

GETTING STARTED – THE BASICS

WHAT IS THE ROOF GARDENS?

The Roof Gardens is a spectacular set of themed gardens 100 feet above Kensington High Street. There are three distinct areas: Spanish, Tudor, and English Woodland, all arranged around the central Clubhouse and spread across the 6th floor of a Grade II listed building. Events at The Roof Gardens are held in the Clubhouse and in the gardens, and on Friday and Saturday nights the Clubhouse is transformed into a Private Members Club. Babylon Restaurant is easily accessible on the 7th floor and is a restaurant open to the public.

WHERE IS THE ROOF GARDENS?

The Roof Gardens is located at 99 Kensington High Street (London, W8 5SA). Access to the building is via Derry Street which branches off Kensington High Street.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

The Roof Gardens is easily accessible by public transport.

London Underground:

- High Street Kensington Station on the District and Circle lines.

London Buses:

- Bus #9 (Aldwych > Kensington High Street > Hammersmith)
- Bus #10 (Hammersmith > Kensington High Street > King's Cross)
- Bus #52 (Victoria > Kensington High Street > Ladbroke Grove)

We are also only a short walk from Kensington Gardens, part of London's sprawling Hyde Park, as well as the exclusive Holland Park area of the city. High Street Kensington has great shopping, and you're only a 30 minute walk or two stops on the Tube from the world-renowned museums in South Kensington.

IF I DRIVE, IS THERE ANYWHERE FOR ME TO PARK?

During the day you can use the National Car Park at 19-27 Young Street, London W8 5EH. Parking is also available at the Euro Car Park situated at 2-24 Kensington High Street (Royal Garden Hotel), London W8 4PT.

In the evenings you can find parking in the streets around The Roof Gardens, but if you're a member of The Club or dining in Babylon we offer free valet parking from 7pm to 3am. Please note that The Roof Gardens is in the Central London Congestion Charge zone, which operates from 7am to 6pm from Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

SO IT'S JUST GARDENS? WHAT CAN YOU DO AT THE ROOF GARDENS?

Well of course there are 1.5 acres of gardens. But there's also a Clubhouse in the middle which doubles as a year-round events venue. On the 7th floor above the Clubhouse sits Babylon Restaurant, open year-round to anyone that wants to make a reservation. Babylon has a terrace in summer looking over the Woodland Garden, but since we're so high up, the views over London are amazing regardless of the season!

RIGHT, SO IT'S GARDENS, IT'S EVENTS, AND THERE'S A RESTAURANT TOO. ANYTHING ELSE?

Well, yes. On Friday and Saturday nights the Clubhouse turns into a Private Members Club featuring two bars, a dance floor, DJs, and music until 3am. There are four levels of membership: Fly Higher, High Flyer, Jet Set, and Long Haul. More information about the benefits of each is explained below.

IS THERE WHEELCHAIR ACCESS?

Both the 6th and 7th floors that make up The Roof Gardens and Babylon Restaurant are wheelchair accessible, with lifts up to both floors. Let us know ahead of time that step-free access will be required, and we can arrange for ramps to be put in place to ensure full access to the gardens.

EVENTS AT THE ROOF GARDENS

WHAT KIND OF EVENTS ARE POSSIBLE AT THE ROOF GARDENS?

We host weddings, corporate functions, anniversaries, cocktail parties, product launches, you name it! From dinners to discos, fashion shows to fireworks, as well as BBQs on balmy summer nights, we can be as flexible as you need us to be. If your vision is for example a Moulin Rouge themed evening with décor, food, and entertainment to match then we can happily organise that for you. We also have themed events throughout the year, like our summer BBQs in the Tudor Garden, as well as shared 'Joiner' Parties on club nights around Christmas time, so keep an eye out for special offers.

IS THE ROOF GARDENS JUST A SUMMER VENUE?








No, not at all. The Clubhouse has large floor to ceiling windows with fantastic views of the gardens in all seasons. We also place marquees with heaters outside during the Christmas period so people can still enjoy the gardens even when the weather's not at its best.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ROOF GARDENS

WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF THE ROOF GARDENS EVENT SPACE?

We can host events for 10 to as many as 500 people.

Day hire is from 8am to 5pm (Monday to Saturday) with a minimum of 50 guests. Evening hire is from 7pm to 1am from Monday to Thursday with a minimum of 200 guests and from 12pm to 12am on Sunday with a minimum of 100 guests. The different configurations and maximum capacities are shown below.

 150	 50	 70	 200	 180	 500	 500
Theatre	Boardroom	Classroom	A la carte lunch/dinner	Dinner dance (seated)	BBQ/Bufferet (standing)	Reception (standing)

WHAT'S THE FOOD LIKE AT THE ROOF GARDENS?

We understand how the quality of the food at an event can be one of the key factors in ensuring the happiness of your guests. With that approach firmly in mind, we take advantage of the seasonal ingredients on offer. The food we serve is inspired by the places we've been, and even by some we haven't! We can tailor the food to your requirements, and if you've got a special request, you need only ask.

