



Guide to
LONDON
CITY
AIRPORT

Business
Traveller

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LONDON CITY has come a long way in the past couple of decades, *writes Tom Otley*. When it opened in 1987, only two small airlines used it – Brymon Airways and Eurocity Express. Both operated slow turbo-prop planes on two of the most popular business routes at that time, Paris and Brussels.

Originally conceived as a specialist facility for short-range flights to major business cities in the UK and mainland Europe, London City was built within the former King George V docks at Silvertown

in the borough of Newham. Its location has always been both an advantage and disadvantage. Because of nearby housing, the airport was given planning permission on the condition that it operated only at certain times, with weekend flights cut to a minimum. That restriction still stands, so weekday morning flights don't get under way until after 6.30am, with the last service landing at about 9pm. In addition, its short runway – it was originally 762 metres long – meant that only certain plane types could use it.

Throw in the fact that although City airport's convenience should have made it an immediate success, the roads were poorly signposted, public transport inconvenient and the local area didn't generate many passengers – since Canary Wharf and the Excel exhibition centre had yet to be built – and it's a wonder anyone thought it was a good idea to construct an airport there.

Fast forward 23 years and the story is a very different one. An extended runway has helped to increase London City's

capacity and scheduled services have been transformed beyond all recognition, as can be seen from the articles on the following pages.

We hope you enjoy our guide to London City airport. We intend to update it, so please let us know your thoughts at talktous@businesstraveller.com





THE FINANCIAL CRISIS wasn't a good time for anyone in the aviation industry – so imagine what it was like for a niche airport serving the business and financial services population of the City and Docklands, *writes Michelle Mannion*.

“We had a particularly difficult 2009,” says Richard Gooding, chief executive of London City airport. “We were running at about 14 per cent down on the previous year in terms of passenger numbers. It was the business community and, in particular, the financial services community that hit us hard.”

Thankfully, things are picking up. “We're currently looking like we'll recover about half of that in 2010 – we should have handled 2.9 million passengers by the end of the year, and I would expect to get the rest of it back [in 2011],” Gooding says. “We're cautiously optimistic that there are some signs of global recovery in financial services, in which case we should see a return to growth before long.”

To keep it on the road to recovery, the airport is upgrading its facilities to be ready for when passengers return. Some £7 million is being invested in putting an extra floor into the terminal building, providing a further 400 sqm of space (for a walk-through video of how the completed terminal will look, visit lcy.co.uk/downloads/flythroughvideos.zip). “We're anticipating growth returning and we want to be ready for it, so we are doing the building work upfront of the demand so that less people are affected,” Gooding says.

SECURITY BOOST

The number of security lanes is being doubled from four to eight and the departure lounge is being expanded. The floor has now been put in and is being fitted out, with the project to

be completed in January 2011. Most of the work is being done out of hours to minimise disruption – the airport is closed weekdays from 9.45pm to 5.15am and from 12.40pm on Saturdays to 11am on Sundays.

“Security is the only part of the airport that the regular passenger now touches,” Gooding says. “They've checked themselves in before they arrive, are travelling with hand luggage only and they know their way through the airport. But there's this one dominant transaction in the middle, so we wanted to do it right, and make sure it was swift because that's what the core London City (LCY) passenger comes here for – to get here easily and pass through the facilities quickly.”

After security procedures were tightened in December 2009, this was an area the airport was struggling with. “We were not operating at the through-put rates that we would have been happy with, which was causing some queuing – and you don't do queuing at LCY,” Gooding says. To combat this, it put in two temporary lanes in February 2010, to be replaced by the permanent ones. “That has enabled us to get the queuing process down to an average of three minutes. We're achieving that at the moment but as we grow, we've got to make sure we keep in line with it,” Gooding says.

LOUNGE REVAMP

The departure area is also receiving a revamp, with further seating, dining and retail outlets. “There's been a gradual switch over the past five to ten years – we used to have lots of landside facilities but passengers don't want that now as they are spending less time in the check-in area, so we need to concentrate the space allocation on airside,” Gooding explains.





LONDON CITY AIRPORT: OVERVIEW

There are no details yet on what kind of shops will be added, but he says: “We’re looking to be more specialist and niche rather than selling 200 Marlboro and a bottle of whisky. Our jewellery outlet [Gassan, which opened in 2008] has exceeded our expectations and that might give a clue as to the sort of direction we might go in.”

Making sure the departure area is fit for purpose is vital because London City doesn’t have individual airline lounges. “Our approach is to make it a bit like a business class lounge anyway,” Gooding says. “So you’ve got comfy seats and somewhere to plug your laptop in – the only difference is you pay for a drink, but some airlines give you a voucher for a free one.” Complimentary wifi is also available.

