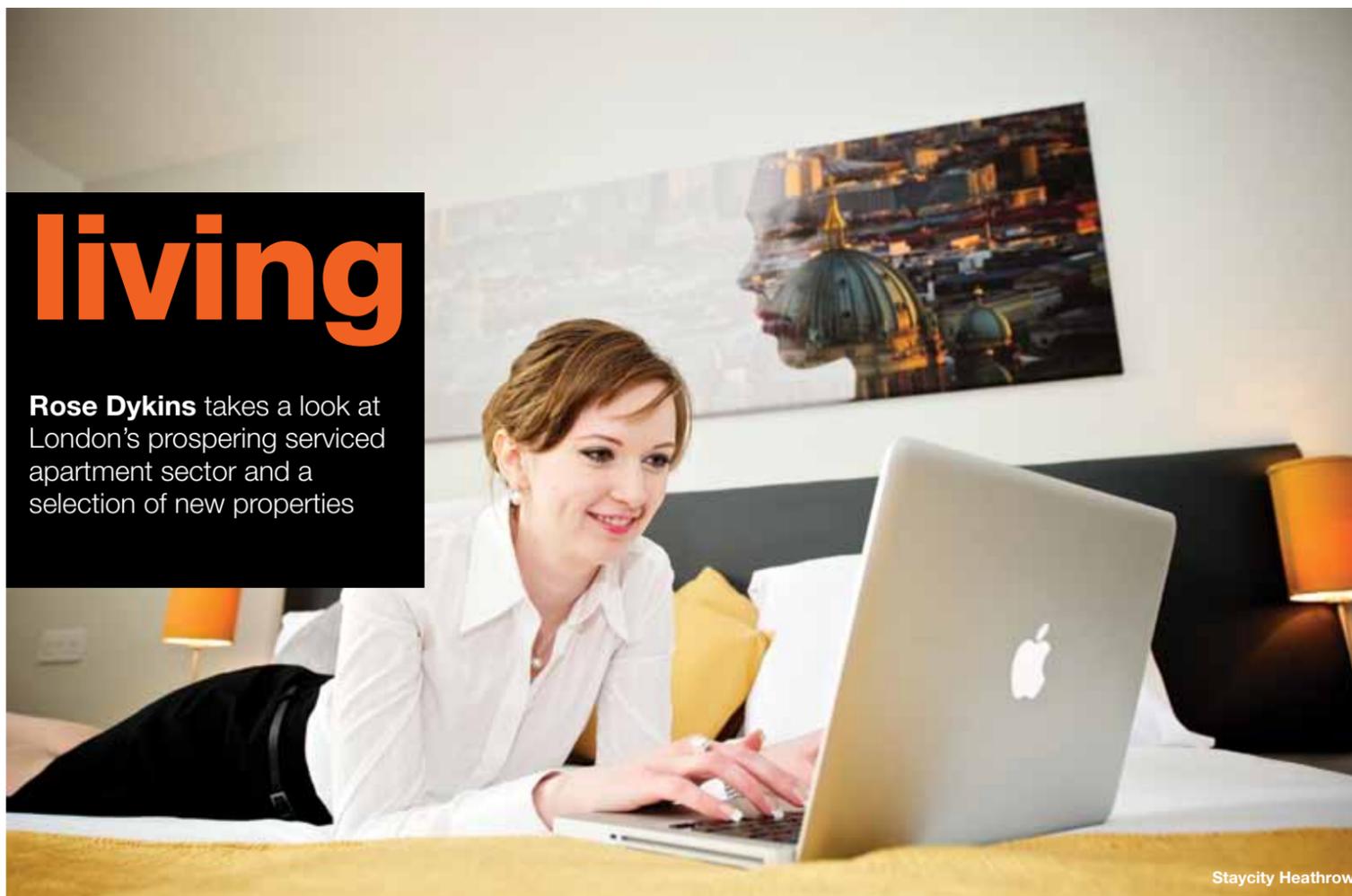
London's summer in the spotlight is over and it's back to business as usual, as meetings and conferences recommence, and the capital welcomes back corporates. While not all hoteliers may have enjoyed the scramble for rooms during the Games that they might have hoped for, the city's serviced apartment providers were largely prepared for what they knew would be a quiet time for their main source of revenue – business travellers.

"We were very reserved about how we handled the Olympics – we weren't convinced that there was going to be a massive uptake of people coming in," says Alexis Burton, managing director of Supercity Aparthotels. "We had a rule that we wouldn't sell more than ten rooms to any one company, and as it turns out a lot of companies that bought up the hotel rooms ended up giving them back at the last minute."

