



Port Hotel, Eastbourne, England, UK

www.allwaystraveller.com



Eastbourne Pier

Designed to be different in Eastbourne

Eastbourne is a traditional seaside town on England's southeast coast.

The English Channel rolling onto large swathes of pebble beach and swirls around the iconic Eastbourne pier.

The Grand, Marina and Royal Parades are lined with the sea facing, Victorian era hotels that one finds in almost every English seaside resort.

Standing out among the white or seaside pastel-coloured frontages is *Port* which, in stark contrast, projects a pitch-black facade.

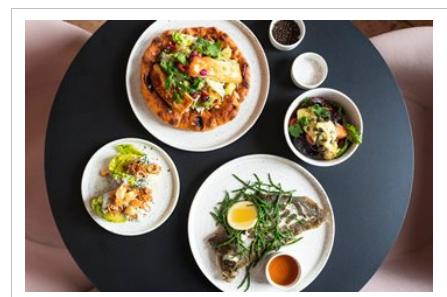
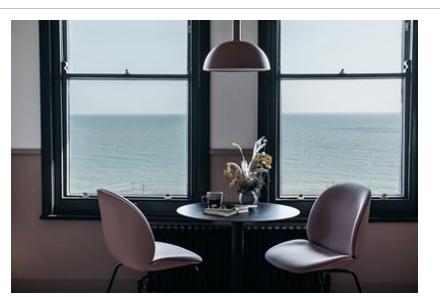
Daring to be different was always going to raise the stakes for this new boutique hotel.

It could well deter some potential guests as much as will entice others.

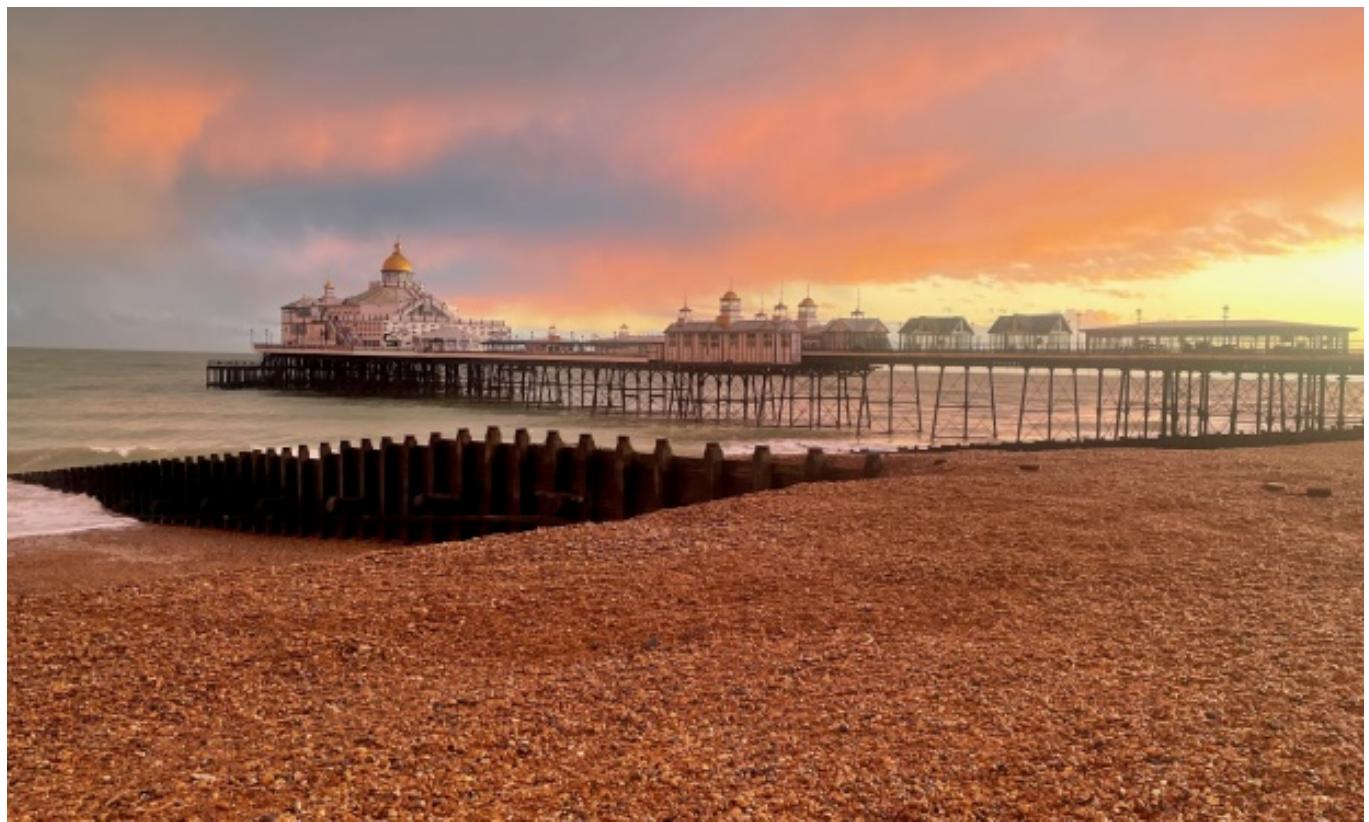
However, those looking for a short break in a hotel with a Scandinavian simplicity and a meticulous eye for design, from top to bottom, will be delighted with *Port*.