BUILT FOR SPEED

In the next 20 years, LCY estimates that it can develop its facilities to handle about eight million passengers a year, and in 2008 it was granted approval to move from 80,000 to 120,000 movements (take-offs and landings) a year. To handle those extra numbers, its plan is not to do anything overly ambitious such as extend its 1,508-metre long runway – which would allow it to increase its current maximum flight length of about two and a half to three hours, but which would be “wildly impractical” in terms of space and economics, Gooding says. Instead, it will add aircraft stands incrementally, in line with demand.

It also intends to keep doing what it is good at – serving London’s business travel community. Some 60 per cent of the airport’s customers are travelling on business, rising to 90 per cent at peak times, and they rate the hub for its speedy processing times on

departure and arrival. London City says that if you are travelling with hand luggage only – as about half of its passengers do – and arrive 15 minutes before departure, you will get your flight (20-25 minutes with checked bags), while on your return you can go from plane to taxi in five minutes (15 minutes with checked bags).

“[The plan is to] stay in our market niche as a primarily business travel airport,” Gooding says. “We are not equipped for larger aeroplanes – the airport is built around 100-seat aircraft – or for the needs of a low-cost leisure market. We’re built around the idea of getting people through quickly and being close to the centre of London – we save people time. That’s the plan going forward because we think there is a part of the market that wants to buy that.”

He adds: “We’ve squeezed in to provide this fast connectivity to people, and that inevitably means some compromise. We have to fly a steep approach [5.5 degrees compared with three degrees] to miss the buildings [of Canary Wharf], we have to stop on a short runway and get the aircraft off quickly and park them somewhere. It’s pretty basic stuff but our plan is to keep doing that – not to be especially



creative and innovative, but just to be routine and thorough and nice, those sorts of words that people tend to forget about.”

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Still, that isn’t stopping London City from spreading its wings – in September 2009, it saw the launch of its first transatlantic route, British Airway’s all-business service to New York JFK. Operated by A318 aircraft with 32 fully-flat beds, the double-daily flights require a refuelling stop at Shannon airport in Ireland on the outbound journey. (See businesstraveller.com/tried-and-tested for a review.)

“It has operated brilliantly for the first year with passenger loads of 75 per cent, which is

pretty good given it was a rotten year,” Gooding says. “The stop in Shannon has become a huge success because it takes only 25 minutes and you’ve cleared US customs and immigration, so when you get to New York it’s only five minutes from plane to taxi [if you are travelling light].”

Mike Doyle, customer experience product manager at BA, says: “It has received some great reviews – it’s flying from the heart of London City into JFK, city to city, and is very popular with our business travellers. They like the location, the 15-minute check-in time and the dedicated check-in facilities with fast-track access to the lounge gate area. They also love the aircraft interior, which has a private jet feel, and the personal service.”



LONDON CITY AIRPORT: OVERVIEW

So might greater frequency or further routes be on the cards? Gooding says: "I know BA is looking carefully at what it will do next. I'm sure it's looking at East Coast US [services would be restricted to that side of the US because of aircraft range]." BA chief executive Willie Walsh said at June 2010's Business Travel Market in London that the airline may consider Boston, Washington and Chicago, but for now Doyle says: "We haven't got to the point where we want to expand the frequency from LCY to JFK, but there have for some time been aspirations to utilise some alternative destinations in the US."

London City also made the most of the summer 2010 lull in business travel by running services to Palma and Ibiza (operated by BA's Cityflyer) and France's Brive and Deauville (by Air France-owned Cityjet) between May and October. "In August, our business normally declines by about 15 per cent compared with a peak month, and this is a good way of using that spare capacity," Gooding says.

Luke Hayhoe, commercial manager of BA Cityflyer, confirms that the subsidiary will repeat the Spanish services in 2011. "They will start again at the end of March, which is a good six weeks or so earlier than [in 2010]," he says. "They have proven very popular – we increased the number of flights in July and August [2010] to reflect the demand, and passenger loads have been in excess of 80 per cent."

The airport also offers ski routes in winter – Cityflyer operates a seasonal service to Geneva, and recently announced new four-times weekly flights to Chambéry in the French Alps from December 18 2010 until the end of March 2011. In September 2010, BA added another Cityflyer route – a double-daily

weekday service to Copenhagen, its first Scandinavian route from LCY. Hayhoe says: "There's a growing demand for Scandinavia. In Denmark, particularly, the economy seems to be doing slightly better and the passenger volumes between London and Copenhagen are starting to grow."

