

Travel

> LONG BREAKS AND WEEKENDS AWAY



The honey stoned frontage of the Cotswold House Hotel in Chipping Camden (left) conceals tastefully decorated rooms (above) and beautiful gardens at the rear (below)

Hidden delight

Immaculate service and a garden oasis await in the Cotswolds, says **Jon Perks**

Over the years I've been fortunate enough, through work, to have stayed at some fabulous hotels. Never before, however, have I seen silver service used to deliver a fresh napkin onto the table. Or a breakfast menu divided into starters and main courses. Or tomato ketchup spooned onto your plate by the waiter.

Welcome to the Cotswold House Hotel. Set in the heart of Chipping Camden, its typical Cotswold honey stone frontage makes it indistinguishable from the buildings around it on the high street.

Set just off the main drag behind the pay and display car park, it's an unlikely setting, which belies its delights inside.

Most of the parking is round the back, meaning you then have the pleasure of walking through the hotel gardens, which include the idyllic Pavilion Terrace (complete with bar and barbecue which opens on warm days). Sadly our visit was not on such a day.

The sprawling hotel features 15 bedrooms in the main house, eight in Montrose House, one each in the Longborough and Old Grammar School Suites and four in the garden cottages.

We were staying in the ground floor of Montrose House; a compact but smart junior suite (£450 per night) with a subtle purple colour scheme, plasma TV, comfy sofa and French doors leading onto our own garden terrace with table and chairs. Sadly it wasn't nice enough to sit out, but in the summer (when it appears) it must be fab.

The bed was pretty big, but pygmy-esque compared to the bathroom, the doubtless centrepiece of Room 11.

A carved egg-shaped bathtub for two (though a small family could have bathed together) complete with wall-mounted 17" TV,

> FACT FILE

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twin basins and a mammoth shower/steam room, it was all very swish and contemporary, slightly spoiled by the Finding Nemo style prints on the wall which didn't go with the rest of it, but did make it feel like you were in someone's house and not a hotel.

Before trying out the bath/steam room, dinner beckoned in Juliana's Restaurant (there is also a brasserie, Hick's).

Served daily between 7pm and 9.45pm, you can choose between two courses for £39.50 or three for £49.50, chef Steve Love's creations as good as anything I've eaten at the likes of Simpsons or Purnell's.

Honestly,

Much of it is local and seasonal too; the pork is from Gloucestershire, beef from Herefordshire, vegetables from the nearby Drinkwater's Farm; there are even Cotswold crayfish when in season.

Quite where they swim about I'm not sure.

Now £50 for dinner is not cheap, granted, but I promise you it's a real event, starting with the delicious canapés and ending with one of the best puds I have had in years.

For starters we enjoyed seared scallops (with pickled cauliflower and white truffle) and a hefty £11.50 glass of red to accompany it, and loin of yellow fin tuna with those crayfish, risotto vert and crispy frog's legs.

Punctuated with a couple of amuse bouches, we then enjoyed (and I mean enjoyed) main courses of braised ox cheek and Herefordshire fillet with oyster and coffee brittle (and a hefty £11.50 glass of red to accompany it), and loin of yellow fin tuna with those crayfish, risotto vert and crispy frog's legs.

Divine, as was the bottle of Pinot Blanc from the extensive and interesting wine list.

My rhubarb-rhubarb dessert (four variations of ice, fritter, parfait and jelly and custard) and the marinated poached pineapple with coconut porridge were a fitting full stop at the end, sending us off to bed (and that bath) with the widest of smiles.

We never quite got the hang of the steam room, but the bath was luxurious, as was breakfast the following morning.

One night was just not enough.



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