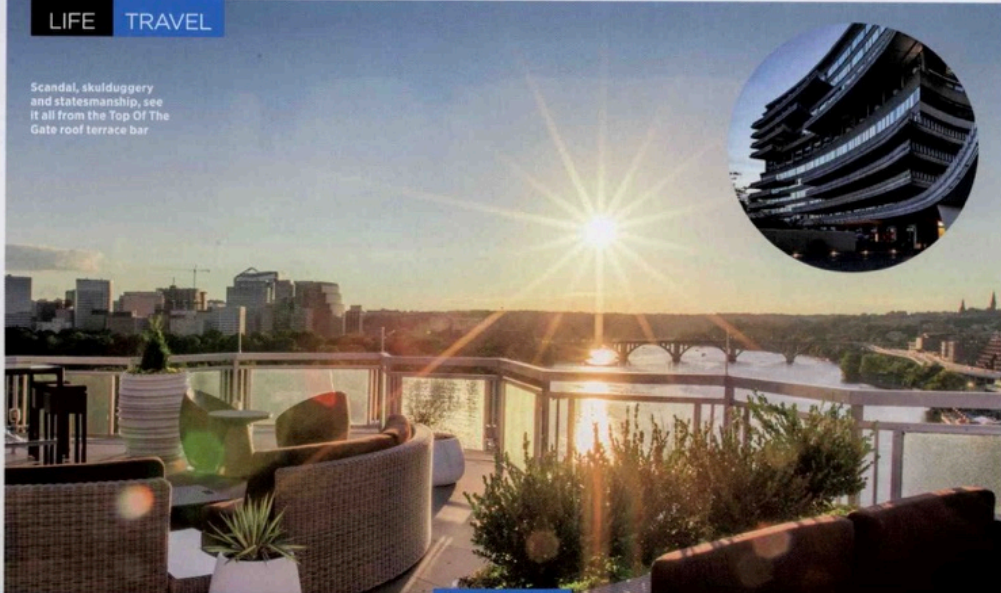




LIFE TRAVEL

Scandal, skulduggery and statesmanship: see it all from the Top Of The Gate roof terrace bar



Stay Of The Month

The Watergate Hotel

Having lent its suffix to every major scandal since 1972, the iconoclastic DC destination is back and bookable with a design-led regeneration that's once again taking on the establishment

Edited by Bill Prince



Of all the famous cities in the US, one thinks of a great many disruptors before one thinks of Washington.

One thinks of Los Angeles. One thinks of New Orleans or Las Vegas. Lately, one might think, with sadness, of Charlottesville. And yet it's not only the appointment of the great disruptor-in-chief to its most famous residence that's upturned the tables in Old DC. Look back to 1972, when its other most famous residence, The Watergate, was the catalyst for 20th-century America's greatest constitutional crisis, when Republican president Richard Nixon was forced to resign after White House operatives used the hotel to co-ordinate a break-in to the neighbouring Democratic HQ. (Lesser-known fact: the site played political hangman again in 1995, when one Monica Lewinsky moved to live there...)

Well, The Watergate Hotel is at it again. Only this time it's not the political caste it's rocking, but the capital's social scene. Having been shuttered since 2007, a credit-crunch casualty, the hotel was bought by husband-and-wife hoteliers Jacques and Rachel Cohen in 2010. After six years and a £155 million refurbishment with design doyen Ron Arad, the Cohens

reopened what was once the world's most notorious hotel, having given it one of the most striking interiors bookable today.

Each room is appointed unique furniture that's more *Mad Men* than *House Of Cards*, stylishly ruffling the feathers of DC's otherwise largely sober neo-classical, white-tablecloth hospitality. It's a modernised return to the hotel's roots. When it opened in 1965, the disruptive vision – there's that word again – of architect Luigi Moretti, with his sweeping buildings, became instantly iconic in the face of twittering local disgruntlement, constructed as they were in the historic Foggy Bottom neighbourhood at the foot of Virginia Avenue, over which the Washington Monument looms large.

Today, with its outstanding restaurant,

Kingbird, edge-hip Next Whisky Bar, the Argenta spa, plus a roof terrace that sways with the seasons (from sun bar to ice rink), the hotel draws an eager young crowd, which, given its anti-establishment past and present, seems apt. Indeed, one feels it may well be a local staging ground for whatever will come to replace Trump. One president down; one to go.

But that's for the future. For now, suffice it to know that The Watergate is back in the mix and mixing things up. Its part in American mythology was cemented decades since, but now, in the DC of 2019, where change and, yes, disruption is palpable, visitors once again have the chance to put themselves in the story. **Aaron Callow** From £315 per night. thewatergatehotel.com



+ The Scandal Room

For years after the Watergate break-in, the suite from which the burglary was co-ordinated was all but forgotten, after the hotel's room numbering changed. Now, part of the owners' witty re-engagement with the Nixon era, Room 214 (left) is back and dressed with memorabilia of the affair that scalped Tricky Dicky. The concierge is usually able to arrange a private visit.