



THE GREAT BRITISH SEASIDE

Roger Wheeler checks out hotels and B&Bs in Brighton

Not so many years ago holidays at home meant a trip to the seaside. The whole thing has a nostalgic ring to it; were things better in the 'old days'? They were certainly different but better is debateable. Tastes have changed – today's B&B is now a boutique experience. Gone are the nylon sheets and slightly dour landladies, now we have high-quality cotton bedlinen, dozens of pillows and cushions, free-standing baths at the end of the bed, expensive 'free' bath products, walk-in rain showers and all manner of activities, Wii, free wifi, flatscreen TVs and Game Boys in every room (well, they were always available!).



AWAKENING THE SPIRIT OF BRIGHTON

Brighton has always been known as the 'queen of the British seaside', but those of us lucky enough to actually live here really don't know much about the place – particularly the revolution in accommodation. Rex Whistler's painting *HRH The Prince Regent Awakening The Spirit Of Brighton* hangs in the Brighton Museum. Painted in 1944, it is very relevant to today as the city rediscovers its spirit.

Brighton has a reputation of being overpriced, particularly its hotels and restaurants. With fish and chips being given a gourmet twist by celebrity chefs, and expensive chain hotels charging more than £300 for rooms most people would keep their proverbial brooms in, there is a good case for that point of view. However, there are many friendly small hotels and guesthouses offering good value for money. There are 14 gay and gay-friendly hotels in the city (possibly there are more – apologies to any I have missed). Most are officially guesthouses, but with elegance in abundance.

Two of them have five-star ratings from VisitBritain, the national tourist website; they are the **Kemp Townhouse** in Atlingworth Street (www.kemptownhousebrighton.com) and **The Claremont** (www.theclaremont.eu) in Second Avenue, Hove. Their prices reflect the exceptionally high quality of the facilities and they are gay-owned and run although, along with all the rest, they are also straight-friendly. To put it simply, the accommodation in both these establishments is stunning and, given the budget, well worth it. Kemp Townhouse in particular has taken chic to the highest possible level, with proprietors Claas and Russell sparing nothing to offer luxury that Brighton may not be used to.

Coming very slightly down the price range, there are no fewer than ten around the New Steine and Upper Rock Gardens area. In New Steine itself there is the **Ambassador** (www.ambassadorbrighton.co.uk) which has a very good reputation. **Gulliver's Hotel** (www.gullivershotel.com) and the **New Steine Hotel** (www.newsteinehotel.com) are linked hotels with reviews ranging from smart, excellent and reasonably priced. The **Sea Spray** (www.seaspraybrighton.co.uk), also in New Steine, is as good as it gets for women. They offering a B&B plus dinner package, linking into a local restaurant and offering an exceptionally good deal.

Upper Rock Gardens has the wonderful **Cavalaire Hotel** (www.cavalaire.co.uk), with owners Garry and Derek providing some of the most outstanding service around. In fact they



AVALON

get the Oscar for being the best in my book. Also in Upper Rock Gardens there is the **Avalon** (www.avalonbrighton.co.uk), **Colson House** (www.colsonhouse.co.uk) and **Cowards Guest House** (www.cowardsbrighton.co.uk), each rated first class and great value. **The Kelvin** (www.thekelvin.co.uk) in Madeira Place and **Boyd's** in St James's Avenue both offer high-class accommodation at very reasonable prices and share the same owner. **Hudson's** in Devonshire Pl. (www.hudsonsinbrighton.co.uk) gets rave reviews for its rooms and reasonable costs.

This just leaves three that can't be ignored: **Legends** (www.legendsbrighton.com), the **Amsterdam** (www.amsterdam.uk.com) and **Hotel Pelirocco** (www.hotelpelirocco.co.uk). The Pelirocco in Regency Square must be seen to be believed; it's what Brighton is all about – sexy, quirky, a little faded but fun. It's linked to the **She Said** erotic boutique, which offers just about everything you could want for a playful time. Not everyone's cup of tea but it is busy. **Legends** and **The Amsterdam**



AMSTERDAM



LEGENDS

are Brighton institutions, located on the seafront and catering for all tastes, shapes and sizes. Both have recently had complete makeovers and offer excellent facilities and exceptional value for money.

All these hotels have their own websites but they only tell half the story. When friends call to ask you to recommend a local B&B these are just some suggestions. One important rule: always ask for the best deal available.



NEW STEINE HOTEL