

Country living at Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire

Louise Alexander-O'Loughlin heads off on another great escape to Four Seasons Hotel in Hampshire.

This month the mission assigned to me was to locate a luxurious hotel with a 'home from home' feel, no more than an hour from Surrey and set in the countryside. The chosen venue would equally cater for corporate events, families, couples seeking out a romantic interlude, or singletons just wishing to escape reality for a short while.

After much research, I picked Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire.

After travelling only forty minutes from Weybridge, I arrived at the restored Georgian manor house, its grand frontage seamlessly blending into the English countryside and its décor combining a tremendously old-fashioned, welcoming feel with twenty first century modernity.

I was greeted at the lobby by the hotel's resident dog, Oliver Beckington, a docile black Labrador that I wasn't expecting. Oliver represents the hotel's

continual commitment to being a dog-friendly destination and, I swear, this dog had so much presence that if he could talk, he'd be running the place. Four Seasons Hotel maintains that pets are part of a family and, for many, a holiday or a visit to the countryside isn't complete without them. The hotel also offers a range of dog-friendly activities as well as dog-sitting services. Don't get me wrong – it's certainly no dog hotel, you wouldn't even know there were any dogs around, apart from Oliver of course. I didn't hear one bark the entire time I was there, and apparently there were quite a few dogs in residence!

The hotel had allocated me the Grand Manor bedroom situated in the main manor house, up an impressive wooden staircase on the top floor. My stunning corner bedroom afforded panoramic views overlooking the grounds. There was a separate wardrobe area, a beautiful marble bathroom with →



Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire





Vitality pool

a standalone bathtub, separate shower and toilet, plush, white, fluffy towels and bathrobes and Asprey amenities.

The estate is set in 500 acres and, upon looking out of my window, I could see nothing but stunning countryside and the Equestrian Centre, which caters for all abilities from four years and above, whether it be for a hack or lessons.

Furthermore, children can also care for their very own pony for the day.

After I had unpacked I decided to investigate this picturesque haven. The weather was superb and I walked around the side of the hotel to the walled garden, where the smell of freshly cut grass and the beautiful aroma of flowers were intense. The garden had a very romantic feel and, unsurprisingly, hosts many wedding ceremonies and marriage proposals within its walls. I then headed along 'lavender walk', which led to the tennis courts: two all-weather courts that can be used by non-residents too. It was all so peaceful, notwithstanding a

couple of residents whizzing by on bikes they'd hired from the hotel, clearly heading out on their own expedition.

Set away from lavender walk was something I can only describe as a set from the Alice in Wonderland film: I walked through a wrought iron gate and there within the hotel's original heritage listed garden sat a perfectly manicured croquet lawn.

I then spotted a very large vegetable patch used by the hotel's chefs to create their in-house culinary delights, and adjacent was a herb garden where spa therapists pick fresh herbs to blend bespoke treatment oils.

Although the hotel caters for families, there didn't seem to be any noise level reflecting the presence of small people. The peace and quiet was possibly due to the careful construction of the hotel, with its wings that accommodate a spa area, a favourite for hotel guests and non-residents alike.

Located in a picturesque eighteenth century stable block, the

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spa can be reached through a glass walkway. This 27,000ft² space provides an ideal setting in which to relax, revive and re-energise with fifteen treatment rooms all spacious and elegant in design. Also on offer are fitness classes, a twenty metre, conservatory-style swimming pool



with outdoor vitality pool and sauna and steam rooms.

Whilst on my walk I also discovered two lakes where one could fish for pike, trout and rainbow carp. The lakes operate on a catch-and-release basis throughout the year and the hotel supplies fisherfolk with all that's needed: fishing rod, jacket and wellington boots, as well as tuition if required.

It was so peaceful by the lake. I really enjoyed sitting there and pondering life, but there were also signs of clay pigeon shells. Was there anything this hotel didn't offer? Clay pigeon shooting also takes place on the estate and clays are released from five different platforms. Suffice to say it was located on the opposite

side of the hotel, away from the children's play park!

So, after a long day exploring, time for bed. The hotel offers a 'Signature Sleep Amenity', made from fresh chamomile and lavender. All you have to do is dial '0' to customise your sleep experience and you can opt for pillow mist, a warm wheat cushion, ear plugs and eye mask and even a white noise playlist! Well, that was it...La La Land awaited... I have to say I enjoyed the best night's sleep in a long time.

One thing I will definitely do on my return is to visit the Basingstoke Canal that runs through the hotel's estate. Guests can hire a luxurious, 56ft-long canal boat, so couples can

enjoy an intimate, candlelit cruise, complete with a log-burning stove, or for a family, a picnic can be ordered through the concierge. The vessel can take up to a maximum of 20 people, making it ideal for throwing a small cocktail and canapé reception.

I'm not sure whether I'm allowed to share this bit of exciting news, but the hotel is in the process of constructing a dual-course 'High Wire Adventure' facility for adults and children with a head for heights. I'll keep you posted on that...

With such an abundance of features it's clear to see that Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire really does fulfill the needs of every one of its guests. I had a fantastic stay there, and would definitely recommend this haven of many delights. ●

essence info

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