



A tantalising taste of East Devon

The south-west English county of Devon takes in sandy beaches, fossil cliffs, small country and coastal towns and villages and national parks.

Many visitors look to the cities of Plymouth or Exeter, head for the English Riviera resorts of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham or opt for Exmoor.

Equally well worth a visit is the area of the county within the East Devon area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This takes in the East Devon section of the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site, along with the coastal resorts of Exmouth, Beer, Seaton and Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton.

The East Devon Way is a 40-mile walking route through the rolling countryside of this part of 'glorious Devon', taking in hills, woods, rivers, commons and quiet country villages.

Taste East Devon has seen a coming together of accommodation providers, local producers, chefs and restaurants to highlight and celebrate the fine food and drink on offer to visitors here.

www.tasteeastdevon.co.uk
www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk
www.visitdevon.co.uk
www.eastdevonexcellence.co.uk

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AllWays traveller





This part of glorious Devon is a breath of fresh air

Natural beauty, warm welcomes and the finest local produce is the reward for a short break with the east of this English county.

Knights of the Realm Edward German and Harold Boulton wrote their song *Glorious Devon* in 1905, when it was performed to acclaim by Peter Dawson and his orchestra.

During this Dawson sings :

*Old England's Counties by the sea
From east to west are seven,
But the gem of that fair galaxy
Is Devon, glorious Devon.*

An area of natural beauty

Devon is indeed a glorious English county, and one I knew well growing up in neighbouring Somerset.

However, until this trip I had not discovered too much of the area that makes up the officially designated *East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*.

I had been to Beer and Sidmouth, but that was about it, preferring the Exmoor part of the county.

The shame is that it took me so long to explore east Devon, for this part of the county offers all one could want to do and see on a short break here.

Opting for this 'bite-sized' bit of Devon offers the best in 'slow travel' and in the choice of locally sourced produce that visitors here can enjoy.





Much of this *AllWays Traveller* will focus on the food, wines and ales available from the local suppliers of East Devon.

But there is also much to take in, in between the fine wining and dining.

Slowing down a gear

While the east Devon countryside so deserves its ANOB designation, one needs to drop into a low gear, literally and metaphorically.

The most pleasant of routes are likely to be on winding country lanes that confuse the sat nav.

Meet an oncoming vehicle and one of you is going to need to reverse into the nearest bit of road widening.

Then, with a friendly exchange of waves, it's on one's way again, albeit at the same snail's pace.

That's fine, all the more to enjoy the rolling countryside, and the picturesque villages that come and go, many with alluring looking inns.

We tended to meander these roads to get to one part or another along the Jurassic Coast.

This *World Heritage Site* along English Channel stretches from Exmouth in East Devon to Studland Bay in Dorset.

Some 18 miles of the Jurassic Coast falls within East Devon, and here you will find a number of delightful small towns.

During this trip we managed to get to the historic estuary port of Topsham, with its elegant 17 Century, Dutch-style, merchant houses and the seaside towns of Sidmouth and Seaton.

I could not pass up the chance to visit the village of Beer, with its shingle beach that is home to a small fleet of working fishing boats.

It brought back so many memories of being taken there when a young child.

Our relaxing, four-night, break in East Devon really did recharge the batteries and provided a genuine desire to return to this part of the county.

More information

www.visitdevon.co.uk



www.visitdevon.co.uk



All aboard for a taste of East Devon

East Devon is an area of abundance for those committed to offering the finest of fare in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.



The farmers, artisan producers and dining and accommodation providers here are making the absolute most of it.

The county enjoys easy access to the best fresh seafood from its waters, and its gently rolling countryside makes fine arable land and grazing pastures.

The climate here has also enabled vineyards to establish and produce some stunning English wines, alongside the traditional Devon orchards producing historic apple varieties.

Taste East Devon is a coming together of some of the best local producers; chefs and restaurants; hotels and pubs and farm shops across East Devon.

Members include The Pig at Combe; The Donkey Sanctuary; Otter Brewery; Lympstone Manor; River Cottage; Darts Farm; Heron Farm; The Jack in the Green, and Mazzard Farm.

Other members include the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and East Devon Excellence.

The Taste East Devon Festival



Highlight of the organisation's year is the Taste East Devon Festival (3 to 18 September 2022), an annual September celebration of all that this part of county can offer the visitor by way of locally sourced produce.

The range of festival events includes producers, chefs and restaurants and embraces a range of culinary events and initiatives including special menus along with tours and tastings and culinary get-togethers.

More information

www.tasteeastdevon.co.uk





A visit to Donkey Sanctuary is truly life-affirming

Although we were discovering much of East Devon for the first time, the one place I knew well was *The Donkey Sanctuary*, the world's largest equine welfare charity.



