

Grand Opening of Virgin Hotels Edinburgh

Sir Richard Branson remains the figurehead of the 40 plus companies which make up the Virgin Group, and it was testament to how important the new Edinburgh hotel is to the company that he visited for the second time today to perform the official opening.

Last time he was here no building work had begun, but he seems pretty pleased with what his team has created in the Old Town. His links to Edinburgh go back to his grandmother, and his link to Scotland is even stronger as his wife was brought up in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street. Although the Edinburgh hotel is the first outside America, the Glasgow hotel is to be even bigger and is planned to open later this year.

The still new Virgin Hotels Edinburgh is accessed through the former India Buildings on Victoria Street, (or Espionage if you prefer) with parts of the hotel reaching down into the Cowgate at the rear. This is where the all day bar Eve, named after Sir Richard's mother who sadly died during two years ago, and the newly renovated Greyfriars Hall are situated.

In celebration of the newly opened Virgin Hotels Edinburgh, Virgin Red – Virgin's Group-wide rewards club – will also be surprising and delighting locals at St Giles Cathedral from 5pm this evening. Passers by will be able to get their hands

on some Virgin Points, with prizes including everything from a luxury four-night staycation at Virgin Hotels Edinburgh to flights to locations all around the world, as well as a Scottish celebration to be remembered.



Sir Richard Branson and Louise Marshall mark the grand opening of Virgin Hotels Edinburgh, located in Edinburgh's Old Town. Picture date: Friday March 24, 2023. PA Photo. In celebration of the newly opened hotel, Virgin Red, the Group-wide rewards club, will also be surprising locals at St Giles Cathedral from 5pm this evening with Virgin Points. Picture credit should read: Euan Cherry/PA Wire.



Greyfriars Hall Cowgate PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter
Greyfriars Hall is an events space ideal for music or business conferences. It was used by Edinburgh's Hogmanay on 1st of January when free music attracted locals along.

Taking questions from the press this morning, he perched on a bar stool alongside James Bermingham the CEO of Virgin Hotels. Both sported a touch of tartan, and do in fact bear a physical resemblance to each other – something they both remarked upon.

Sir Richard said: "The last time I was here this was an empty shell. I have visited just about every room this morning, and think that every single little detail is fantastic. One of the advantages of a 50 year long career is that people grow up within Virgin, creating Upper Class lounges at Heathrow or new Virgin Voyages cruise ships, so then transforming something somewhere else in the world we know the people to ask. The people who can be presented with a blank sheet of paper and transform a building and from the second anyone walks in her it is a warm place with a touch of Scotland about it. I think the people who originally built this as a registrar's office

many years ago would be happy if they came alive today would be bowled over to see what the team has done.

“It has the warmth which Virgin can bring to it with a touch of the past as well. We’ve got a great bunch of people here and initial feedback has been great.

“I may not sound like it but my roots are Scottish. My grandmother was from Edinburgh and my wife is from Glasgow and technically I think I am about three quarters Scottish. The first record shop I opened was here in Edinburgh. I think that finding a Virgin normally goes where we feel there is a need for us. The team looked at other hotels, but we felt that we could create something original and different here, If you can come into a city and create something original and different then you are likely to be able to make a business out of it. This building – people with greater vision than me felt that they could turn it into something extraordinary and I think that is what they have done.”



(Left to right) Sir Richard Branson and CEO of Virgin Hotel

James Bermingham mark the grand opening of Virgin Hotels Edinburgh, located in Edinburgh's Old Town. Picture date: Friday March 24, 2023. PA Photo. In celebration of the newly opened hotel, Virgin Red, the Group-wide rewards club, will also be surprising locals at St Giles Cathedral from 5pm this evening with Virgin Points. Picture credit should read: Euan Cherry/PA Wire.

He admitted that it was surprising coming back to the hotel now that it is complete and houses 222 Chambers and Grand Chamber suites with the Commons Club restaurant, Eve the all day dining space and the Greyfriars Hall which he is particularly pleased with.

He said: "It is a pinch me moment coming back here today. The hall and the chandelier, the whole space – everything about it means it can be a rock venue, a dance space or host conferences. It has been exquisitely done and is I think a fantastic addition to Edinburgh. We are lucky there are a lot of places in the hotel where smaller conferences can be hosted, and to be honest a few years ago I had not spotted that at all. I am looking forward to comparing the photos taken today on our staircase with those taken a few years ago."

Virgin Hotels CEO, James Bermingham, said: "We are incredibly proud of what we've achieved with Virgin Hotels Edinburgh. From the beginning, we set out to create a hotel that would be unlike anything else in the city – a place where locals and guests could come and feel welcome and inspired, and where they could experience the best of Edinburgh. We're thrilled to see the hotel officially open and thriving, and we look forward to welcoming even more guests in the years to come." He almost admitted to roots in Scotland having lived in Glasgow during the early years of his life.

"We want every hotel that we open to reflect the history and the culture of the destinations. The opportunity that the India Buildings and Greyfriars Hall offered was both

historical and architectural. The team has done a great job of combining both the history and the culture. We really want to be a community centre where locals come to gather. It is important to us to embrace the local community as international travellers want to have the authenticity of mixing with local people. “



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(Left to right) Katie Johnson, Sir Richard Branson and CEO of Virgin Hotel James Bermingham mark the grand opening of Virgin Hotels Edinburgh, located in Edinburgh's Old Town. Picture date: Friday March 24, 2023. PA Photo. In celebration of the newly opened hotel, Virgin Red, the Group-wide rewards club, will also be surprising locals at St Giles Cathedral from 5pm this evening with Virgin Points. Picture credit should read: Euan Cherry/PA Wire.



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