www.porthotel.co.uk
www.visiteastbourne.com

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller



Port hotel



A warming welcome in the bleak mid-winter

Who would want to visit Eastbourne in the bleak mid-winter for goodness sake?

The traditional English seaside resorts have a genuine charm all their own during the lazy, hazy crazy days of summer. But in December?

That we were here, in Eastbourne, out of season was thanks to a colleague recommending *Port* as somewhere "that's really bucking the trend in seaside accommodation".

A sense of anticipation

So there was a real a sense of anticipation pulling up outside *Port* on a truly miserable Monday morning with a gale lashing torrential rain against the hotels black facade.

Thoughts that this could be the opening scene from a horror movie, are quickly dispelled on entering *Port*'s light and inviting interior, which enjoys the ambience of an art gallery reception area.

The informal, warm welcome from the team on duty set the tone for the stay.

Ann will take you through the hotel itself (below) but, for now, I can report we taken to our room, which enjoyed a truly dramatic view of the English Channel just across the road.

The ferocity of the grey waves that barraged the beach was relentless, with the rain still sheeting down and the swirling wind buffeted those sturdy herring gulls still attempting flight.

One brave and very wet dog walker was the only person braving the elements although the dog was loving it.

A dramatic change

We were accepting that our first day would be a wash out when it all changed - within several minutes.

The dark clouds scuttled away to reveal a late afternoon sun that added a rich golden glow to the prevailing grey pallet of colours.

The change was startling, with waves now shimmering pure white as they broke foaming onto the shore.

The pier, which had been no more than a dim and dour outline in the rain, now sheened in the crisp December brightness.

The *piece de resistance* then occurred when a double rainbow formed an arc over the horizon.

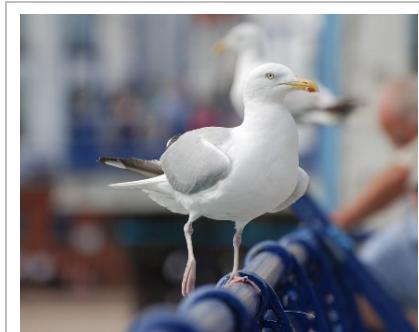
We were wrapped up and on to the beach in minutes, as was a woman photographer, tripod stanchioned in the pebbles, to create what will have been memorable images of the stunning vista nature had just created.

The question as to why Eastbourne in winter had been answered emphatically. The resort had already delivered big time.

And then, come evening, with the rain and gales returned and we enjoyed a wine in our room watching the unrelenting mighty force of the sea battering the shore.

