



STUNNING: The Lakeside Hotel overlooks the glorious southern shores of Lake Windermere

Quackings trip to a winter lakes

THE reaction was always the same when I told friends we were off to the Lakes.

“In winter?” they’d ask incredulously, before the inevitable jokes about thermal underwear.

Well yes, in winter. After all, the high season crowds haven’t yet hit, the weather can be pin-sharp and glorious and there’s nowhere better to blow off those seasonal blues.

Of course it helps if you’re staying somewhere like the Lakeside Hotel, a luxury hideaway on the southern shores of Lake Windermere.

Originally a 17th century coaching house, the hotel has adapted over the years to offer country-house style four star accommodation complete with top notch restaurant, fabulous spa and the sort of log fires you see in magazines.

But don’t be put off by that country house tag.

This isn’t one of those places that make you feel uncomfortable. It’s elegant and sumptuously decorated but friendly with staff who go out of their way to ensure a home from home feel.

Crucially, they like kids so mum and dad can enjoy being pampered in the knowledge that the children will be made as welcome as they are.

We arrived late one Friday and, despite being busy, the porter helping us with the bags took the time to show us the constellations of the night stars, spread out like diamonds across the winter sky.

And when he realised the 10-year-old’s teddy had come too, he gave him pride of place on the luggage trolley. Both nice

An out of season break is ideal to blow away the winter blues finds **Susan Lee**

touches that said more than any glossy brochure could.

We stayed in a family suite which featured a big main living area, a vast double bed, squashy sofa and tv with a second smaller bedroom off to one side containing bunk beds.

Our immaculate bathroom came with fluffy towels, superb hot shower and a yellow rubber duck who we Christened Donald – more of which later.

We managed a quick drink at the bar, all wood panelling and with the original cobbled floor cleverly revealed, before retiring to crisp Egyptian cotton sheets and an early night.

“So where’s the lake?” demanded my daughter as we set off to breakfast the next morning. Her answer came as we descended the sweeping staircase and looked out of a huge window directly onto Windermere, glazed with ice and breathtakingly beautiful.

We couldn’t have been any nearer the water if we tried and after a spectacular breakfast – Cumberland sausage, what else? – we strolled out into the gardens and onto the hotel’s jetty to take in the stunning view.

The hotel’s location isn’t ideal just because of the natural surroundings, though. A stone’s throw away is the Lakes Aquarium – an ideal afternoon out if the weather turns.

Windermere lake cruises also depart from directly outside the

READERS’ OFFER

LAKESIDE Hotel, Newby Bridge, Cumbria.
www.lakesidehotel.co.uk
tel: 015395 30001.

The Lakeside Hotel has teamed up with the **Liverpool ECHO** to offer exclusive online discounts available to **ECHO** readers.

Rooms are available from **£75 per person, per night to include bed and full English breakfast. Usual room rate £135pp per night.**

Enter www.lakesidehotel.co.uk/echo and follow the instructions on the page to book your room.

hotel which means you can visit Bowness and Waterhead, near Ambleside without having to get into your car.

If train travel is your thing you’re in luck too – again just a minute from reception you can catch a steam train courtesy of the Lakeside and Haverthwaite railway or if you prefer to take to two wheels there’s bike hire.

We set off on foot for Gummer’s How, a famous viewpoint opposite the hotel which although just 1,000ft in height commands marvellous views in every direction from the length of the lake over to Morecambe Bay and the Pennines.

Even the kids, never entirely convinced of the merits of a bracing walk unless there’s an ice cream at the end of it, were impressed.

Back at the hotel we relaxed, sore muscles in the spa, and checking out both the sauna and

steam rooms, jacuzzi and the pool before taking coffee in the conservatory and feasting our eyes on a Lakeland winter sunset.

There are a number of dining options at the Lakeside, from the light and contemporary Ruskin Brasserie to the more formal two AA Rosette Lakeview. We chose to make an occasion of it in the latter and weren’t disappointed with a menu inspired by local ingredients and which offered both the different – I had cauliflower risotto – alongside more familiar dishes such as venison or sirloin steak.

It was one of the best meals I’ve had and again the staff were at pains to include the children in what was a fine dining experience, explaining dishes and making sure everyone was happy with their choice.

And to finish? Tea from a silver teapot in front of a log fire in the snug.

The next morning we understood why we had been given Donald as guests were invited to take part in the morning ritual of feeding his real life chums who come waddling ashore at 11am each day secure in the knowledge of a guaranteed meal.

There was just time to look around nearby Newby Bridge and a stroll alongside the River Leven – the five arched stone bridge that gives the village its name passes over it – before we had to leave.

“Can we bring Donald home with us?” asked the 10-year-old, I enquired at the hotel reception to be told he was ours – a little memento of our stay.

Something tells me we’ll be back to reunite him with his feathered friends soon.

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