Aside from the Games, has there been much demand for serviced apartments in London this year? Joyce Cawthorpe, association manager of the Association of Serviced Apartment Providers (theasap.org.uk), says: "The first quarter was tough, then it picked up again in April. The Olympics has been a bit of a distortion because a lot of corporate travellers didn't come. Now everybody's saying there's a pent-up demand for the last quarter of the year."

The coming months will also see a range of new serviced residences popping up around the capital (see facing page). On

Rose Dykins takes a look at London's prospering serviced apartment sector and a selection of new properties



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October 1, US operator AKA Residences, was set to open a London property – its first outside the US. Steve Korman, founder of AKA's owner, Korman Communities, says: "We'd like AKA to have ten boutique locations around London. We're looking at other properties in Marylebone, Knightsbridge, Mayfair and on Shaftesbury Avenue, although none are confirmed yet."

It could be that the boom in new properties is an indication that the benefits of serviced apartments are being more widely recognised. "They give you maximum flexibility and privacy," says Cawthorpe. "It's the additional space people love, and the home-from-home feeling." Apart from these factors, opting for a serviced apartment over a hotel can save you a significant amount of money – especially for stays of five nights or more.

"Often after 28 nights the VAT reduces to 4 per cent," says Cawthorpe. "In general, serviced apartments give you lower costs than a hotel equivalent [of the same star-rating] with about 50 per cent more space and no hidden extra costs."

London needs a 200 per cent increase in serviced apartments

In London, the demand for serviced apartments is outstripping supply – earlier this year, UK-based estate agent Savills released a report revealing that a 200 per cent increase in the number of London serviced residences would be required to meet current demand. Central London supply is about 8,000 units, yet it remains one of the smallest markets internationally.

So there is room for the operators to grow. Marcus Angell, founder and managing director of apartment agent Silverdoor says: "The good thing about the Olympics is that it has drawn serviced apartments eastwards and northwards – these parts of London have been particularly underpopulated."

So what amenities are becoming commonplace? Angell says: "More often than not in a serviced apartment, wifi comes free these days." Burton adds: "Just because we provide serviced apartments rather than hotel rooms, it doesn't mean people don't want first class linen and a first class cleaning service."

Korman agrees: "At AKA West End, someone will be there to help guests receive any services they want – whether it's a masseuse or for their fridge to be stocked with certain foods."

NEW & IMPROVED APARTMENTS

AKA WEST END

Set to open on October 1, AKA West End is housed in a converted 1920s townhouse and comprises nine residences – a combination of studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. There will also be a two-bedroom "Mews House" with a study and a private garage. The minimum stay for AKA West End is 30 days.

"We're going to open a 'wow' boutique property," Korman says. The residences will have bespoke furniture, kitchens with grey lacquer cabinets, charcoal caesarstone countertops and stainless steel appliances, marble baths and sumptuous linens. Each



The Rosebery

suite will have different décor and artwork, and there is one suite per floor, accessible via a glass lift. Amenities include washer-dryers, free wifi, Sky TV and local calls, air conditioning and Asprey toiletries. A general manager and full-time housekeeper will be on hand. [5 Bentinck Street](#); tel +44 (0)20 3544 7713; [stayaka.com](#)

GO NATIVE

Go Native, which is rapidly expanding its presence in London, opened its Sussex Gardens residences in Paddington, a short walk from Hyde Park, in May. Each floor of the property has its own design theme, allowing guests to opt for a "glitz and glamour" look, or "soothing neutrals". The 68 one-bedroom flats have dishwashers and washer-dryers, and access to a 24-hour concierge.

In August, Go Native also opened its College Hill residences – three apartments located on Cannon Street – as well as an Assam Lofts property (with 28 modern

studios) near Aldgate East, and its Southwark Bridge Road property in London Bridge, with six one-bedroom apartments. Two more residences are set to open in November – Lees Place in Mayfair (11 five-star suites with a "club feel") and Spitalfields (eight contemporary one-bedroom apartments a ten-minute walk from Liverpool Street station). One-night stays are possible at all residences. [Visit \[gonative.com\]\(#\)](#)

THE ROSEBERY

London provider Supercity Aparthotels will open its third property in the capital in Clerkenwell this month, with a minimum stay of seven nights. The Rosebery's comfortable, contemporary spaces will have arty furnishings and a "hotel feel". Its 58 suites are a mixture of studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. Wifi is free, and there is a gym and a bar.

