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SUSSEX LIFE

August 2006

Arundel special!

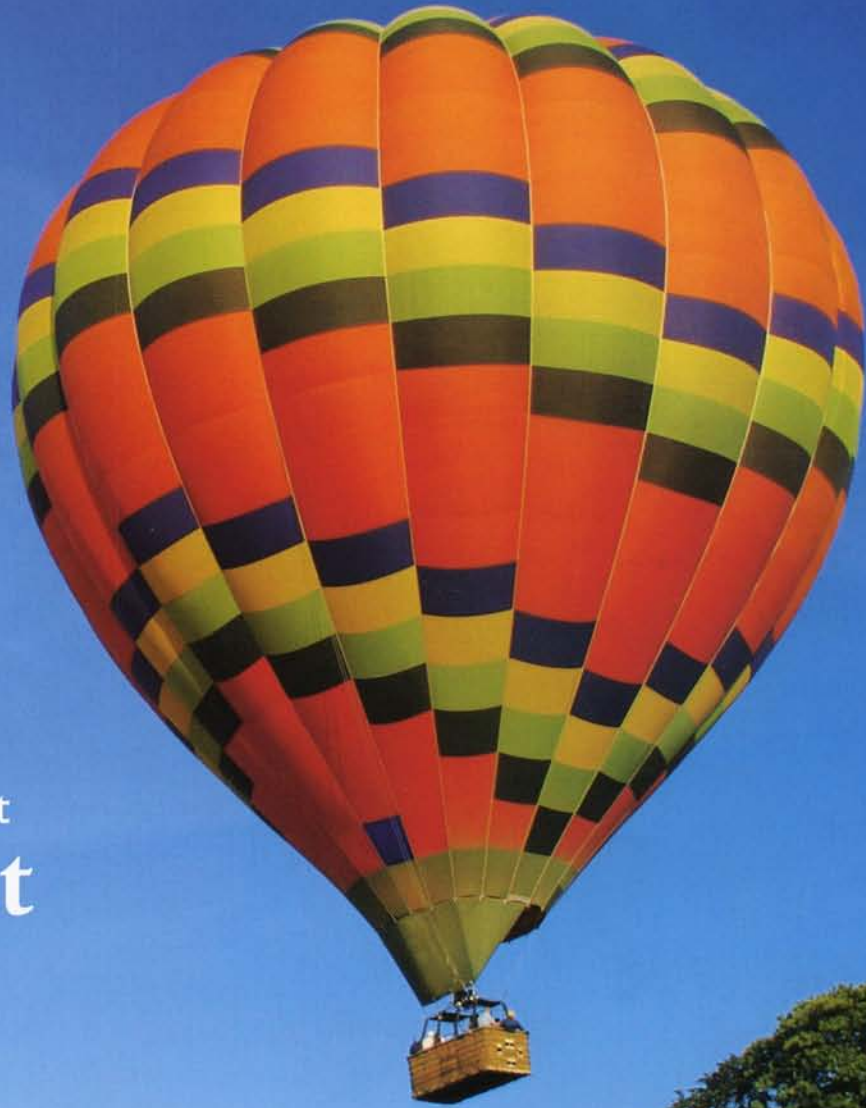
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ARCHANT



Sit back and relax

Spa days have come along way since the "health farm" image of years gone by. Susie Perry explores two of the latest options – one in the east and another in the west of the county

AROUND 10-15 years ago a Spa was a place that you visited if you were suffering from a debilitating illness, needed to purge your body or wanted to experience a radical and extreme way to boost your immune system. You would be checked in, stripped of all luxuries, placed on a fat, sugar, caffeine, alcohol and meat free diet and exposed to hot and cold plunge pools.

Over the last five years there has been a global explosion of a new kind of spa, the "Hotel and Spa". Thankfully these establishments seem to take the idea of a luxury break much more seriously. There you can let this pampering experience gently soothe your busy mind and tired body. There are no dietary rules, you can enjoy healthy foods or dine on fine food and wine. You can float away in a bubbling spa pool, pursue a few laps in the heated pool and then enjoy hours or even days of top-to-toe pampering with signature body treatments.

And the good news is you don't have to travel outside of Sussex to take part.

Bailiffscourt Hotel and Spa, Climping, West Sussex

Setting the scene

You don't get more English than Bailiffscourt Hotel. Inside stone buildings the hotel is full of low ceilings, open fireplaces and nooks and crannies. Twisted corridors lead you through a maze of lounges to the restaurant and out to a medieval courtyard. Vases of fresh flowers cut from the traditional country flower garden lift every room and floral print curtains and tapestry furniture and wall hangings transport you to 'Olde England'.