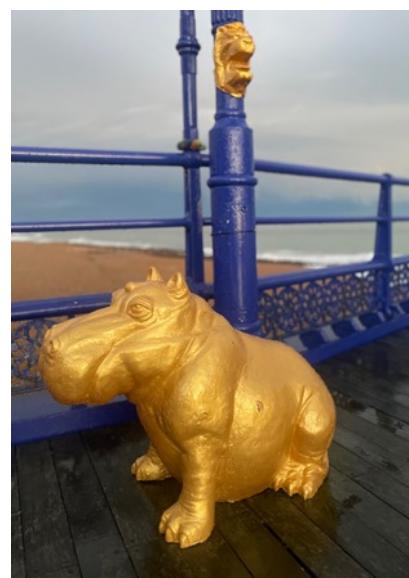
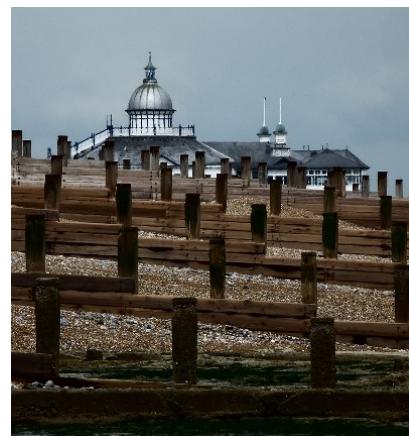
Had this been in summer we might summer we might have been disappointed.

In December it was an absolutely enthralling experience that we would not have missed, particularly being happily ensconced in *Port* for the rest of the evening.



More information

www.porthotel.co.uk
www.visiteastbourne.com



Eastbourne pier - a character all its own

Tuesday was a bright brisk winter's day.

After breakfast, and before heading to Beachy Head, we took a brisk and invigorating walk along Eastbourne promenade and out to the end of the pier.

The favoured activity for so many since the resort became a getaway destination during the 19th Century.

Eastbourne Pier has been jutting out nearly 1,000 feet into the Channel, in one form or another, since first opening in 1872.

Reading up on the structure I discovered it is built on stilts, which rest in cups on the seabed to allow the whole structure to move during rough weather.

We could clearly understand why this was a necessary design feature.

During the pier's hey-day in the 1880s, it saw theatrical and musical performances in a grand theatre at the end of the pier and socialising in two luxury salons.

This part of the pier was largely destroyed by fire in the 1970s while another blaze some 40 years later destroyed the middle section of the pier.

What was left went up for sale with the new owners first saving and then undertaking an ongoing renovation of Eastbourne Pier.

There is now a bar/restaurant and nightclub at the tower end of the pier with shops and cafes along its length.

For more than a decade, the pier hosted the town's annual Birdman competition, which saw competitors jump into the sea in home-made costumes to see who could 'fly' the furthest (spoiler alert, not very far).

More information

www.eastbournepier.com



Beachy Head, Seven Sisters and the South Downs

Our second day in Eastbourne was bright if chilly.

Just right for visiting Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters, which are both part of the Heritage Coast, an *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, and fall within the South Downs National Park.

The national park covers the chalk hills of the South Downs, including the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head, along with the western Weald, with its heavily wooded sandstone and clay hills and vales.

Beachy Head

Beachy Head, the highest chalk sea cliff in Britain, is less than a mile from Eastbourne, with a footpath linking the two.

It rises some 531 ft above sea level and has a distinctive 1902 lighthouse just off shore.

There is parking at the top, with a series of paths criss-crossing the headland and stunning views out to sea and back to Eastbourne.

Walking down the paths at Beachy Head was fine, walking back up a struggle. But oh so worth it.

The Seven Sisters

The Seven Sisters Country Park embraces 280 hectares of chalk cliffs, a meandering river valley and open chalk grassland.

Here one finds grazing sheep, rare flora and fauna and a large number of birds during the migrating season.

Parking at the National Trust visitors centre, one walks a few steps to discover the majestic 'sisters' themselves.

These are seven peaks created when ancient rivers cut valleys into the chalk and the experience of coming across them is dramatic.

One can pause here and gaze at the crashing waves and white chalk cliffs or take the walkway down to and along the pebble beach itself.

The South Downs National Park

The South Downs National Park, which was designated in 2010, is England's newest national park.

It covers some 628 sq mi from Winchester to Eastbourne and falls within the counties of Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex.

The South Downs Way national trail spans the length of the park.

