

I came, I saw, I concurred

LONDINIUM CLAIMS THAT ITS MUSIC IS "RELAXING" AND ITS AMBIANCE "WELCOMING". ROBERT COOK CERTAINLY AGREES



I have always been enthralled by London's Roman past. I've visited numerous museums, gone on ancient wall walks in The City and gazed at the Walbrook Mithraeum in its incongruously modern setting. So, given the chance to visit londinium, a restaurant bearing the capital's Latin name, I couldn't wait to go.

Those who do not share my passion for the ancient world have nothing to fear. londinium isn't decked with Corinthian columns or gimmicky statues. Instead it boasts a clean-cut, contemporary look, with wooden flooring, elegant wall panels and smartly upholstered chairs. The historical aspects remain subtle: the menu includes a discussion of the earliest written reference to Londoners ("Londinienses"), from a Roman inscription found at nearby Tabard Square, whilst the walls show maps of the city in centuries past.

The restaurant itself is fairly new. Located in London Bridge Hotel, the space was, until 2005, used only as a breakfast room for residents. Following a revamp, however, londinium became a chic dining place for both hotel guests and visitors from outside. We began our meal with the ample wine list, selecting a refreshing Sauvignon Blanc (£21.50). The wine stowed in a cooler beside our table, we proceeded to order some dishes. Like Gaul, the food menu is divided into three parts. It is less extensive than the wine list, with six options for each course, but all the choices are mouth-watering. For my starter, I selected the Dover crab lime avocado salad (£6.95), which was delightfully succulent. My companion, meanwhile, chose the Soup of the day - leek and potato, another delicious dish (£5.90).

Roman noblemen sometimes ate delicacies such as peacock or nightingales' tongues. Paying tribute to this, I ordered Guinea fowl with pisto manchego for my main course (£15.25). The bird's delectable flesh came easily from the bone, moistened by a side order of garlic mashed potato. My friend sated his appetite with the juicy Peppered fillet of beef, which included roasted potato wedges and wild mushroom sauce (£17.50). Moving on to dessert, I was tempted by the exotic-sounding Tropical brioche and butter pudding (£6.50). It was laced with caramelised sugar that crunched satisfyingly between the teeth. This pudding may have proved detrimental to my waistline, but did wonders for my tastebuds. The same was true of my companion as he tucked into the moreish Chef's special - a tasty slice of white chocolate and raspberry cheesecake (£5.95). Unlike the Hotel's other two eateries, londinium is located in the depths of the building and does not have a street façade of its own. This means that casual passersby don't always notice it, something of great benefit to those who do; outside peak times like the pre-theatre rush, londinium can be fairly quiet, making it a tranquil haven. Our visit took advantage of one such period, the subtle jazz music in the background contributing to the soothing, chilled out atmosphere. A place like londinium only turns up once every two thousand years. ■

[londinium](#)

[London Bridge Hotel](#)

[8 - 18 London Bridge Street
SE1 9SG](#)

[Tel: 020 7855 2200](#)

www.londonbridgehotel.com