

**SUSAN
D'ARCY**



I am not worried about the government guidelines per se," one hotelier told me. "What worries me is can we abide by them, give guests a great experience and still make some money?"

He'll find out soon enough, because with falling infection rates and growing pent-up demand – not to mention 9% of UK jobs dependent on hospitality – the domestic hotel scene is likely to be open for business, in some form, for the critical summer months.

So what can we expect? Well, spontaneity will be out, certainly. Confirmation emails will cover everything from your health status to whether you require a porter to sanitise

“ Check-in will be staggered and rooms will have hygiene seals for guests to break

and carry your luggage. To ensure that social distance is maintained, hotels will allocate time slots for things such as check-in and dinner. Some are considering giving guests the option to bring their own bed linen.

Forget the welcome drink; hygiene stations and temperature checks will feature in lobbies stripped of furniture to deter lingering. Native Manchester has remained open for frontline workers. Guy Nixon, its chief executive, describes the new-look check-in. "It was touchy-feely, now it's contactless," he says. "Your arrival pack contains a key, prepared by staff wearing PPE, and details of the video app for queries."

Getting to your room may be an exercise in patience (lifts aren't exactly made for social distancing), or a mini adventure – St Michaels Resort

in Falmouth, Cornwall, has devised a one-way system through its property.

Conspicuous displays of hygiene will be much in evidence. Some hotels will present rooms with a seal to break; don't worry, the look will be more elegant birthday gift than crime scene, we're assured. Bedrooms will be decluttered, with fewer decorative cushions (finally!) and no minibar (refilling and hygiene issues).

Housekeeping is likely to be by request only, and there will be disposable plastic covers on high-touch points such as television remotes, as well as a cleanliness charter replacing the guest directory. The Cary Arms, in Devon, is to sanitise rooms with an O₃ gas generator that is the same type as those in use at Nightingale hospitals, its website states.

Hotels will look to exploit every nook and cranny on their premises, including in gardens, to ensure that guests have the requisite space. Andrew McPherson, of Grantley Hall in Yorkshire, says: "We may offer afternoon tea or private dinners in our top suites if they're not occupied." And there will be attempts to lighten the mood. "If staff have to wear PPE, the bartender's might have 'Make mine a double' written on it."

As for food, the breakfast buffet is on borrowed time; in-room dining, perhaps minus the usual tray charge, will be more common; and spread-out restaurants will colonise other rooms. The grand neo-Jacobean design of South Lodge, an 89-room luxury hotel in West Sussex, means it can position tables across various public spaces. It is considering a system in which guests order via a smartphone app and waiters leave food trolleys at tables. In the spa, hands-on treatments will be out, in favour of group mindfulness or yoga, and we'll see a move to al fresco fitness classes rather than gyms.

Expect a few surprises, too. Many of the hoteliers I spoke to remained tight-lipped about the finer details of their post-lockdown strategy, no doubt eager to get any sort of advantage they can in these straitened times. As one candidly told me: "If a competitor comes up with a good idea, we'll all copy it."