I had been to its Sidmouth sanctuary just the once, with my mother, to view *Dinky* and *Megan*, the two donkeys Ann and I had adopted.

But since then, we have been donating to the charity and receiving its regular newsletters, and so know what vital work they do.

Its Sidmouth sanctuary, and the charities international headquarters, attracts 400,000 visitors a year, and is free to visit.

The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by the sadly departed Dr Elisabeth Svendsen, in 1969, whose vision is a world where donkeys and mules live free from suffering, and with their contribution to humanity is fully valued.

Elizabeth's vision and work is being carried on today with 10 sanctuaries, around the UK and Europe,

giving lifelong care to more than 7,000 donkeys and mules.

The Sanctuary receives is donkeys and mules from people no longer able to care for their loved animals or, mor distressing, following cases of ill-treatment and neglect.

But once here the animals could not have better care or a better life.

No donkey or mule in need is ever turned away.

The Donkey Sanctuary also runs a Donkey-Facilitated Learning programme specifically designed for vulnerable children and adults.

Internationally, *The Donkey Sanctuary* operates programmes to help improve the welfare of donkeys and mules working in agriculture, industry and transportation.

It currently has programmes in Nepal, India, Mexico, Peru, Ghana, S Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia and Brazil.



A heart-warming experience



Eating at The Donkey Sanctuary



Ashley

A visit to the Sidmouth sanctuary is a hugely enjoyable and truly heart-warming experience.

One can walk on a short trail through the donkey's fields, with umpteen pats along the way, see the hospital where any poorly animals are looked after, and listen to the volunteers talking with passion and knowledge about the donkeys.

Unfortunately, *Dinky* and *Megan* are no longer with us, but I know they had a wonderful life at the Sidmouth sanctuary.

And while there this time I saw that there was the opportunity to adopt *Ashley* for £3 a month.

The next time we get to *The Donkey Sanctuary* *Ashley* will be my first stop.



It's not only the donkeys who are kept well fed and watered at The Sanctuary writes *Ann Mealor*.

The Kitchen restaurant, bright and airy with rustic pine tables and colourful chairs, has gained a reputation in its own right as the place to come for locally sourced, well cooked, good wholesome food.

And what's more, all profits go towards caring for the donkeys – so it really is a case of eat out to help out.

The Kitchen buys from, and supports, local farmers to ensure the freshest ingredients possible are used in all its dishes. Food is responsibly sourced from producers with a high standard of farming and animal welfare.

All the suppliers and what they provide are listed on the menu.

As I walked into The Kitchen my gaze landed on a tempting display of delicious looking cakes and pastries from *The Exploding Bakery*.

The Carrot and walnut cake, Chocolate caramel slice and the Peanut butter brownie particularly caught my eye.



We finished with a large latte each, which again was lovely and hot. I was really looking forward to trying one of the cakes but, unfortunately, I was just too full.

I will have to wait until next time. We headed towards a table by the window so we could enjoy the views across the fields to where a large herd of donkeys were grazing peacefully.

There was plenty of choice on the menu including baked potatoes, salads, burgers, soup, fish, flatbreads, sandwiches and award-winning Devon pasties.

I went for a stone baked flatbread with barbecued pulled jackfruit, apple sauce and crispy sage. I also decided to go for some fries, which came piping hot and in a cute plant pot.

Ashley picked the Garden Burger, which was a mouth-watering medley of mushroom, roasted pepper, smashed avocado, water cress and spiced tomato and caramelised onion chutney.

The brioche bun was packed to the max and Ashley tucked in with relish.

The portions were hearty, the food tasty and our stomachs were nicely filled.

Needless-to-say all proceeds from the Kitchen at the Donkey Sanctuary go to support the charity's wonderful work.

More information

www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk



Fine dining over fire

High Grange, in the rolling hills of East Devon, is run by Luke and Sara Mackay and offers outdoor dining par excellence.



Luke was enjoying his status as one of London's top chefs when he met lawyer Sara, on an internet date, in 2010.

Their romance led to three children and a complete change of lifestyle at High Grange.

Leaving the Metropolis for an ultra-rural retreat in the West Country they now have a large outdoor cookery school with fire pits, pizza oven, Ofyr, and Luke's beloved Big Green Eggs (ceramic charcoal grills).

The couple now offer visitors and locals alike a range of full and half-day 'fire schools', where Luke passes on his skill at and unbridled joy for cooking in the outdoors.

Watching Luke 'perform' is akin to watching a TV chef in action, except this is for real, with the birds singing and the chance to taste the delicious fish and meat straight from the grill.

