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## 200 penguins for a party in central London? No problem

For the clients of London's flourishing luxury concierge industry, no demand is too outrageous.



One couple who paid membership to a concierge service were allowed to watch the New Year fireworks from the Sydney Opera House Photo: Tibor Bognar / Alamy

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Picture the scene: you have returned from a spectacular day skiing in the Alps to discover that your keys are lost, buried somewhere in the powdery wonderland above.

What do you do? Write them off, call your nearest and dearest for the spares, and start blaming

yourself for having been so careless, no doubt.

Faced with this same conundrum, however, the world's richest would do something very different, thanks to an ever-growing number of London-based concierge companies who set no limit on fulfilling their clients' every whim.

Thus Quintessentially Lifestyle, which is now the biggest concierge company in London, sprung into action following a panicked member's instruction to find their keys no matter what the cost. They immediately arranged for a metal detector to be delivered up the mountain and initiated a top-priority search & rescue operation to find the elusive set.

The same company has also been asked to recover a digital camera left on the back seat of a taxi in Shanghai, and managed to return a Nintendo console that had been left on an aeroplane in Spain to its owner's hotel within the hour.

Paying a concierge service to solve every conceivable problem has recently started to become common practice among the wealthy émigrés who now account for 60% of the London's prime property buyers.

Alistair Gill, General Manager of the newly-founded Mayfair Concierge firm, describes these newcomers as "cash-rich and time-poor", and it seems their demands on the companies who pledge to look after them extend to more than just finding lost possessions.

Alex Allason, a spokesperson for Quintessentially Lifestyle, described one of the most challenging requests: "A member called from the Amazon unable to find the rare pink dolphins, despite being there with a local guide. After a few calls to our contacts we managed to find them and arranged a helicopter to take the member to see them."

In another case the company managed to track down a client's long-lost friend, solely on a name and the fact that they would be found in either Cyprus or Paris.

Apparently a common appeal is for clients to be instantly jetted away from London to an exclusive destination round the world. Allason relates how one member wanted an Indiana Jones-style adventure in Jordan, so the company had to pull enough strings to arrange an action-packed schedule of training by ex-MI6 agents, including "uncovering hidden treasures in the desert" and "rescuing hostages in densely populated market places".

Another couple on their books was given permission to climb Sydney Opera House one New Year's Eve and watch the fireworks from the top of the sails.

Many firms know that their clients value discreetness, and are defensive when asked about the

outrageous demands they receive. Falcon Concierge Services, another recently-started firm, stated only that “an individual’s definition of ‘outrageous’ may differ from another,” and that they couldn’t think of any such instances.

Bon Vivant Concierge also refused to give examples, but did disclose that they received a request “from someone who wasn’t a member, pleading for lunch and a visit to the theatre with Prince Albert from Monaco.”

If the same request came from a paying client, however, the company would have moved mountains to try and make it happen. With enough money involved, even royalty is not beyond reach.

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