CAN I GET MARRIED AT THE ROOF GARDENS?

Absolutely! The Roof Gardens is fully licensed to perform civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnerships indoors. Outdoor services are unfortunately not possible but that doesn't prevent you from holding your reception

outside. Religious ceremonies for those not of the Christian faith can be easily arranged outdoors so you can take advantage of the splendour of the gardens for your special day. Contact our team for full details on planning a wedding or partnership, as we can propose a range of options incorporating the facilities of both The Roof Gardens and Babylon.

WHAT ABOUT BAR/BAT MITZVAHS?

We certainly welcome Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies at The Roof Gardens, though in these cases you have the option to work with specialised external caterers. As there is additional preparation time involved both for our kitchen staff and our events staff, we generally try to schedule Bar/Bat Mitzvahs on Sundays.

CAN I HIRE BOTH FLOORS FOR MY EVENT?

Yes. Both Babylon Restaurant and The Roof Gardens can be hired together on an exclusive basis, subject to availability.

HOW MUCH IS IT TO HIRE THE ROOF GARDENS?

This depends on the time of year and the size of your event. It's best to speak with someone in the events office who would be happy to discuss your requirements. Call us on +44 (0) 207 368 3971, or email us at events@roofgardens.virgin.co.uk; a member of our team will get back to you as soon as possible.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ASK FOR A LATE LICENSE?

We can request a late license for a specific event which would allow us to stay open until 3am, but there would be an additional charge for this service. Note that we cannot extend the license on Sundays.

WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR SECURITY AT MY EVENT?

All events at The Roof Gardens are required to have a minimum of two security guards (although we can sometimes permit just one for very small events). You should allow for one additional security guard per 100 guests above the basic threshold of 200 people. This requirement is part of our alcohol license and is a legal obligation, so we can't be flexible, even if you promise to be on your best behaviour!

BABYLON RESTAURANT

WHERE IS BABYLON RESTAURANT?

Babylon is situated on the 7th floor and is accessible directly by lift from the ground floor. Or, if you arrive at The Roof Gardens first on the 6th floor you can walk up the stairs to our welcome desk and restaurant bar.

WHAT CAN I SEE FROM BABYLON?

The best views are from Babylon's terrace. To the east you can see the City, St. Paul's, Canary Wharf, and Centre Point. To the south is the National History Museum, Battersea Power Station, Crystal Palace, and to the west you can see Earl's Court, Kensington Olympia, and Richmond Park.

WHEN IS BABYLON OPEN?

Babylon Restaurant is open Monday to Saturday from 12pm to 3pm for lunch, and from 7pm to 11pm for dinner. The restaurant also opens for brunch on Sunday from 12pm to 3pm. Our set lunch formula gives you the option of either a two course or three course meal for a very reasonable price, and the setting is sure to impress your guests.

WHAT IS THE FOOD LIKE?

The food at Babylon is best described as international. From modern British to Asian fusion to traditional French cuisine, we try and vary our offer as much as possible. We also adapt the menu to reflect the seasonal products we can get our hands on.

IS THERE A BAR AT BABYLON?

There is a bar, but it's only a small one and it's designed to welcome those dining in the restaurant—you can't just pop in for a drink unfortunately!

DO YOU CATER FOR SPECIAL DIETS?

We'll certainly do our best. If you look at our à la carte menu online and see something you particularly fancy, do let us know in advance and we'll see what we can do.

DID YOU KNOW? BABYLON CAN BE HIRED FOR GROUPS OR EVEN EXCLUSIVELY

There is a private dining room with space for up to 12 at the rear of the restaurant with its own terrace overlooking the flamingos in the Woodland Garden. It is also possible to hire the semi-private area for up to 28 people. If you're really in the mood for a party, we'd be happy to let you hire the entire restaurant which seats up to 120 people, or hire it for a cocktail reception for up to 150 people.

CAN I GET MARRIED IN BABYLON?

You certainly can. Both The Roof Gardens Clubhouse and Babylon Restaurant are licensed to perform civil and marriage ceremonies.

CAN I EAT OUTSIDE?

Babylon has an outside terrace available during the summer months, although we seat this space on a first-come, first-serve basis, regardless of whether you have made a reservation.

ARE CHILDREN WELCOME?

Children are always welcome, and we have a special menu for our younger diners with very favourable prices for two courses. Kiddie packs are provided for children on arrival, and on Sundays a magician is on hand to keep the kids fully entertained!

THE PRIVATE MEMBERS CLUB

HOW DO I JOIN THE PRIVATE MEMBERS CLUB?

You can become a member by filling in an application form and paying an annual fee, subject to approval by the membership committee. Alternatively, if you dine at Babylon on either Friday or Saturday night, you can head straight downstairs to The Club after dinner! You'll still have to pay the entry fee, but it means you avoid queuing at the front door! If you're neither a member nor a diner at Babylon, you'll have to get on the guest list if you want to party with us. Email club@roofgardens.virgin.co.uk or call +44 (0) 207 368 3999 for guest list information.