On a Friday once a month, Luke and Sarah hold their sumptuous suppers, with a five-course tasting menu of meat, fish and vegetables sourced from their own garden and local suppliers.

The evening begins with cocktails and canapés, followed by the feast on their 24-seater, outdoor communal oak table

More informal lunch and supper is also available.

An evening at High Grange is a succulent must for anyone who enjoys what is so much more than your average bar-b-cue.



Luke and Sarah

Be brave, be bold – and give everything a go



Luke Mackay's Fire School, set in beautiful, tree filled grounds is a flame filled eye opener when it comes to cooking outdoors *writes Ann Mealor*.

Whole leeks, beetroot, fennel and even radish went directly onto coals or were left to slowly char on a rack above the fire pit.

All came out tasting delicious.

Thick large sirloin steaks were given similar treatment and emerged tender and juicy. No burnt offerings here.

It was a fun and informative way to learn more about how cook well outside.

In starting off, we were taught how to light a fire and the best materials to use – lump wood charcoal and kiln dried wood. Both are environmentally friendly and don't give the food a 'chemical' after taste.

We started off with freshly cut, local asparagus which Luke chargrilled, and we dipped into a cast iron pot of melted butter.

This was followed by samphire and succulent scallops cooked on the hot rim of the fire pit.

The secret is not to keep turning the food, allowing it to cook nearly all the way through from one side. Whole, fresh mackerel went on the hot grill, sides seared and salted for extra crispiness.

Luke also demonstrated how to fillet a mackerel, a very sharp knife being key to this process.

Next was the chopping of roasted red peppers and a variety of herbs, plucked from Luke's garden, for a salsa to go with the steaks.

Another handy tip from Luke is to always keep the point of your knife on the chopping board for quick, even and safe slicing.

Finally, after a relaxed, convivial evening, watching, participating, sampling, drinking (you can take your own wine and beer) and chatting, we (about 12 of us) sat around a large oak table to feast on the fruits of Luke's labour.

The steak and veg filled platter was passed around and to the sound of *mms* and *ahs*, we all tucked in.

As darkness fell, we ate heartily beneath the stars, our fire pits, still burning, casting a warm, magical glow across the garden.

One final thought from Luke, when cooking over fire in the outdoors. Be bold, be brave and give anything a go.



More information
www.highgrangedevon.com



A pint of Otter tastes just as good as I remembered

Otter goes from strength to strength as it heads into its fourth decade from its brewery in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

As a West Country lad, and real ale lover to boot, the growth of local breweries in the 80s and 90s was indeed a good time to be alive.

Thankfully, I am still here and so are many of the best local brewers.

Back then a pint or two of Otter was in my top three real ales (along with Exmoor's Stag and Hook Norton's Old Hooky).

The pleasure of drinking a local ale is that it will be, by implication, local.

Living in London these many years, I have had to explore other berries but, with this this geared to getting a 'taste' of East Devon, there was never going to be a chance of me not tracking down the Otter Brewery.

It was first started, in 1990, by David and Mary Ann McCaig from a farmhouse on a 19-acre site in the county's Blackdown Hills.

This is an *Area of Outstanding Beauty* and an *Area of Special Scientific Interest*, it is a most delightful place of work

The water used in the brewing process is drawn directly from the head springs of the River Otter.

David and Mary's son Patrick is now at the helm, and he has continued to oversee a planned expansion of the production process, while ensuring the continued quality of the Otter range of brews.

As a family, with deep roots in Devon, the McCaig's also appreciate the importance of making their brewing process as sustainable as possible.

Otter has also partnered with the Devon Wildlife Trust in an environmental project that sees a tree planted in the county for every barrel of beer sold.

While brewery tours are available on request, this is happily not a prerequisite for enjoying a pint of Otter.

It has a wonderful range of ales, from the hand pull or bottle, can be found in pubs and hotels throughout the county.



Patrick McCaig



More information
www.otterbrewery.com
www.devonwildlifetrust.org



Darts is a farm shop extraordinaire

Darts Farm, which sits on the banks of the River Clyst at the edge of Topsham, is a veritable 'Harrod's' of the finest in local fare.

It has been at the vanguard of the 'farm to fork' movement from the time, in the early 1970s, when farmer Ronald Dart introduced the 'pick-your-own' approach to his produce.

Even back then Ronald saw the benefit of us eating what is in season and from as local producers as possible.

Ronald's philosophy and approach to environmentally friendly farming was instilled into his three sons, Michael, James and Paul, from an early age.

So, it is no surprise that, when their father passed away, his boys took up the mantle.

The farm itself continues to champion traditional farming methods and maintained old rotational practices that means that their rich, red Devon soil is full of life and fertility.

