

travel

THE Lake District undoubtedly offers some of the most beautiful, awe-inspiring scenery in the country.

Unfortunately what it cannot guarantee is good weather.

A previous visit during an unseasonably warm spring had given us a false sense of the usual Cumbrian climate.

For a return to the Lakes a few months earlier in the year brought with it slightly less blue sky and sunshine. However, even in the mist those surroundings were still impressive. On arrival at the Lakeside Hotel, at the very Southern tip of Lake Windermere, we peered out at Gummer's How. The peak is directly across the lake opposite the hotel, but on this afternoon the top was swathed in low cloud.

Though it wasn't quite the weather we'd hoped for, the atmospheric scene was straight out of a painting from one of the artists who so loved this part of the world.

It's easy to see why. The Lakes are an easy, pleasant drive from West Yorkshire but offer totally different landscapes.

And while some of the towns are very popular with visitors, there are still always miles of undiscovered areas to find.

Our hotel, it turned out, was a landmark to many Lake District aficionados. Mention the Lakeside and most said 'oh yes, the white one right on the lake'.

Indeed it is, a picturesque white building literally on the water's edge – with the appropriate slogan 'we overlook nothing but the lake'. Officially in the village of Newby Bridge, the Lakeside is easy to find and even easier to enjoy. Originally a 17th century coaching inn, the four-star hotel has gone through several changes to become the luxury retreat it is today. In contrast to the vast majority of

Room with a view

A break in the Lakes promises gorgeous scenery, delicious food and unrivalled relaxation, as **Katie Baldwin** found out



WATER'S EDGE:
Lakeside garden

sizeable hotels, Lakeside is privately owned. In fact one of its two owners can often be seen dining in the restaurant and generally making his presence known among the staff and guests – we were lucky enough to chat to him one night.

He is said to expect nothing but the

highest standards in his hotel and staff often visit other top quality hotels to see how they do things.

That dedication has certainly paid off. Absolutely everyone in the place, without exception, greeted us as we passed and often struck up conversations. These weren't the 'have

a nice day' American-style comments but showed genuine interest in the guests and their lives.

The friendliness was also perfectly pitched, so our afternoon sojourns in the hotel's conservatory could pass peacefully if we wanted. Oh, that conservatory. Surrounding

the front of the building, it offered a gorgeous setting in which to read a paper, enjoy afternoon tea or simply look out past the boat moorings onto the lake outside.

Even better, it protected from that unpredictable weather while still enabling us to take in the scenery. This was just one of the places in Lakeside to simply sit and relax. A more formal library offered a perfect location for after-dinner coffee, while there is also a panelled bar with part-cobbled floor, a leftover from the buildings days as a coaching inn. In addition there are an array of bar areas and a funky private dining space. Our bedroom, one of 75 in the hotel which are all individually decorated, also afforded great views over the lake. The comfortable room was equipped to enjoy them with two armchairs and a table positioned in the bay window. Luckily we managed to tear ourselves away for dinner.

In the formal 2 AA rosette Lakeview Restaurant the chefs aim to create the one of the best dining experiences in the Lake District – and they succeed. We enjoyed starters of braised belly pork and scallops, pea puree and pancetta followed by salmon with spinach and capers and steak and chips.

Dessert was truly delectable – forced rhubarb and elderflower terrine, gingerbread and vanilla brulee. Priced at £35 for two courses and £40 for three, the restaurant is a must-treat during any visit to Lakeside.

More casual is John Ruskin's Brasserie, where diners can try two starters, either together or as two

travelfacts

- Lakeside Hotel and Spa on Lake Windermere is part of Fine Individual Hotels, a collection of the very best privately owned and operated luxury hotels in the UK.
- A one night stay at Lakeside costs from £179 per room per night with breakfast.
- Spa treatments cost from £30 and include facials, body treatments, hand and foot treatments and massage therapy.
- For hotel bookings visit www.LakesideHotel.co.uk or call 01539 530001.
- A variety of short break deals are available, including special offers for weekend and midweek stays, as well as health and leisure breaks with daily spa treatments.
- Special rates are also available on specific dates in May and June, with stays from £75 per person, per night.
- Details on cruises on the lake can be found at www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk.
- More information on the Lakes Aquarium is at www.lakesaquarium.co.uk.



BEAUTIFUL SETTING: Lakeside Hotel at the very Southern tip of Lake Windermere