NEXT-GENERATION JETS

The expansion of the network is being made possible by the carrier's new Embraer 170s and 190s. It took delivery of ten jets over 2010, replacing its ageing Avro RJ fleet, with one more set to come in October 2010. All Cityflyer services are plied with the new aircraft, the last Avro flight having taken place in July.

"Embraer is providing us with the second generation of aircraft," Gooding says. "They've been designed with the capabilities to serve airports like ours, where the flying arrangements are not typical." They join the Bombardier Q400 and A318 aircraft, which have also come into service at LCY in the past couple of years. All these aircraft are going down well with customers, he says. "They are



configured 2-2 rather than 3-3 and have slightly wider seats – people love them."

Hayhoe adds that the Embraers are more eco-friendly: "If you compare the 170 to the RJ100 on a route such as Madrid, you're looking at close to a 50 per cent reduction in fuel burn." Lufthansa and Baboo have also introduced Embraer planes at LCY. (For more on Embraer see "Joining the jet set", businessstraveller.com/archive/2009/december-2008-january-2009.) The extended range of the

new jets also opens up fresh possibilities. "The Embraer fleet brings eastern Europe into range, and we'll see more southern European routes as well," Gooding says. "We've got Madrid already and I think that will develop especially as the BA/Iberia relationship blossoms."

Hayhoe says BA is also looking at other destinations in Scandinavia, Germany and Italy – which will mean even more opportunities to experience London City's speedy service. ■ Visit londoncityairport.com for more information.



CHECK-IN TIMES

London City says that if you are travelling with hand luggage only and arrive at the airport 15 minutes before departure, you will get your flight (20-25 minutes with checked bags), and on your return you can go from plane to taxi in five minutes (15 minutes with checked bags). Half of passengers now travel with hand luggage only, while 40 per cent of business travellers check in online.

SELF-SERVICE CHECK-IN

At the moment, while the works are going on, eight self-service kiosks for Air France, Cityjet, Luxair, Swiss, Air One/Alitalia, Aer Arann, KLM and Baboo are situated in the walkway between the DLR station and the airport entrance – they may be relocated when the upgrades are complete. Immediately inside the terminal are nine kiosks for BA and 12 for multiple other airlines.



CHECK-IN DESKS

In front of the terminal entrance is a dedicated desk for BA's all-business class New York JFK service. Inside, on the right, are 20 check-in/bag-drop desks for the airport's other routes.



OTHER LANDSIDE FACILITIES

Also located in the check-in/arrivals area are Pret, Travelex and WH Smith outlets, Lufthansa and Luxair information desks, and counters for the airport's shuttle and chauffeur services. No space will be added landside in the terminal improvement project.

WHICH AIRLINES FLY WHERE?

Aer Arann – Isle of Man

Air One/Alitalia – Milan Linate

Baboo – Geneva

British Airways/BA Cityflyer – Amsterdam, Barcelona, Chambéry (seasonal), Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Frankfurt, Geneva (seasonal), Glasgow, Ibiza (seasonal), Madrid, New York JFK, Nice, Palma (seasonal), Zurich

Cityjet – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Dublin, Dundee, Edinburgh, Eindhoven, Geneva, Jersey, Luxembourg, Nantes, Paris Orly, Rotterdam

KLM – Amsterdam

Lufthansa – Frankfurt, Munich

Luxair – Luxembourg

SAS – Copenhagen

Sunair (operating as BA) – Billund

Swiss – Basel, Geneva, Zurich



BY DLR/ UNDERGROUND LONDON CITY AIRPORT

is about 9.5km from central London and 5km from Canary Wharf. It has its own station on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), which links to the London Underground – the station is connected to the airport and is a minute's walk from the terminal. The DLR departs the airport every eight to 15 minutes, with journey times of seven minutes to Canning Town, from where you can connect to the Jubilee line, and 22 minutes to Bank, from where you can link to the Central, Northern, Circle and District lines. Canary Wharf is two stops from Canning Town (six minutes) and Westminster is eight stops (13 minutes).

The DLR line splits at Canning Town as it runs east towards the airport – one line to Beckton runs along the north side of the long Royal Victoria dock, where you will find hotels such as the Crowne Plaza, Novotel and Ibis. The other line – the one to the airport – runs to Woolwich Arsenal along the south side of the dock, where hotels such as the Etap are located. If you are coming to the airport from Canary Wharf or central London, make sure to check the destination of the DLR train before boarding, or you may have to retrace your steps to Canning Town to change to the Woolwich Arsenal branch.

The airport is in Zone 3, with a single peak journey to Zone 1 costing £2.70 with an Oyster card (off-peak £2.40). Paper tickets cost £4.00.

● **TIP:** Be aware that many of the hotels close to Canary Wharf are best reached by taxi rather than the DLR because there is no direct route on the Woolwich Arsenal branch – you will have to change at least once, which can be time-consuming and confusing.