In 2016 it was granted *International Dark Sky Reserve* status, making it one of the best places in the country to view the night sky.

The National Park embraces a number of globally important habitats, including lowland heath, with

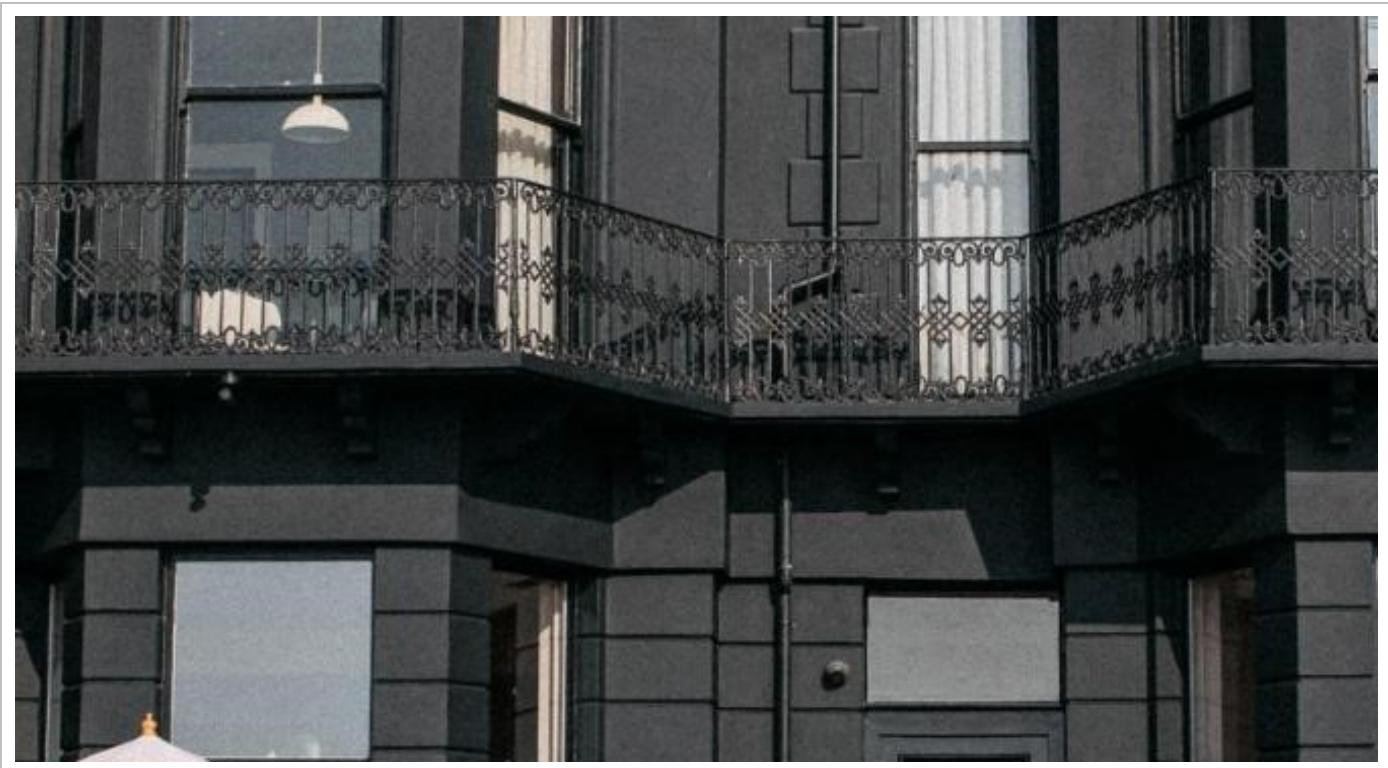
Woolmer Forest, a lowland heath site, the only place in the country to find all 12 of the UK's native amphibian and reptile species.

The very rare Adonis blue butterfly thrives in chalk grassland.



More information

www.beachyhead.org.uk
www.sevensisters.org.uk
www.southdowns.gov.uk
www.southdowns.gov.uk/our-landscape/sussex-heritage-coast



Port is a pioneer in the design led hotel experience

You can't miss Port Hotel on Eastbourne's glorious sea front.

