



Roaming around Brighton's boutique hotels

Roger Wheeler - *The roaming pen...*

How often have you been asked by friends and family to recommend a local hotel? Invariably I have to say no as I live here and don't need to stay in a hotel. Where would you recommend? What about the new 'boutique' hotels that are springing up all over town. Sparing no shoe leather I decided to investigate..

A boutique technically means small, individual, stylish and independent, when applied to a hotel, it should mean all of that plus a little extra, personal service maybe, friendly and informal perhaps. I wrote to a random selection of 18, there are about 30, only six had to courtesy to reply, the others obviously didn't want to be mentioned in this magazine. The Hotel du Vin's London based PR agency particularly asked NOT to be included; they don't want the likes of us spending our money there, so we won't.

There are only two five star B&B establishments, The Claremont in Second Avenue, Hove and Kemp Townhouse in Atlingworth Street. Your intrepid reporter visited both and was most impressed; these are the best of the bunch by miles and have the necessary wow factor.

The Claremont is in one of those lovely Victorian houses that Hove is famous for; they have 11 rooms, four poster beds and lovely bathrooms. The rooms are large and spacious with easy chairs and obviously comfortable beds – no I didn't try, but they looked very inviting. They have meeting rooms and a large garden they are licensed for

weddings and civil partnerships and in my book a great venue. The Claremont is a real success story. Kemp Townhouse, this is the very latest and possibly the best. Claas and his partner Russell took over this run down guest house in Atlingworth Street, Kemp Town and have transformed it. They must have spent a fortune on their nine rooms; this is luxury with a capital L, it is a completely new

breed of small hotel. They only opened their doors in June 2008 and are busy, they deserve to be. The welcome was warm and professional; the public room was very smart and comfortable. The rooms are stunning and the amazing bathrooms worth the money alone, I'm moving in. The Brighton House, in Regency Square is a

delightfully old fashioned guest house with no pretensions to be a boutique hotel. Run by a charming Dutch couple, they bought the 16 room hotel in 2004 and have renovated it to a very high standard. The breakfast menu is very impressive, you wouldn't want lunch. The rooms are all beautiful – I'm fast running out of superlatives in the article – I'd be happy to stay in any of them and again they are also busy. Bookings are good and they seem very confident in the future.

I can't really recommend any of these in particular, they are all excellent, the average room rate is



between £70 and £140 depending on day of the week. They all have websites so you can get a good idea of what is on offer. Next month I will tell you about some more small hotels, we need to know what is on offer in Brighton.

Get in the swim

Don't forget that if you happen to have reached 60 from 1st April you can swim in The Prince Regent,

The King Alfred or St Luke's Pool for FREE, yes absolutely for nothing. You will need to get a registration card from one of the pools and then jump in!!

Bus Passes and National Express

Several readers have asked me for reassurance that they can use their Bus Pass on National Express Coaches – yes you

can - just hop on and show your pass to the driver.

Details are on my website –

www.theroamingpen.co.uk

The 10% discount on Advance fares is back until the end of July with National Express East Coast – it's a TRAIN operator just to confuse us. They are about the cheapest for all rail travel. All you need to do is book online at nationalexpresseastcoast.com. Just click on the lowest fare finder which helps you find the very best deal on return fares.

Take it easy and enjoy yourself.



Grumpy old git, Gary

Ginger whinger

Having just had my 57th birthday last month it occurred to me, in a reflective moment, that as I've got older my life has been one long triumph of disappointing reality over what I believed when I was younger.

To Explain; I was a child long before the age of the personal computer, internet etc and was thus bought up on a diet of comics.

I took them all. Not just the tabloids 'The Beano, The Dandy' but also the broadsheets 'The Beezer, The Topper.'

Obviously, then, you'll understand that the 'numbskulls' led me to believe that I had a workforce of little tiny men toiling away inside my head. They were manifestly not union members. They worked all hours of the day, peering through telescopes so I could see where I was going, etc. Every time I ate, a couple of titchy labourers in my mouth shovelled it all down a trapdoor to be dealt with by, presumably, a gang of unskilled lascars with no interest in their job who didn't care if their little pick-axes penetrated my stomach-lining, and yet as a benevolent, even patriarchal employer (if you can be that at the age of nine) I couldn't bring myself to sack them. They were, after all, part of me.

Of course, I got a bit older, gave up these childish ideas and took a more adult approach to life. What I had to do was foil evil and villainy in all its forms. What I needed was six regiments of little mechanical men built for me by my scientist father so that I (general jumbo) could control them all via a

contraption on my wrist that had four buttons and an aerial.

This did not happen, mainly because of my mother's lack of foresight in not marrying a scientific engineering genius.

Likewise, nowhere near where I lived (Moulescoombe) could I find a child gang led by a little chap in a miniature top-hat and tails, so it didn't look as if I was going to be one of Lord Snooty's pals any time soon.

So much for dreams of spending my days involved in japes and wheezes, followed of course, by tucking into a bumper feast.

Naturally, as I moved on in my reading to comics like 'Victor' and 'Valiant' my ambitions changed.

I was going to be an Olympic-class runner.

How could I fail? I knew what to do. I had read 'Alf Tupper. (The tough of the track.)'

I had first to join an athletics club where every one but me was an upper- middle-class twat, and call them all 'mate.'

I had to be the scruffiest person there. Easy, that bit. Most importantly, I had to live on a diet of fish and chips; eaten out of old newspapers, obviously.

Evidently, in practice this doesn't actually work.

So yet another failure.

I must say that although all these discoveries were a bit depressing at the time, as an adult it's made me far more realistic about things.

You've got to be fairly level-headed to become a Power Ranger.

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