And, together, the Dart brothers have expanded what they inherited into a nationally recognised 'farm shopping experience', an emporium of the finest of fare.

During the summer months, the farm's native herd of Ruby Red Devon cattle graze on the River Clyst Meadows.

Fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables are picked daily for the farm shop, where one also finds artisan cheeses; organic bread; a wide range of cakes and biscuits along with wines, sauces and preserves.

There is also a master butcher on-site and so too a fishmonger and a cyder maker who uses apples from the farm's own cider orchards.

Darts Farm also makes its own chocolates and ice cream and has two thriving restaurants, with menus dominated by the farm produce.

The pizzas are a particularly delicious option.

Darts also provides a venue to a range of high-end retailers, along with a florist, beauty therapist and Pilates studio.

Finally, Darts Farm also hosts an RSPB shop, which is appropriate as the area is rich in wildlife including flocks of linnets, fieldfares and redwings during the winter and dragonflies, skylarks and kingfishers in summer.

The RSPB nature reserves at Bowling Green Marsh and Goosemoor are also nearby.

More information
www.dartsfarm.co.uk



Heron Farm makes for a delightful hour or so

Heron Farm, which is a vineyard with a range of aligned visitor facilities, is as popular with locals as it is with those of us passing through.

Longer, if you are looking for a wine tour or attending one of the events that take place here.

It is located just outside the market town of Honiton.

Otter Farm, as it was then called, was set up by Mark Diacono, River Cottage's then Head Gardener, in 2010.

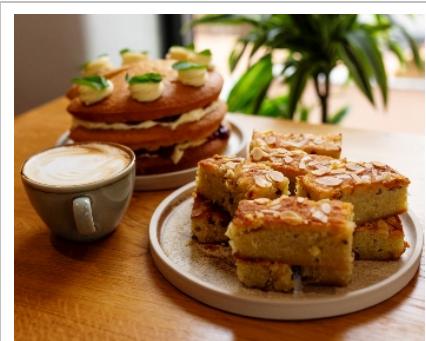
In addition to vineyard, Mark wanted to create a *Climate Change Farm*, with food-producing trees and plants more traditionally associated with warmer climates, but which still have the potential to grow sustainably in Devon.

In 2016/2017 the site was the subject of an episode of TV's *Grand Designs*, when Mark and his family designed and built a plough-shaped house and a matching building.

A year later Christine Helliwell took over the place and renamed it Heron Farm for the heron seen on the river Otter, which forms part of the boundary.

Since then, Christine has poured heart and soul into Heron Farm and, today, and in addition to the vineyard and orchard, visitors will find a kitchen garden, used to grow as much fruit and vegetables as possible for the onsite *Vineyard Kitchen and Farm Shop*.

The vineyard itself comprises around 3000 vines of Seyval Blanc, Solaris, and Pinot Noir.



The cider orchard has some 40 trees, all local Devon varieties that are used for the farm's apple juice, and lovely cider.

An unusual selection of forgotten foods are grown here, including quince, medlars, mulberries and perry pears.

It come as no surprise to hear that sustainability and zero waste to landfill are paramount.

The Vineyard Kitchen serves breakfast, lunch, and snacks prepared from seasonal ingredients sourced either from the Kitchen Garden, or as locally as possible.



More information

www.heron-farm.co.uk



Pig Perfect: Manor from Heaven

Set in 3,500 acres in the secluded and beautiful Otter Valley, The Pig exceeded my expectations on every level.

By Ann Mealor

Pig, oh perfect Pig! How I do love thee!



Can I praise The Pig at Combe enough? I don't think so.

Everything about this Grade 1 listed Elizabethan manor house is superb.

Driving up the long winding drive, I was expecting to see a quaint country pub. Instead, there at the top of the hill, stood a majestic Manor house, proud yet welcoming, grand yet inviting.

We pulled up on the crunchy gravel outside of the main entrance and after admiring the view across the Valley, we unloaded our cases.

On pushing open the heavy, oak front door, we found ourselves immediately in the impressive Great Hall. This room was originally constructed in 1580 by Henry Beaumont who built the Manor house.

A log fire burned warmly in the huge Elizabethan stone and tile fireplace, and comfortable sofas and chairs were placed along its length in front of the large, wood panelled bar.

Portraits of past ladies of the house, looking regal, hung in gilded frames on the stripped, oak panelled walls, adding to the feel of relaxed grandeur.

The Folly

The friendly reception staff took our cases to our room, whilst we made our way through the house to *The Folly*, for a garden lunch.

The Folly, originally the Orangery, was a delightful rustic hideaway.

Set amongst tall and ancient cedars, *The Folly* had an elegant, conservatory style feel, with its natural stone floor, huge woven willow lampshades.