By Ann Mealor

Boldly painted completely black, it stands out proudly like a strip of liquorice sandwiched between its candy-coloured counterparts.

A traditional Victorian townhouse on the outside, a chic, scandi-designed boutique hotel inside.

Our room was a high ceilinged, spacious studio apartment with dramatic views across the ocean to the horizon.

Decorated in earthy tones and furnished with natural wood and stone the room is in harmony with the external seascape.

A traditional roll top bath stood in the corner alongside a deep, rectangular wash basin with the most gorgeous smelling hand soap I have ever tried – Haeckels fennel and bladderwrack.

Expensive, I was told, but divine!

Very good during a pandemic as it made hand washing a treat for the senses in every way.

The toiletries were all full size, eco-friendly and made from naturally based products.

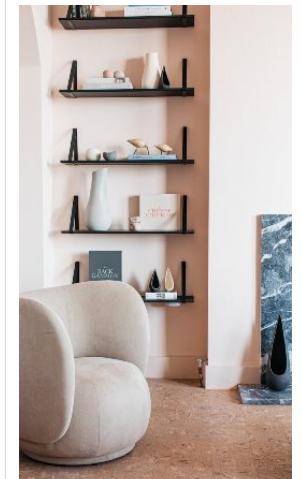
The hair dryer was the most high-tech I have come across in a hotel, and there were other welcome touches such as a pair of binoculars to make the most of the sea views, an eye mask and ear plugs.

The retro style record player with a selection of vinyl LPs! was particularly noteworthy.

It was fun remembering how to use the turntable, but eventually the dulcet tones of Barbara Streisand echoed around our Nordic-styled room.

The weather was wild, so we decided to sit in the safety and comfort of our tall window bay, enjoy a glass of chilled wine (the room had a very handy fridge) and watch nature's powerful performance.

The sea was magnificent; compelling yet disturbing.

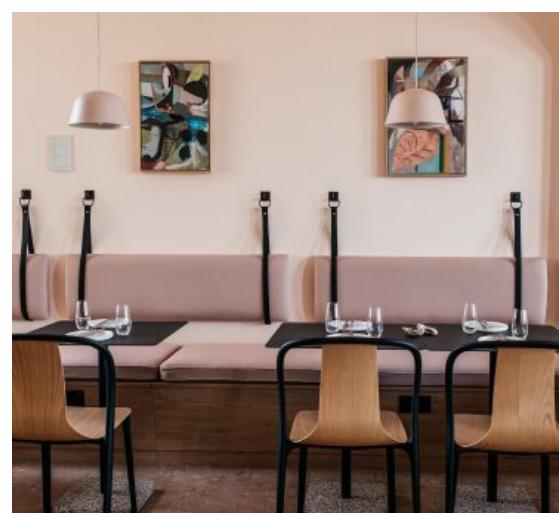


The wind whipped the waves into a frenzy, sparkling white foam flew high into the air, as they roared relentlessly onto the shore. The sky was dark and brooding and the air charged with energy – it was mesmerising and exhilarating.

Early evening, we made our way down to the bar for our complimentary welcome drink.

We sipped our sauvignon in front of the fire in the snug lounge area, which certainly had a touch of Norwegian hygge (cosiness) about it.

There was a selection of board games to play, magazines to read and interesting pieces of artisan pottery and artwork to look at and buy.



Dining at Port

The dining room, bar and lounge area are all in one.

The décor was tranquil and soothing, with original artwork showcased on the walls.

Before dinner we sampled expertly made cocktails and took advantage of the two-for-one happy hour.

There was plenty of Sussex based craft beers on offer as well as local gins and English wines.

The menu was a selection of tasty-sounding small plates, with all dishes locally sourced and designed for sharing.

Chef Alex

Head Chef, Alex Burtenshaw supports local producers and creates his menus around food that is seasonally available and primarily within a 30-mile radius of his kitchen.

We started with a selection of bread with a mustard butter, tangy mixed olives in a warm oil dressing and a delicious, silky smooth Jerusalem artichoke hummus with burnt chives and crunchy nigella seed crispbreads.