■ Visit tfl.gov.uk



BY TRAIN FOR ONWARD RAIL TRAVEL,

Stratford, London Bridge and Waterloo stations can be reached via the Jubilee line (seven, 14 and 17 minutes from Canning Town, respectively). Moorgate, Liverpool Street, King's Cross and Euston can be reached by tube from Bank (two, two, nine and 11 minutes, respectively).

■ Visit nationalrail.co.uk



BY BUS IF YOU LIVE LOCALLY,

the east London services provide a convenient way to get to the airport. Bus number 473 operates between LCY, Stratford, Silvertown, North Woolwich and Prince Regent DLR station. Bus number 474 operates 24 hours between LCY, Canning Town, North Woolwich and East Beckton via Silvertown. The bus costs £1.20 for Oyster card users and £2 for paper tickets.

■ Visit tfl.gov.uk



BY TAXI LONDON CITY AIRPORT

claims to have the longest taxi rank in Europe, located outside the terminal building and served by licensed black cabs. Estimated prices are:

- Excel **£10**
- Canary Wharf **£12**
- Liverpool Street **£25**
- West End **£30**
- Euston **£35**

● **TIP:** Note that black cab drivers are not keen on queuing in the rank and then getting a short fare to a local hotel. In the case of the Travelodge, the hotel closest to LCY, they charge up to £7.50 for a journey of only a few minutes.



BY SHUTTLE THE LCY SHUTTLE SERVICE

provides travel to and from the airport to central London – it has a desk inside the terminal. There are two options, both of which must be pre-booked. A 16-seat shuttle bus costs £8 for Canary Wharf and £18 for the City, with pick-up and drop-off times dependent on the destination. The service is free for BA's New York JFK-London City customers going to the Marriott at Canary Wharf, though they must book in advance at JFK.

The other option, a ride share service in a six-seat Mercedes Viano, starts from £28 for central London. It will pick you up and drop you off at a time you specify, with free water and newspapers on board. To book call +44 (0)845 095 9595 or email reservations@lcyshuttle.co.uk. Online bookings will be possible on the company's new website, due to launch in October 2010.

■ Visit lcyshuttle.co.uk



BY CHAUFFEUR THE OFFICIAL CHAUFFEUR

company for London City is Quay Vennards – its desk is inside the entrance of the terminal building. Unlike taxis, the company charges fixed prices, with a journey to the West End starting from £36. Cars used include the Mercedes Viano MPV, and minibuses and coaches are available for larger groups. Book on arrival at the airport or call in advance. Drivers can also act as a concierge and make bookings for restaurants and concerts on your behalf.

■ Visit quay-vennards.com or call +44 (0)20 7511 2888

BRITISH AIRWAYS PARTNERS WITH JAGUAR to provide a chauffeur service to its LCY-JFK passengers, with special rates

available via the Quintessentially Driven Jaguar Chauffeur Programme.

■ Visit ba.com

There are plenty of other private chauffeur services available – see businessstraveller.com for reviews and news stories, or visit the forum to discuss different services with fellow travellers.



BY ROAD THE TERMINAL ENTRANCE

is located on Hartmann Road, E16 2PX. The airport is located outside the London congestion charge zone and can be accessed from the north via the North Circular Road (A406), from the south via the Blackwall Tunnel, from the east via the A13 and from the M11 via the A406 (North Circular). It can also be reached from the West End via the Limehouse link tunnel.



PARKING THERE ARE TWO CAR PARKS

at the airport, both of which are on-site and only a few minutes' walk from the terminal, and both of which are extremely expensive.

SHORT STAY – this is located adjacent to the terminal. It costs £4 for 30 minutes, £28 for 12 hours, and £41 for 24 hours and every 24 hours thereafter. Note that these subsequent periods of 24 hours are charged by the unit, so if you park for 25 hours, this will cost £41 for the first 24 hours and an additional £41 for that extra hour.

MAIN/LONG STAY – on arrival, follow signs for BCP. It costs £24 for 12 hours, £36 for 24 hours and £36 for every additional 24 hours, charged as above for short stay in units of 24 hours. The long-stay park can be pre-booked online.

■ Visit londoncityairport.com or call +44 (0)871 360 1390



DEPARTURE LOUNGE, DINING AND RETAIL

London City is quite unusual in that it has no individual airline lounges. Airport chief executive Richard Gooding says there are no plans to add any “because everyone would be in them”, though he adds: “If our airline colleagues wanted to do something different then, of course, we would talk to them about that.” So the airport’s approach is to make departures as much like a business class lounge as possible, but without the free food and drink.