There were exposed rafters, terracotta pots filled with a variety of green foliage, round, weathered oak tables, open brickwork and metal bistro style chairs - with comfy cushions.

Huge French windows opened-up onto a flagstone terrace with views across the grounds that lifted body and soul.

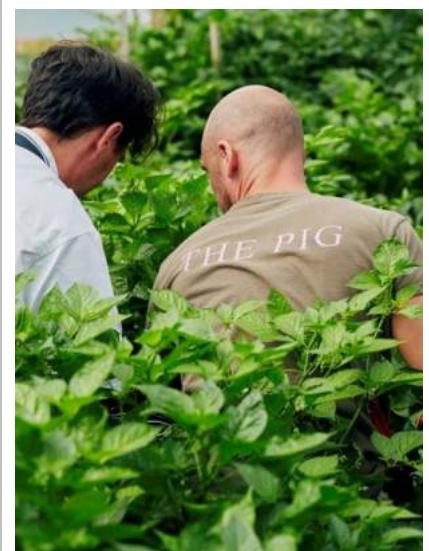
Our lunch was a mouth-watering selection of kitchen garden treats.

There were tangy olives and garden pickles, flatbread and taramasalata, strips of warm crunchy pork crackling and apple sauce.

Then came a wood oven flatbread loaded with fresh mushrooms and wild garlic and mackerel fillets on crunchy sourdough topped with a warm, creamy aioli dressing.

This was paired with a glass of crisp English sparkling wine.

The dishes were simple but packed with flavour and we would have lounged there all afternoon soaking up the ambience and charm of the place, but we had more exploring to do.



The Kitchen Garden

Common to every *Pig* hotel (eight in total) is *The Kitchen Garden*.

There is a massive commitment to home grown and local produce and as much veg, fruit, herbs and eggs (provided by the free-range quails, hens and ducks) make it onto the menu as possible.

The Pig at Combe has three walled gardens – vegetable, herb and infusions, the produce of which also flavours the gins and cocktails. Chef, Dan and Head Gardener, Nathan liaise closely on what's grown, what's in season and what needs to be on the menu.

If there's an abundance of a particular fruit or veg, then Dan will look to incorporate it into his menus and make something creative.

If Dan needs something specific for his dishes, then Nathan will do his best to grow that for him.

Each Autumn, the two will decide what will be planted for the following year.

Everything is organic and the microclimate around the garden makes it very fertile.

An ancient mulberry tree, over 200 years old, still provides an abundance of fruit.

Meat and fish are smoked on the premises in an old smokehouse. Edible flowers are grown for use in desserts and cocktails and honey is collected from the bees.

Guests are encouraged to walk around the kitchen gardens and Nathan is always happy to show guests around and answer any questions.

Not far from the Manor house, is the farm area, where visitors can see pigs (which will eventually make their way to the table), sheep, ducks, hens and beehives.

Dan's aim is to source as much food as possible from within a 25-mile radius of The Pig.

What he can't source locally, he gets from specialist suppliers so that he can trace the provenance of what he buys. He can trace his fish from Cornwall, for example, back to the fishing boat if came off.

On the back of each restaurant menu, there is a list of all the suppliers, with a paragraph on each as well as a location map. It makes such an interesting read.

As well as the Kitchen Garden, guests can stroll around the Manor grounds taking in the rural beauty or sit and enjoy a cocktail or a glass of wine overlooking the tranquil Otter Valley.

There are plenty of picturesque walks close-by and the hotel team can provide maps, wellies and umbrellas (bright pink!) if needed.

So, you can make the most of the countryside whatever the weather!





The house

Following our garden tour, we headed up to our room to freshen up before dinner.

On our way we stopped by the Library and the *Drawing Room*.

Each had an ornate fireplace with a flaming log fire giving off a warm glow and making the grand rooms feel very cosy.

Soft, comfy, sofas and chairs with plump cushions were dotted about the rooms with colourful patterned rugs scattered across the ancient, oak floorboards.

The gilt framed mirrors, chandeliers and traditional oil paintings contrasted nicely with the more informal reclaimed wooden coffee tables and terracotta plant pots filled with bright green garden herbs.

I was looking forward to enjoying a pre-dinner cocktail sitting in the window and watching the sun go down.

We climbed the impressive staircase, passing antique furniture, ancestral portraits and small snug lounging areas until we found ourselves outside number 9.

Inside No 9



Our room, one of the 'comfy luxe' variety was spacious and full of character.

Located towards the top of the house, it had an attic feel with impressive views across the grounds through latticed, leaded windows.

The weather board panelling lining the walls was painted soft grey and an inviting free standing Victorian style bathtub stood in the alcove.