WHAT ARE THE MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AT THE PRIVATE MEMBERS CLUB?

Fly Higher annual membership entitles you to bring along one free guest, queue bargaining privileges, booth reservations in The Club, free valet parking, access to the VIP tables, and discounted tickets for special events during the year – Valentine's Day, Summer Tudor BBQs, New Year's Eve, and other promotional events we may organise.

As a **High Flyer** member, you get all the benefits of a Fly Higher membership, and you can bring in three guests free of charge as well as the following: complimentary hire of an area of The Club for parties of 50-100 guests between 7pm and 10pm, 20% off your total dining bill in Babylon as well as complimentary hire of the Private Dining Room, and other seasonal benefits.

The **Jet Set** membership is a group membership for 10 people at a preferential rate encompassing all the benefits of High Flyer membership.

Contact us by emailing club@roofgardens.virgin.co.uk, calling +44 (0) 207 368 3999, or visit our website www.virgin.com/roofgardens to request a membership pack with full details.

WHAT IF I DON'T LIVE IN LONDON? CAN I STILL BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CLUB?

Of course! You can take out a **Long-Haul** membership, which includes the same privileges as Fly Higher membership, but at a reduced rate since we know it's harder for you to get to us! We do require two forms of identification displaying an address outside the confines of the M25 motorway for this type of membership.

THE GARDENS

CAN I POP IN TO VISIT THE GARDENS?

Yes, but please call ahead to arrange an appointment as when The Roof Gardens is booked for a private event, the gardens are unavailable for viewing. A good way to make sure you at least get a glimpse of the gardens is to book lunch or dinner at Babylon. Call +44 (0) 207 937 7994 to organise a visit to the gardens, or +44 (0) 207 368 3993 to reserve a table at Babylon.

TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE GARDENS. WHAT'S THE HISTORY?

The history of the gardens began in 1936, when Trevor Bowen, the then Vice President of Barkers, a department store, had a vision of creating an urban escape on London's rooftops. Two years later, The Roof Gardens were completed at a cost of £25,000, with one and a half acres of gardens 100 feet above street level split into three distinct areas: the Spanish Garden, the Woodland Garden, and the Tudor Garden. In May 1938 the gardens were opened to the public for viewing, at a cost of 1 shilling (about 5 pence) which raised over £120,000 for three local hospitals over 30 years. The building itself is now a Grade II listed structure, and the local council placed a 'Tree Preservation Order' on all the trees in 1976 to prevent any unnecessary removal or harmful pruning. The structure of The Roof Gardens remained essentially unchanged until 2001, when an additional floor was added to the building to house the restaurant Babylon.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GARDENS?

Of the three distinct gardens, the Spanish Garden was inspired by the Alhambra in Granada, and is characterised by manicured lawns, fountains, and colourful seasonal bedding plants, all arranged around a central courtyard. The Woodland Garden is undoubtedly at its best in the spring

months, and features almost 100 different species of trees, some of which were planted 70 years ago. This garden stretches all the way along the length of the roof, with full grown oak, lime and fruit trees growing in just 1.5m of soil. This garden also has two resident flamingos, a stream filled with carp, a play area for the ducks, and a fish pond harbouring a number of different species. Finally, the Tudor Garden is a delightful combination of Tudor-style archways and walls punctuated by secret corners, hanging wisteria, and a beautiful display of flowers in spring. Evergreen shrubs are surrounded by fragrant lilies, roses and lavender during the summer months, and look for the detailed hunting scene carved in the Tudor arches as well as the occasional artefact peering out amongst the trailing climbers.

HOW DO YOU KEEP THE GARDENS LOOKING FRESH?

Maintaining the gardens is quite a feat: each year about 3,000 bulbs are planted, mostly in spring, which is also the time for tidying up, pruning, and making sure all the trees are in good health. The gardens are listed so it's not possible to make major changes, although our gardener does try to add in the occasional new plant to keep things interesting.

HOW DEEP IS THE SOIL?

The soil is only 1.5m deep at its deepest point, although it still manages to support over 80 full size trees!

WHAT SORT OF WILDLIFE DO YOU HAVE IN THE GARDENS?

The gardens are home to two male flamingos that are in their late 20s, with a life expectancy of anywhere up to 40 years. They are Chilean flamingos and can withstand temperatures as cold as -10°C, ideal for our temperate climate! In the wild they feed on shrimp and other crustaceans which give them their beautiful colouring. We give them a specially developed carotene-enriched diet to keep them pink—without this they'd

turn grey! We also have 5 pairs of ornamental ducks; three of the dabbling variety - Carolina, Mandarin and Bahama Pintail, as well as two pairs of diving ducks - New Zealand Scaup and Pochard's variety. They all have pinioned wings to keep them within the safe confines of their unique habitat.

the · roof · gardens 

THE ROOF GARDENS & BABYLON

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