The exception is British Airways’ Gate 24 facility for passengers departing on its New York JFK flight. It offers comfy leather and velvet armchairs, free drinks, nibbles, wifi, newspapers, magazines, and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the aircraft.

SEATING

The left end of the departure area is being extended, with work to be completed in January 2011. For now, it has a mixture of seating options. To the left, after security, are brown leather seats and tables with power points. Plants and flowers create a pleasant ambience.

These lead on to an open-plan sit-down bar and restaurant (Bar Ten 28), with departure screens (flights are not announced), TVs, paid-for internet kiosks and a range of dining tables, sofas and bar seating. At the right end, where the gates are located, there is more leather seating and dining outlets. Free wifi is available.

SHOPPING

The retail offering is also being expanded as part of the terminal improvement project, with Gooding promising “more specialist” outlets. At the moment, the lounge has:

■ Tax- and duty-free shops – straight ahead as you turn left out of security

■ Travelex – both airside and landside

■ WH Smith – a book shop to the right end and a more general outlet to the left, with another branch landside

■ Nuance – a clothing outlet that stocks Hugo Boss goods

■ Gassan Diamonds – a jewellery and Swiss watch specialist

■ Free shoe-shine service

DINING

Considering the size of the airport, there is a good range of eating and drinking options. More may be added during the expansion. For now, there is:

■ Bar Ten 28 – a bar and restaurant named after the navigational alignment of the airport’s runway. It sells appetisers (£2-£5), salads (£11-£14), sandwiches (£5.50-£6.25), burgers (£11.20) and main courses such as lasagne (£11.90), moussaka (£12.90) and grilled salmon (£15.60). The bar offers a range of wines (from £5.85 a glass), champagnes (from £8.40 for 125ml) and draught and bottled beers (from £4.10), as well as juices, smoothies and soft drinks.

■ Caffe Nero – a coffee specialist to the right end of the lounge. Also serves snacks and cold drinks. Pick up a loyalty card, and collect nine stamps to get your tenth coffee free.



■ Trattoria – a sit-down bar/restaurant to the right end of the lounge, seating up to 116 people. It offers a morning breakfast menu – selections include continental (£6.20), eggs Benedict (£9.70) and full English (£10.50), plus pasta dishes (from £10), and more. A range of wines, champagnes and bottled beers are also on offer. You can sit at the bar or at wooden tables, and there are more tables on the pier around the corner, where full-length windows provide lots of light.

■ Presto – sells freshly prepared sandwiches, coffee and soft drinks.

■ Pret a Manger – a landside sandwich and coffee outlet.





CLOSEST TO AIRPORT

TRAVELODGE LONDON CITY AIRPORT

The closest hotel to London City airport, the Travelodge is less than a ten-minute walk away, although at night women might not feel that safe walking along this road. Bus numbers 474, which runs 24 hours, and 473 serve it from the airport station. A taxi costs about £7.50.

The 157 rooms feature triple-glazed windows, pale walls, blue and white bedspreads, an extra sofa-bed, work desk, wardrobe space, tea and coffee-making facilities and a digital flatscreen TV with Freeview. (Note that there is no telephone or air conditioning in the bedrooms.) The bathrooms are basic and clean, with a combined bath/shower. Wifi costs £10 for 24 hours or there are two computers with internet access (£1 for 20 minutes) in the lobby.

Reception is staffed 24 hours and there is a bar/restaurant next to reception that serves a breakfast buffet (£7.50) and meals ranging from Indian to Italian. Two courses can be pre-booked online for £6, and a "breakfast bag" is available 24 hours for £4.50. There is no room service but you can order food downstairs and take it up to your room. Vending machines supply items including beer and toiletries. There are 160 parking spaces charged at £5 per night.

■ **Hartmann Road, Silvertown;**
tel +44 (0)871 984 6290; travelodge.co.uk

ETAP HOTEL

This budget hotel is one stop from the airport on the DLR (Pontoon Dock). It is possible to walk but note that the road leading there is not that pleasant and it is potentially unsafe for lone women at night. A taxi costs £5 to £7. The blue and white stone building has a 24-hour

reception and there is a small canteen that serves a breakfast buffet for £3.25. Sandwiches and snacks are also available.

The 81 rooms, spread over three floors, are in the process of being refurbished (due for completion 2011). They are basic and can cater for three people, with a double and a single bunk bed above. There is a rail to hang clothes on, and a shower in the bathroom. Day rooms are also available for short stays.

■ **North Woolwich Road, Silvertown;**
tel +44 (0)20 7474 9106; etaphotel.com

BY EXCEL

NOVOTEL LONDON EXCEL

The four-star Novotel is opposite the Excel exhibition centre and is within walking distance of Royal Victoria DLR – from the airport, go three stops to Canning Town, change to the Beckton branch and go one stop. A taxi from the airport costs about £10.

