

Tourists will want more from Edinburgh's serviced accommodation in 2015

✘ Fountain Court Apartments, the largest independent serviced accommodation provider in Edinburgh, will begin 2015 with a strong service offering that embraces many of the predicted travel and technology trends for the year ahead. Director John Neil looks ahead to what savvy travellers will be demanding from accommodation and other travel operators.

“We know that our visitors are searching out value and using the ever evolving latest technology to do it. Adapting to this is an essential step to remaining relevant with the next generation of both leisure and business travellers,” said Mr Neil.

One of the significant travel trends is the increase in popularity of serviced apartments in recent years. According to the latest Global Serviced Apartment Industry Report, 73% of operators reported an increase in occupancy levels this year to date and the sector has grown by 14% since the last report in 2013. With serviced apartments now accounting for 8% of the accommodation offered in Edinburgh, growth in this sector has been particularly strong and is set to continue. Fountain Court is at the forefront of this trend with its planned expansion offering 230 apartments at eight locations throughout the city by mid-2015. This growth is coming from both the leisure and corporate markets, as travellers recognise the benefits serviced apartments have to offer in comparison to hotels.

Edinburgh leading the way with Wi-Fi technology – Edinburgh has been named as one of the top cities in the world for technology, and it has plans to implement free Wi-Fi for

everyone in the city centre by the end of 2015. This follows in addition to the free Wi-Fi access that is already available on the city's trams and buses, and presents a massive bonus for visitors and residents who will no longer be hit with expensive data roaming charges.

Responding to visitors' technology requirements – for corporate guests, free Wi-Fi with fast connectivity is rated in the top three essentials they look for when booking accommodation – along with a comfortable bed and great shower! When guests check into an apartment now they come armed with an array of different devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops. Multiple guest devices connecting simultaneously to the internet has resulted in additional bandwidth access becoming business critical. Something which was once seen as 'nice to have' is now mandatory and can prove a deal breaker for some guests. Recognising this as a necessity, Fountain Court has responded by installing the latest leased line cabling to ensure that guests have free and fast access to all the internet they could require during their stay.

Mobile and website innovations – mobile has transformed the way we do pretty much everything and in 2015 it's going to be even more prevalent in the travel industry. More than a third of all travel bookings made online will be done via a mobile device by 2018. More people are going through the booking process using mobile and tablet devices so Fountain Court has invested in a new responsive WordPress website, launching in February, which has a number of features which will provide a more seamless experience between devices, social media integration and live review feeds and, overall, simplifying the booking process.

Travellers are often looking at accommodation providers as a 'travel experience' rather than just a place to sleep. They look for insight into what's happening in and around the place they are staying. Fountain Court's new website will also be

geared towards improving access to information guests want with a directory and interactive maps of Edinburgh enabling visitors to find the best attractions and restaurants and bars within its website. Fountain Court is also stepping up its partnerships with businesses in and around Edinburgh city to promote special events and share local travel experiences.