

With us magazine: the growth story of Soho House

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Soho House & Co, the group behind the original, eponymous club in London's West End (amongst many others), is ambitiously growing its presence around the world. The expansion of this unique business is seemingly unstoppable.

Nick Jones opened the first Soho House in London's Greek Street in 1995. Since then, he's gone on to turn his concept – private members' clubs for people in the creative industries – into a global network, with a further 14 clubs across Europe and North America (along with a fast-growing portfolio of restaurants, cinemas and spas).

The properties that make up Soho House are designed to cater to a community of like-minded individuals around the world. And with clubs everywhere from Babington House in the English countryside, to Chicago, Hollywood, New York and Toronto, via Berlin, there's no shortage of choice. But as diverse and far-reaching as the business has become, it's still built around a single mission – wherever they're based, from London to Miami, every House is there to provide a comfortable home from home for its members.

Growth on growth

Alongside new clubs in London (76 Dean Street) and the Oxfordshire countryside (Soho Farmhouse), one of the most exciting recent openings is in Istanbul, where a 19th-century palazzo and former American consulate in Beyoglu has been transformed into an 87 room club with spaces for eating, drinking and meeting, along with a spa and a rooftop pool overlooking the Golden Horn.

Grand plans

Jones summed up his formula for success in a recent interview: "We try to have that relaxed vibe at all of the Soho Houses, but the reality is, to pull this off you need to be even more organized. Otherwise relaxed can just be sloppy and bad. We want relaxed to be as efficient and impressive as if you were in a posh, white-tablecloth place. The attention to detail is just huge for me and the disease is getting worse as I get older."

Of course, it takes a minutely observed and expertly executed approach to make 'relaxed' look easy and natural. And it takes an innate instinct for what will 'click' with his membership (and what won't) to be on-trend with so many aspects of Soho House's operations.

Jones's decision to open Babington House as a rural Somerset retreat for Soho House members is a case in point. Still widely regarded as the first English country hotel to change the mould, Babington was born out of a desire to make country hotels better, a place where guests could eat what they liked, when they liked. Located in a Georgian house in 18 acres of grounds, the House has 33 bedrooms, as well as a private lodge, bars, restaurants, spas, pools and a 45-seat cinema...not forgetting the cricket pitch, lake, walled garden and Grade I listed chapel.

Withers partner Jeremy Wakeham, who has guided Soho House through numerous stages in its expansion, provides his perspective: "Nick and his team have a big picture in mind for Soho House. As its reach grows, so does the potential to take pioneering leaps."

In the right place

Another of Jones's decisions – taking over the Electric Cinema in Notting Hill's Portobello Road, and installing a House next door – put him in the right place at the right time in one of London's most-sought-after areas. Having pulled off similar coups ahead of the crowd in other locations, at home and abroad, it was no surprise when Soho House caught the eye of US investor Ron Burkle, who acquired 60 percent of the business for a reported US\$363 million in 2012.

Still at the helm, Jones continues to make headline news with reports of new ventures. These include SOHO WORKS in Shoreditch, the first of an international network of 24/7 workspaces designed for the creative industries. Open to both Soho House members and non-members, the

concept has been created for individuals and businesses that want dedicated workspace, but with Soho House's design, functionality, service and attention to detail. The 16,000 sq ft layout hosts 23 private Studies each accommodating one to ten people, multiple banks of Shared Desks and a variety of Sitting Room spaces (hot-desks).

A further venture is the upcoming development at London's iconic BBC Television Centre at White City. The new House will host 47 bedrooms, with views over the famous Television Centre forecourt, and feature a terrace and swimming pool on the roof.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Soho House recently announced plans to expand its Los Angeles operations from West Hollywood into Downtown's fashionable Arts District. The warehouse building will feature club space, hotel rooms and studio apartments, Cowshed Spa, gym and rooftop pool. The ground floor will also feature restaurants, which will be open to the public.

Jeremy sums up his experience of working with the business: "Advising Soho House on its string of new openings has been exhilarating. With bold plans like White City and Downtown LA in the pipeline, this extraordinary company will keep moving in the right direction."

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