This is a new-generation Novotel and has a stylish, contemporary feel, with stone, wood and richly coloured furnishings used in the public areas. The hotel has nine floors, with reception on the first level and two storeys of parking underneath (76 spaces in total).

The 257 rooms are spacious and have air conditioning, 26-inch flatscreen TVs with MP3 ports, iron/ironing boards, minibars, hairdryers, laptop safes, tea and coffee-making facilities, and 24-hour room service. Bathrooms have separate showers and tubs. Wifi costs £14.95 for 24 hours and there are two computers in the bar area offering free access for 20 minutes. There is also a £19 package including films.

There are 12 meeting rooms on the lobby level with a mezzanine floor above. All venues have

natural daylight, with a maximum capacity of 70. The hotel also has a gym, hammam and sauna. The Upper Deck restaurant was refurbished in 2009, and has colourful oars on the walls and an outdoor terrace for al fresco dining.

■ **Western Gateway, Royal Victoria dock;**
tel +44 (0)20 7540 9700; novotel.com

IBIS LONDON DOCKLANDS – EXCEL

Next to the Novotel, this Ibis is also well positioned near Excel. Its 278 rooms occupy eight floors and are due to be refurbished in 2011. They will be modern with wooden floors, blackout blinds, flatscreen TVs and air conditioning. Wifi is £10 for 24 hours as part of a package that includes films, internet on the TV, and music.

The reception and bar/restaurant are open-plan, with pop music videos playing on a flatscreen TV during our visit. A buffet breakfast (£6.95) is served between 4am and 12pm, with a full dinner menu from 6pm to 10pm. Snacks are available 24 hours a day. There is no room service, but Ibis does offer guests a pizza deal whereby you can order one from the restaurant and pick it up from reception in a box.

There are no meeting facilities, although there are plans to extend the eatery (it currently caters for 86 people), which could provide a pleasant environment for business get-togethers. This is all part of the refurbishment of the public areas, which is due to take place in 2011.

Also in the area is the smaller Ibis London Docklands hotel, which is a three-minute walk from Blackwall DLR (five stops from the airport) and seven minutes' from Canary Wharf. The 87-room property has a café/restaurant, a bar offering snacks 24 hours a day, and outdoor parking for 30 vehicles.



■ **Ibis Excel: 9 Western Gateway, Royal Victoria dock; tel +44 (0)20 7055 2300;**

■ **Ibis London Docklands: 1 Baffin Way (off Preston's Road); tel +44 (0)20 7517 1100; ibishotels.com**

CROWNE PLAZA LONDON DOCKLANDS

Three minutes' walk from Royal Victoria dock, the four-star Crowne Plaza is a short distance from Excel and is an excellent choice with good service. A courtesy shuttle runs regularly between Canary Wharf station and the hotel.

The 210 rooms are spacious and were refurbished in 2010. They come with wired





internet access (£5 for 24 hours), laptop safes, satellite TV with paid-for in-room movies, irons/ironing boards, hairdryers and Neutrogena bathroom products. The hotel's brasserie-style restaurant, the Docklands Bar and Grill, opened in 2008 and offers a seasonal menu with daily specials, 18 different beers and Prosecco wine on tap.

There are nine meeting rooms on the first floor offering free wifi and natural daylight – the maximum capacity is 250 people theatre-style. There is also a pool and gym.

■ **Western Gateway; tel +44 (0)207 055 2000; crownplaza.com**

ROYAL VICTORIA DOCK

RAMADA HOTEL AND SUITES

The Ramada is a five-minute walk from Prince Regent DLR – from the airport go three stops west to Canning Town and change to the Beckton branch for a further three stations (the journey takes about 30 minutes). A taxi would probably be easier and costs about £7.

There are 153 rooms (plus 71 suites), each with a small sofa-bed, tea and coffee-making facilities, air conditioning, a workdesk, floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the river, a digital TV, paid-for in-room movies, an iron/ironing board, a hairdryer and a bathroom with a walk-in power shower and Neutrogena toiletries. Suites are modern with a separate bedroom, kitchenette and living room, TVs in both the lounge and bedroom, and a direct phone line. Windows are triple glazed.

The airy Stresa restaurant is located on the ground floor and has both indoor and outdoor seating – there is also 24-hour room service. Wifi is available free on the ground floor, while

there is free wired internet on all levels. Other facilities include a small gym with a couple of machines, and two meeting rooms – Connaught and Victoria – located next to the restaurant. A spacious lobby next to these can be used for breakouts and registration. The venues can accommodate 20 to 30 delegates in each and have video-conferencing capability and air conditioning.