When we arrived we enjoyed tea, served in a silver teapot with hot-from-the-oven shortcake biscuits in one of four delightfully cosy hotel lounges. Once relaxed and refreshed from our (very short journey!) we were then taken across to the Spa, a beautifully converted barn.

One of the wonders of Bailiffscourt is that it boasts an indoor and outdoor heated pool both with spa pools. We enjoyed a leisurely dip and then returned to the hotel restaurant for lunch. Figs and

palma ham, fresh seafood pasta and exotic fruit salad with homemade ice-cream I remember to be our favourites.

Pampering

After lunch it was back to the Spa for nearly three hours of treatments of Quench and Drench Facial and Vespers Drift Away Massage. The thing about Bailiffscourt is that every attention to detail has been considered, right down to the massage couch. Each couch has an amazing heated water pad that you lie on so your body is properly supported and warmed throughout your treatments. This was the most comfortable massage I had ever experienced.

Products

All the treatments use Temple Spa products, another Sussex based company who pride themselves in using a combination of natural ingredients with cutting edge cosmetic science. I loved their Power Breakfast scrub and mask and my Mum enjoyed her Windows of the Soul Eye treatment.



The staff appeared to be genuinely happy and have been with the hotel for years. I realised this makes a huge difference to the quality of treatment you get and your whole relaxation experience. Watching my mum smiling away as she enjoyed the outdoor hot tub surrounded by steam and bubbles, truly relaxed.

Cost

Day packages start at £170 or book £150 of treatments which entitles you to spend the day at the spa, but add on £20 for lunch.

Contact Details Tel - 01903 723511
www.hshotels.co.uk

Alexandra House Hotel and Spa, Turners Hill, East Sussex

Setting the scene

Turn off the M23 and start to unwind as you drive through rolling hills before entering into the Ashdown Forrest. Turn into the grand drive and park up next to the impressive hotel building. Before you have time to say "we're here" your car door will be opened and you will be greeted by the hotel staff and whisked away to your room while someone else struggles with your baggage.

The Utopia Spa is located in a brand new extension off the original hotel building. There is an elegant, contemporary feel which indulges in

opulence with large print modern wallpapers in dark charcoals, rich reds and chocolate browns. Luxury tactile fabrics drape windows, walls and cover cushions on velvet seats in the hotel rooms and spa reception areas. There is a no-expense-spared feel about this new addition to the hotel.

Once dressed in your white robe you are free to descend to the basement pool area, which is not for the claustrophobic. This area is in the grand ancient Romanesque style which might make you feel like you should swap your robe for a toga. When you are ready for a meal you can either get dressed and visit the hotels A la Carte Restaurant or remain in your robe and eat at the brasserie style 'Reflections' courtyard restaurant.

I took my hubby along to this one and we ate in the hotel restaurant in the evening – it was like stepping back in time. You leave the spa and cross the corridor with water fountains and bird cages into traditional England for a pre-dinner drink in the very respectable hotel lounge before being shown to your table. Fantastic food which flirts with Nouvelle Cuisine.

Pampering

After a healthy breakfast in bed we got back into our robes and went down to the spa for our treatments. I had a facial and my hubby enjoyed a Japanese Hot Oil massage. It was a beautiful day and we relaxed on the outdoor terrace

which overlooked a newly planted and designed Spa Garden with central outdoor spa hot tub.

Products

Utopia Spa has its own range of products which many of the treatments use. I loved their Indulgent Chocolate Orange Body Cream which smells delicious. Also on offer are Guinot treatments.

Although it's difficult to get past the fact that everything is so new and doesn't have that settled down lived in feel, I did find that I was strangely teleported from the UK to Italy whilst staying at the Utopia Spa. There was something about the smell of the pine trees in the spa garden combined with all the pillars and the gnarly olive tree in the middle of the courtyard brasserie which made me feel like I was truly away not just from home but the UK. Maybe I was just getting carried away because the sun was shining.

Special Memory

Admiring a truly magnificent male peacock strut his stuff in the garden, whilst relaxing next to a water fountain waiting for my hubby to emerge from his massage.

Cost

One Night Spa Escapes start at £185 and include a facial or a massage.

Contact Details

Tel - 01342 714914

www.alexanderhotels.co.uk