Two armchairs were perfectly positioned to enjoy the views and the king-sized bed was very comfortable.

I'm always pleased to find good quality toiletries in the bathroom, and I wasn't disappointed here.

The fragrant Bromley shampoo, conditioner, body lotion and body wash were large in size and plentiful – certainly enough to see us through our two-night stay.

The small bars of hand soap from 'Odds and Suds' were a scent-filled treat.

The monsoon shower was absolutely invigorating, there was an impressive coffee machine and kettle with plenty of tea bags and coffee pods, Tunnock's teacakes, refillable water bottles and fresh milk in the fridge – essential for a good cup of tea!



The restaurant

I was really looking forward to my evening meal in the Pig's atmospheric restaurant.

The dining room was like the outside, but in, with pale, weathered oak panelling, worn floorboards, flowerpots filled with cascading greenery, and bare, stripped oak tables. A stag's head hung proud above the traditional fireplace – it felt like a stately conservatory and was charming.

The elegant grandeur blended with rustic farmhouse kitchen look worked beautifully.

Head Chef, Dan is passionate about what he does and changes the menu on a regular basis to suit what's in season. He also enjoys foraging and incorporates what he finds into his dishes.

We perused the menu whilst enjoying a cocktail and glass of sparkling rose in the drawing room.

As the sun set across the valley we nibbled on a delicious selection of 'garden bits' small plates of pickled quail eggs and warm mushroom arancini. There was just enough to leave us wanting more.

Our dinner

For starters, I decided on James Golding's oak smoked salmon with dressed fennel and Willy's cider dressing.

The salmon came in pink strips and was light and delicately flavoured.

Ashley went for the Charred 'Wirosa' Savoy Cabbage with a hollandaise and sourdough crumb. We both said we had never tasted a savoy cabbage so good!

We then had some plump and juicy hand dived scallops with garden fennel, perfectly pan seared and caramelised on top. They looked a picture and tasted as good.

As did a dish of creamy mozzarella cheese paired with broad beans and crunchy garden veg.

For mains, I chose the Gibbins 28-day aged rump steak, with a garden salad, triple cooked chips and a bearnaise sauch. The steak was tender and succulent despite being well cooked and was just as I like it.

The simple fresh salad complimented the richness of the meat so well and I savoured every mouthful.

Ashley went for the *Tizzardlee Pollock* with cockles and savoy cabbage.

The pollock was sweet and moist and the cockles proved to be little flavour filled additions.

Istven, our sommelier, was excellent and introduced me to a delicious English white wine that I would never have tried if he hadn't recommended it as a pairing for my smoked salmon.

The Chablis he chose to go with my steak was also inspiring. I don't drink red, but this full-bodied white worked perfectly.

Unfortunately, we couldn't manage a dessert (as we couldn't resist tucking into the warm, organic bread and somerset butter whilst waiting for our starter!).

However, we were given a box of 'piggy fours' to try the next day, which we did - six mouthfuls of deliciousness. After sipping a coffee in front of the lounge fire we headed up the well-trodden boards to bed.

Breakfast

I was very pleased, that despite eating a full meal the night before, I could still manage a hearty breakfast.

Perfectly presented in farmhouse kitchen style, I helped myself to homemade muesli, stewed apple and rhubarb, crunchy cheddar cheese, crusty sour dough bread, salty somerset butter, and an egg from the Pig's own hens.

I also sampled a fruit-filled smoothie and a glass of zingy ginger and carrot juice. I then managed to devour a deliciously sticky cinnamon bun from the local bakery and a forkful of Ashley's kippers, which were magnificent! If only I had a larger stomach!

What a place



I can only say the Pig was superb! And in every way.

From the magnificent interior design and attention to detail, to the food, the green ethos (every guest is given a pack of seed to plant at home), and to the staff who were fantastic.

All were friendly and knowledgeable, and nothing was too much trouble.

They were the best hotel team I have come across and a credit to *The Pig at Combe*.

Can all eight Pigs all be as good as this one? I hope I get the chance to find out.

More information

www.thepighotel.com/at-combe/

Family run Ladram Bay is really family friendly

Ladram Bay is a family-owned and run holiday park on the Jurassic Coast a short drive from Sidmouth.



It has a fine pedigree having been set up when farmer Frank William Sydenham Carter, known to all as FWS, opened a field to visiting campers in 1943.

Today it is Robin and Zoe, FWS' son and daughter, oversee the running of what now offers camping pitches and glamping pods, holiday homes and luxury lodges.

It's located on the cliffs overlooking the bay of the same name and with direct access to a private beach.

Ladram Bay is very much a family friendly place, with heated swimming pool with dedicated kids' pool and indoor and outdoor play areas.