■ **Excel, 2 Festoon Way; tel +44 (0)207 540 4820; ramadadocklands.co.uk**

PREMIER INN LONDON DOCKLANDS

Also a five-minute walk from Prince Regent DLR and next to Excel, the Premier Inn's 202 rooms are all air conditioned and double glazed. A breakfast buffet is charged at £7.95 and includes healthy options, as well as the full English. Those in a hurry can opt for the £2.95 "grab-and-go" option. Breakfast is served until 10am, after which the "lounge menu" (jacket potatoes, sandwiches, pizzas, salads) is available until the bar closes at 1am (there is also an extensive dinner service).

Wifi is available throughout the hotel (£10 for 24 hours), and there is also a computer in the lobby that can be used for internet access (25p a minute). There is one meeting room, which can hold up to 13 people, and the hotel can provide working lunches and snacks.

Customer services rooms on each floor have ironing boards (irons are available from reception, as are toiletries and umbrellas). The chain has also implemented a "female-friendly" policy – single women are given rooms on higher floors if possible and reception staff are trained not to disclose room numbers.

■ **Royal Victoria dock; tel +44 (0)870 238 3322; premiertravelinn.com**

CANNING TOWN

HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS LONDON – ROYAL DOCKS/DOCKLANDS

The Holiday Inn Express is located close to Canning Town station – when you exit, walk through the bus station and the hotel is 100 metres away on your left-hand side.

The reception is a large open-plan space joined to the bar, and the dining area is to the right, with green and blue chairs, tall plants and a large flatscreen TV. The bar is open 24 hours a day for hotel guests. Breakfast is served here and is included in the price. The hotel does not have a restaurant but there is a snack menu.

There are 136 rooms, all of which are air conditioned and have wifi access (£10 for 24 hours). Décor is simple yet tasteful, and features include tea and coffee-making facilities, Sky TV, pay-per-view movies, and a small shower room. As part of the Holiday Inn rebrand, new tables, chairs and carpets are going to be introduced by the end of the year.

For meetings, the restaurant space can be divided into a conference room that holds 70 people theatre-style. There are also four other smaller meeting rooms on the same floor, all with natural daylight. The 50-space car park costs £10 for 24 hours.

■ **Silvertown Way, Silvertown; tel +44 (0)20 7540 4040; exhi-royaldocks.co.uk**

BLACKWALL

THE RADISSON EDWARDIAN NEW PROVIDENCE WHARF HOTEL

The Radisson Edwardian is relatively easy to find and is about a five-minute walk from both



Premier Inn



Radisson Edwardian

Blackwall and East India DLR stations. Travelling by taxi from the airport costs about £14. The hotel offers a free shuttle service to Canary Wharf every 20 minutes on weekday mornings.

The 169 rooms and suites are minimalist and spacious with workdesks, Bang and Olufsen TVs that adjust to the brightness of the room, and entertainment systems with satellite and pay-per-view movies. They also have air conditioning, iPod docks, iron/ironing boards, laptop safes, minibars and a trouser presses.

Guests receive 30 minutes of wifi access for free, or they can pay £10 for 24 hours. Bathrooms are impressive – they are wet rooms with walk-in rainshowers, tubs and square sinks. Many of the rooms offer great views of the River Thames and the City.



There are breakout areas and seven meeting rooms, including the Ontario conference suite, which can seat 250 delegates theatre-style or 160 for dinner. Each event space has natural daylight and the latest audio-visual technology.

Azura restaurant offers British cuisine with a menu that changes seasonally. There is also an attractive riverside terrace and the East River spa, which offers a range of treatments and has a stone oven sauna, swimming pool, crystal steam room, relaxation area, and gym.

■ **5 Fairmont Avenue, New Providence Wharf; tel +44 (0)20 7987 2050; radissonedwardian.co.uk**

CANARY WHARF

MARRIOTT WEST INDIA QUAY

Around the corner from West India Quay DLR station and 10 minutes' walk from Canary Wharf tube station, the Marriott occupies the first eight floors of a 32-storey curved-glass building, while floors nine to 12 house Marriott's 47 serviced apartments.

The hotel has 301 bedrooms, a mixture of Deluxe, Executive and suites. If you are in an Executive room or above you have access to the 24-hour Executive lounge on the seventh floor. Free drinks and snacks are served here. The shape of the building means that the seven Curve suites are shaped like smooth shards of glass, with windows on each side making the most of views over the water.

Rooms have dark wood furniture, tea and coffee-making facilities, laptop safes, minibars, hairdryers, iron/ironing boards, and wired internet access (wifi in public spaces), charged at £15 for 24 hours. Views from the property are of the quay or surrounding buildings.

