

Hotel Review

Four Season's Hotel Hampshire

Opened on 14th February 2005, the Four Season's Hotel is one of the best hotels I have stayed in for many different reasons, but mainly due to the freshness, cleanliness, fantastic staff, atmospheric bar, excellent food and beautifully decorated rooms throughout the hotel.

The long sweeping drive leads to the dominating 18th century manor house in Dogmersfield Park, which was originally named 'Docce mere feld' in Saxon times, '- a field by the water lily lake'. The original manor and

Seasons Restaurant



Four Season's Hotel

the village are mentioned in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book of 1086, and the area is steeped in history.

In 1501 Henry VII visited with Prince Arthur to meet his future wife, Catherine of Aragon, and after the death of Prince Arthur his brother was crowned Henry VIII and made Catherine the first of his six wives.

In 1547 the house became a private estate when Edward VI gave the house to Lord Wriothesely whose family owned it for 100 years. It then passed through several families, and during World War II, Dogmersfield Park was used to billet Dutch and Polish airmen. Following the war the estate became Reed's School for girls, who were awarded bursaries to attend this high standard of grammar boarding school, in honour of their fathers who were killed during the war. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's the manor was a house of formation for Catholic Brothers, and in the 1970's Daneshill Preparatory school for girls and boys occupied the site until it was sold in 1979.

In August 1981 a fire gutted three quarters of the house. The only remains were the manor house and the ruin that can be seen in the courtyard by the glass link.

Early in 2001, the Four Seasons Hampshire project began, the Hotel's South and West Wings were built, and the stable block was creatively and sympathetically restored into The Spa.

The hotel has done a great job in keeping details from its 1000 year history and has carefully and seamlessly woven them into the 21st century, while providing a smart, modern and comfortable venue for you and your family to enjoy.

The walls and carpets are all light in colour and are immaculate, and there is a sense of freshness and cleanliness throughout the hotel. Everything about The Four Season's oozes class. Orchids adorn the public areas along with flower filled glass bowls that are beautiful.

The reception area is a dark wood area,

where the staff are welcoming and they even provide a toy box to entertain the little ones whilst you are checking in or out. The Spa is beautifully appointed. The changing rooms are luxurious and are replete with gowns and sandals to wear whilst relaxing in the Spa. The changing rooms are clean, airy and have all the facilities you need if you have already checked out of the hotel but are spending the afternoon there. In the ladies changing area there is a heat area and a special tropical shower which has three water jets at neck, stomach and knee height (if you are about 5 ft 7!).

The hotel has a good sized indoor swimming pool, with adult only swimming times. From the pool you can swim through to the outdoor jacuzzi area that has several different water jets to ease your aches and pains.

The treatment areas of the spa are very sumptuous, with ESPA products on display in cabinets and a large range of treatments to choose from.

I was offered the Camomile and Sage Massage which started with hot towels being rubbed over the body, followed by a fabulous massage that included my hands and feet (I can believe that reflexology has some substance now!). All your senses are stimulated throughout this massage. Firstly your visual sense with a choice of lights – blue for relaxation, green for balance and red for vitality, then your sense of smell with an infusion of camomile and then your aural senses with relaxing music. Coupled with that the masseur also used just the right amount of pressure throughout the massage.

There are two outdoor tennis courts where you can borrow tennis rackets and tennis balls, and water and sun tan lotion are also available. In fact the attention to detail to make your stay comfortable is second to none. There are bottles of water throughout the hotel, and the staff can't do enough for you. So much so that a lady from the spa came all the way to the courts to tell us that there had been a cancellation of the tennis court we were on so that if we wanted to continue playing we could do so.



Wrought iron gate – entrance to Walled Garden



Conservatory swimming pool

The hotel can also arrange horse riding, golf and clay pigeon shooting for the more adventurous.

Both the bar and restaurant are found at the bottom of a sweeping white marble staircase, which I thought was stunning.

Bar 1086 (remember the doomsday connection) is a great venue to enjoy an apéritif or coffee and petit fours following dinner. It is designed in an art deco style that oozes class and sophistication. There is a fire which enhances the very friendly, buzzy and warm atmosphere. Everyone looked thoroughly relaxed and although most people had dressed up for dinner, the ambience is so relaxed that some diners had dressed more casually in jeans.

Dining is always an important part of staying in a hotel, and the main restaurant – Seasons – is very versatile. In the evening it is a romantic, seductively lit restaurant, and in the morning it is transformed in to a light and airy

restaurant for breakfast and lunch. It is smart, modern, chic and has a great atmosphere, as does the bar.

Dinner in Seasons restaurant is a great dining experience. You can choose from the set menu or the À la carte menu.

We chose from the À la carte, and we started with the Foie Gras Terrine with English rhubarb, ginger scented brioche, the Spring Pea Soup, Morel Mushroom, Coconut froth. Both were beautifully presented and were beautifully seasoned. For our mains we chose the Wild Mushroom Risotto, spring vegetables, black truffle, Parmesan froth which we both thoroughly enjoyed, as did we the Grilled Fillet of Casterbridge beef, braised beef croquette, pickled red onion compote, broad beans, smoked potato mousseline. We followed these dishes with some fabulous cheeses and then the Chocolate, walnut and banana financier, banana baked in caramel jelly, cocoa

ribbons. All the dishes were well balanced and immaculately presented with starters costing from £11.00 whilst the mains starting from £21.00. The Menu du jour costs £49 for three courses followed by tea and coffee.

The Four Seasons pride themselves on sourcing local produce, and on Sundays have their Market brunch where you can choose from local seafood, salads, meats, vegetables and cheeses and you also get a complimentary glass of pink sparkling wine from a vineyard in Kent. The wine was so palatable that I am going to contact the vineyard direct to see if I can purchase a case of it.

The waiting staff and restaurant manager are superb, and we were invited to meet the Head Chef which was an honour in itself.

The bedrooms feel more spacious due to the high ceilings and the light walls and curtains. Everything is on a grand scale, the curtains were long and thick, the bed was incredibly comfortable. The bathroom is beautifully tiled and has a stand alone bath as well as a separate power shower, and the products are from Asprey's. We had cakes and jams in our room on arrival which were delicious, the tea and coffee facilities were great, with fresh milk being left in the fridge and a beautiful china teapot with matching cups, flat screen TV, DVD player and safe. The turndown service was very impressive, with again a lot of attention to detail and we were also left some little biscuits.

Children are extremely well catered for. At the Sunday brunch there are comics for them to take in to the restaurant, there are children's bikes for them to borrow, several children's channels on the television and large areas of land for them to play in.

All in all The Four Seasons is a top class hotel, that is suitable for romantic breaks, family breaks or long weekends, and we hope to return very soon. ■

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Grand Manor Room bedroom