Locally sourced cuisine is available at Pebbles Restaurant, and there is a range of live entertainment at the Three Rocks.

Ladram Bay welcomes guests from across the UK each year and has five-star status from *VisitEngland*.

I had not thought of spending time in a holiday camp, and I was a little surprised just how quickly we settled in and how enjoyable our stay was.

We spent a couple of nights in one of the Ladram Bay holiday homes with an uninterrupted coastal view from balcony area.

The *South West Coast Path* was literally 'on the doorstep' with the invigorating walks and wonderful views that this enabled.

If we enjoyed our stay, this was nothing compared to what is on offer to families.

The kids we saw were loving their time there with the parents able to relax knowing the offspring were happy and safe.

More information
www.ladrambay.co.uk

Mazzard Farm offers a self-contained retreat

Mazzard Farm is found on the outskirts of Ottery St Mary.



Heating (incl. hot water) is generated through a Biomass heating boiler and solar PV panels are providing a significant percentage of electricity.

The buildings are optimally insulated and use wood from its own forest for the wood burners.

All materials used for the conversion of the cottages pass high-level environmental standards.

The farm's animals are a big part of the lure at Mazzard Farm, with pygmy goats, chickens, ducks, pigs and horses 'part of the family'.

There are a number of traditional English pubs nearby that serve fine ales and great food.

It offers six cottages positioned around a pretty courtyard in 17 acres of our own woodland, orchard, gardens, fields and play areas



More information
www.mazzardfarm.com



Jack in the Green rewards Paul's dedicated devotion

Don't miss the chance to dine at *The Jack*



Some pubs restaurants flatter to deceive, looking good from the outside but not quite coming up to scratch.

The *Jack in the Green* at Rockbeare, near Exeter, is the complete opposite of this.

Those unaware of this pub, or who have not had it recommended, might be inclined to give it a miss.

The exterior belies what awaits inside, which is one of the friendliest of country inns with a restaurant *par-excellence*.

Thanks for this are down to landlord and lady Paul and Judy Parnell, and there can be few finer examples of what can be achieved with unstinting devotion to the cause.

Paul had enjoyed a career running hotels in Bavaria and the New Forest when he and Judy came across the 'Jack' back in 1992.



Paul accepts it was a pub well past its sell by date when he took what could have been a very expensive punt and bought the freehold.

A bypass of the village, in the pipeline, was not going to help the passing trade, and the initial gamble paid off in 'spades'.

It did though take a good few years of struggle, along with a substantial flow of additional funds into the place, and the careful hand-picking of a passionate and very loyal team.

This includes head chef Craig Griffin, who has been at the Jack for over a decade and creates a menu that would grace the most esteemed of restaurant anywhere.

It is indicative of the quality of the Jacks offering that we were hard pressed to get a table on a Monday evening.

Thank goodness we did, as Ann explains.



Like visiting friends

Walking into the restaurant in The Jack on The Green is like going to a friend's house for dinner writes *Ann Mealor*.

The dining room is so cosy and homely that you immediately feel at ease, as if you are in a familiar and welcome place.

Wooden beams, stone fireplaces, oak sideboards and dressers, prints on the whitewashed walls, teak dining tables and comfortable chairs give the place a country cottage feel.

There is something on the menu to suit every taste and budget from classic pub food and light bites to daily specials and fine dining options.

There was plenty to choose from.

As we were deciding what to have, we tucked into a basket of warm Guinness bread with two large pats of salty Cornish butter.

Such a treat.

While rapidly emptying the breadbasket, along came a complimentary appetiser – a creamy white onion velouté, decorated with chopped, green chives and served in a small, white teacup. It was a lovely start to the meal.

Our server came over to ask if we had any questions about the menu.

She was very helpful and knowledgeable, answering all our queries about the various dishes very thoroughly. Finally, we made up our minds.

For starters, I chose the tomato and red pepper soup which came piping hot and went so well with the Guinness bread.

Ashley decided on the smoked mackerel with crispy capers and a lemon dressing.

Nothing was left on his plate.

For mains I went for one of the pub classics, the mushroom and tarragon tagliatelle.

The pasta ribbons were coated in a light, silky sauce, there was plenty of mushrooms and the tarragon gave the dish a distinctive flavour.

Ashley had the pan-fried cod loin, with crab fritter, crushed peas and a lemon butter sauce.

His meal also came with a large bowl of seasonal, fresh veg and new potatoes.

The cod was soft, flaky and crunchy on top and the sauce delicately flavoured. We managed to polish everything off between us.

Unfortunately, as we had eaten all before us, we couldn't manage a dessert.

It was a shame as there was a great selection to choose from.