There are about 20 meeting rooms to choose from with a maximum capacity of 300 people in the largest – the West India ballroom can be divided into three and holds about 160 for a sit-down meal. There is a breakout area on the mezzanine level over the lobby, and a 24-hour business centre. A free boarding card printing service is available.

On the ground floor there is a small fitness centre with large changing rooms and saunas. Passengers on British Airways' LCY-New York JFK service can freshen up here on arrival, with a shuttle service provided.

■ **22 Hertsmere Road; tel +44 (0)20 7093 1000; marriott.co.uk**

FOUR SEASONS CANARY WHARF

One of the first hotels to open in the Docklands, in 1999, the Four Seasons is a two-minute walk from West Ferry DLR, seven stops from London City airport, or about a ten-minute walk from Canary Wharf station. A taxi from the airport is about £14.

The 142 rooms and suites are on floors two to eight and start from 37sqm. All have walk-in wardrobes and large windows with seats built in – a nice touch that allows you to enjoy the city views. River vistas are worth paying a little more for – the hotel is positioned on a bend of the Thames and looks upstream towards the City. Décor is modern, with pale wood finishing and friezes above the bed.

Other facilities include iPod docking stations, flatscreen TVs, wired and wireless internet access (£15 for 24 hours), free shoe-shine service and a morning paper. The bathrooms have limestone floors, elegant glass tiling, Bulgari bathing products and separate showers and tubs.

There is a fitness centre on the second floor but the hotel also has an arrangement with the Virgin Active gym next door – this is open around the clock and features three floors of equipment, a spa and a pool, free for Four Seasons guests.

In the lobby, the Quadrato restaurant serves high-level northern Italian cuisine with menus that change weekly – outdoor seating is available on the terrace in the summer.

The meeting facilities are located on the first floor and comprise a ballroom that holds 200 people theatre-style, and two other rooms holding about 50. There is also a boardroom on the mezzanine level.

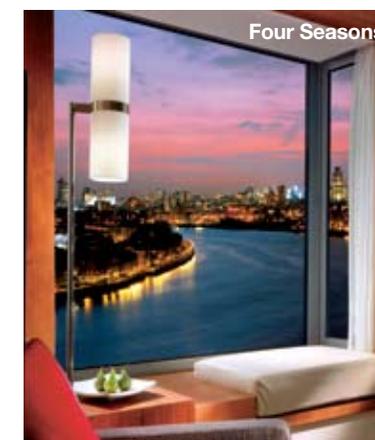
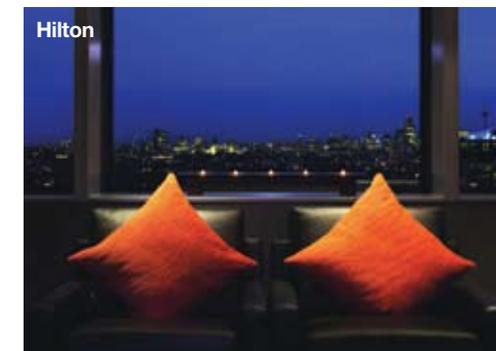
■ **46 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf; tel +44 (0)20 7510 1999; fourseasons.com**

HILTON CANARY WHARF

The Hilton hotel opened in June 2006 and is just around the corner from South Quay DLR and ten minutes' walk from Canary Wharf station. The property's 283 bedrooms have flatscreen televisions (to be upgraded to 37-inch ones in 2011), Crabtree and Evelyn toiletries, laptop safes, iron/ironing boards, minibars and air conditioning (in standard bathrooms the tubs and showers are combined).

Wifi is available in the public areas (£10 for 24 hours), while in-room access is wired and costs £14.95 for 24 hours. The 55 Executive rooms and 24 Junior suites provide guests with entry to the Executive lounge, located on the 14th floor and featuring views of the Thames and free internet access.

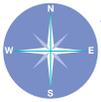
The hotel has a good selection of meeting facilities on the first floor. The biggest venue, the Quayside suite, accommodates 300 delegates theatre-style. There are also eight smaller rooms and a 24-hour business centre.



On the ground floor, Cinnamon restaurant and bar is decorated in green glass and dark mahogany wood. For the peckish, snacks are dished up, while the restaurant dining menu features plenty of seafood, inspired by the nearby Billingsgate fish market.

The good-size, 24-hour gym is on the second floor and features cardiovascular machines, a steam room and a sauna. The Hilton also has a relationship with the Six Senses spa across the road, so can arrange for hotel guests to have free use of it.

■ **South Quay, Marsh Wall; tel +44 (0)20 3002 2300; hilton.co.uk**



AREA MAP