Next up was a flakey roasted cod with cannellini beans; soft and juicy chestnut gnocchi with mushroom and roasted hispi cabbage with black garlic mayo.

We scraped our dishes clean and mopped up the juices with our bread.

Not wanting to miss out on dessert, a waffle with poached apple and miso caramel brought the meal to a sweet end.

Breakfast

Breakfast was also a mouth-watering affair.

Beautifully presented (the best I have seen) it also tasted delicious.

The pork sausage was stand out and the roasted red cherry tomatoes on the vine were packed with flavour.

The smoked trout royale with a perfectly poached egg on homemade brioche with yuzu hollandaise was an early morning feast!

Even the Earl Grey tea came with its own little egg timer to ensure it reached maximum brewing potential.

A modern twist

Port Hotel is a modern twist on the traditional and done to a very standard.

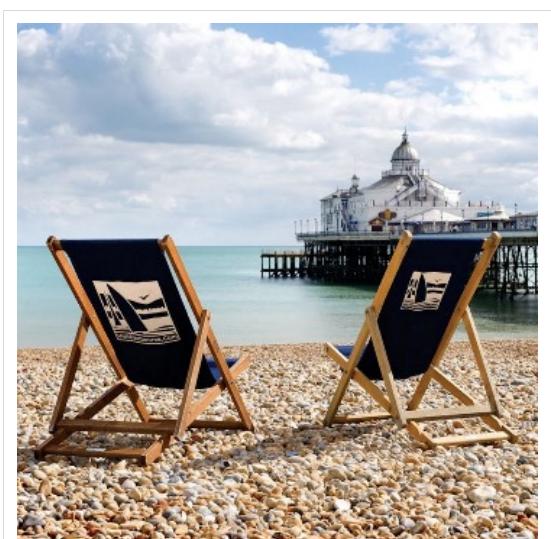
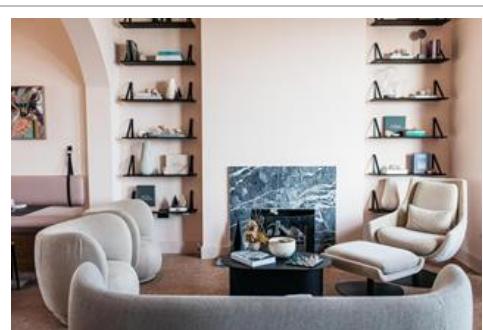
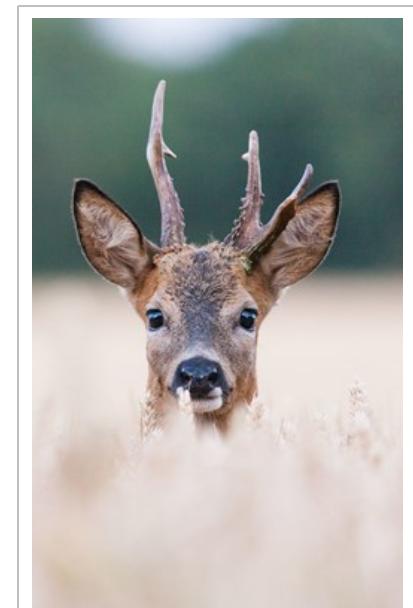
It's innovative and smart, a great addition to the Eastbourne sea front and perfect as a base for exploring the Sussex countryside.

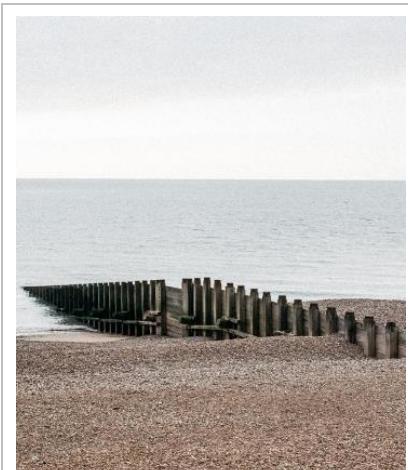


More information

www.porthotel.co.uk

A snapshot of Port and Eastbourne





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AllWay

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The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



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