[Rosebery Avenue](#); tel +44 (0)20 7373 6670; [supercityuk.com](#)



Go Native Sussex Gardens



Go Native Sussex Gardens

'Just because we provide apartments rather than hotel rooms, it doesn't mean people don't want first class service'

SACO ALDGATE, FOUNDRY COURT

A few minutes' walk from Aldgate East tube station, SACO's Foundry Court residences were due to open last month. There are nine apartments – four one-bedroom, four two-bedroom and one three-bedroom. Available for stays of two nights or more, the residences have modern open-plan kitchens and neutral, soft furnishings, and are set within a secure development with its own Tesco Metro store. Each apartment has a balcony, a washer-dryer, wifi (£18 per week), an iPod dock, and one bathroom per bedroom.

15 Plumbers Row; tel +44 (0)20 7269 9930; saccoapartments.com

OAKWOOD FORSET COURT

Adding to Oakwood's extensive portfolio in the capital of about 20 properties, Oakwood Forset Court was set to open last month in a restored 1930s mansion located four minutes' walk from Edgware Road Tube station and a ten-minute walk from Hyde Park and Marble Arch. The spacious one- and two-bedroom apartments have contemporary furnishings with art-deco designs, free wifi, concierge and 24-hour security, daily and weekly housekeeping, video entry phones, luxury linens and towels and hairdryers. The minimum stay for the residences is 90 days.

140 Edgware Road; tel +44 (0)20 7749 4460; oakwood.com

ASCOTT ST JAMES

From the beginning of this month, the Ascott Limited will

manage Mayfair's Cavendish hotel, and subsequently transform the 230-room property into luxury serviced residences (opening date to be confirmed). The Ascott St James will be the group's seventh London property – others include the Ascott Mayfair and Citadines Prestige residences in South Kensington, Holborn/Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square – and is a five-minute walk from Green Park and Piccadilly Circus stations. The minimum stay will be one night.

Jermyn St; the-ascott.com

CITADINES PRESTIGE TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The Ascott Limited also completed a £6 million renovation of its Trafalgar Square property in March, which offers the option of one-night stays. "The décor throughout the public areas and apartments is a significant improvement on the previous interiors – the new look is far more contemporary, and there is a 24-hour reception with friendly staff," writes Jenny Southan in her review on businessstraveller.com. Each of Citadines Prestige Trafalgar Square's 187 studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments has received a redesigned living space, with modern artwork and fresh colours. Amenities include free wifi, air conditioning, a 24-hour staffed reception, a business corner, lounge and breakfast areas, and a car park. The property is a few minutes from Charing Cross station and Trafalgar Square by foot.



Grosvenor House Apartments



Oakwood Forset Court



Citadines Prestige Trafalgar Square

Ascott has been rolling out a brand-wide refurbishment of its European Citadines properties over the past two years, and both the Citadines Prestige South Kensington and Citadines Prestige Holborn-Covent Garden benefited from extensive renovations in 2010.

18-21 Northumberland Avenue; tel +44 (0)20 7766 3700; citadines.com

GROSVENOR HOUSE APARTMENTS BY JUMEIRAH LIVING

Luxury Dubai-based hotel company Jumeirah opened its first serviced apartments in the UK in the spring. Available for minimum stays of seven nights, the Grosvenor House Apartments are housed in a 1920s Lutyens building on Park Lane. The 133 residences range from 34 sqm

'It's the additional space people love, and the home-from-home feeling'

studios to a 448 sqm five-bedroom penthouse. The décor is "masculine, with dark wood floors, tan leather sofas, and a grey and slate colour scheme, except in the larger penthouse apartments where there is a black and white art deco feel," writes Mark Caswell in his review on businessstraveller.com. An iPad in every room links to the 24-hour concierge, and there's the option of a daily maid service, and 24-hour in-room dining and spa treatments. Apartments on



Staycity Heathrow

the seventh and eighth floors are served by butlers. Wifi is free. Park Lane; tel +44 (0)20 7518 4444; jumeirah.com

STAYCITY APARTMENTS LONDON HEATHROW

Staycity opened its first development in the London area in June, a ten-minute drive from

Heathrow airport. The new-build development is next to Hayes and Harlington station, a 20-minute train journey from London Paddington. Available for stays of one night or more, the 144 studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments (which can sleep up to six people) all come with free wifi, a flatscreen TV,

DVD player, Freeview and Sky Sports channels and kitchen. A private courtyard can be used by guests, and there's a 24-hour reception desk. An on-site Tesco Express, secure car park and discounted fitness centre are other handy features. Highpoint Village; tel +44 (0)20 8569 2028; staycity.com

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