But never mind, it's just another reason to return.



More information
www.jackinthegreen.uk.com

Dukes is a Sidmouth favourite for all

Dukes is a seaside inn that has been standing proud on the Sidmouth Esplanade for some 20 years now.



As such it is not easy to miss, which is just as well, as Dukes is a fine, family friendly, place for a drink and a meal thanks, in no small part, to Dan Colson and his longstanding team *writes Ann Mealor*.

This inn is popular with locals and visitors alike, which gives it a great buzz.

As an inn, it also offers 14 bedrooms.

From a dining perspective, Dukes is proud of its Branscombe ale battered fish & chips and Brixham crab sandwiches among an extensive menu.

With this fresh sea food, local meats, traditional pub food and plenty of interesting plant-based dishes, Dukes is an ideal choice for a relaxing meal at the end of a busy day exploring Sidmouth and Lyme Bay.

We sat outside with a cocktail, soaking up the seafront atmosphere and perusing the menu, before heading inside for our evening meal. The restaurant was light and airy with a pleasant nautical theme and candles lit on each table.

For starters I chose the baked scallops with black pudding, chorizo, pea puree, rocket and samphire.

The scallops, served in their shells, were plump and juicy and perfectly complimented by the black pudding and chorizo. The samphire went so well too.



Ashley went for the grilled mackerel with beetroot and horseradish – a great combination of flavours and always a favourite of his.

For mains we both made the most of the great variety of fish on offer.

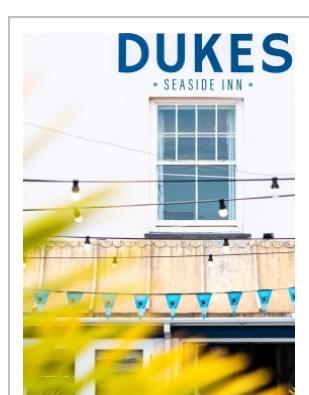
I chose the grilled whole Brixham plaice with roast new potatoes, asparagus and crayfish cream and Ashley decided on the grilled Torbay lemon sole with lemon and caper butter, new potatoes and veg.

The fish was sweet and full of flavour, the portion sizes generous and the food piping hot.

For dessert I just managed to fit in a couple of boules of delicious creamy homemade honeycomb and salted caramel ice cream.

Although Ashley was too full to order his own, he still managed a spoonful or two of mine!

Dukes is proud of their local suppliers and so have listed them on their menu and website for all to see.



More information
www.dukessidmouth.co.uk



An ideal setting for Michael Caines fine dining

Lympstone manor is a Georgian manor house that has been creatively and beautifully restored by celebrated chef, Michael Caines.

We ended our food inspired trip to East Devon in real style at Lympstone Manor, which stands in 28 acres of historic gardens and parkland writes *Ann Mealor*.

With views across the Exe estuary and rolling green Devonshire hills, it is the ideal setting for his luxury hotel and Michelin starred restaurant.

On arriving for lunch, we took a short woodland walk from the car park up to the manor house to be welcomed and shown into an elegant lounge.

Decorated in natural and muted tones with touches of traditional grandeur provided by gilded gold mirrors and glittering chandeliers, we relaxed on a soft sofa, taking-in the views across the lawns down to the estuary.

As we sipped a glass of English sparkling *Nyetimber*, we admired the interesting pieces of art displayed around the room, particularly the horse sculptures.

Lympstone Manor is decorated throughout with artwork by highly regarded local artists, some of which are specially commissioned for the Manor.

The grounds also feature 53 hand-crafted contemporary sculptures from sculptors around the country. These can be fully appreciated on a pre or post meal stroll.

Our lunch at Lympstone Manor

Whilst looking through the menu, four small, but perfectly formed canapes were placed before us.

They were tiny, if transient, colour filled works of art in their own right – such was the attention to detail.

After marvelling at the edible flowers and the chef's handiwork, we popped them into our mouths and savoured each bouche.

There were two choices of menu on offer – the four course *Lunch Menu* and the eight course *Signature Tasting Menu*.

Both looked fantastic, but as we were driving back to London later that afternoon, we opted for the shorter *Lunch Menu*.

Once our order was taken, we were lead through to a chic, panelled, modern dining room, tastefully furnished in shades of pastel blues, pale greys and cream with a vibrant circular black and white tiled floor.

Our table was by the window, and once again we could enjoy spectacular views across the grounds.

A basket of freshly baked sundried tomato and French bread was swiftly brought to the table.

I always look forward to this part of 'eating out' and regard it as a treat!

We thickly layered each piece with creamy, salty butter and it was soon gone.

Extras were declined as we wanted to leave room for our meal, otherwise we would have eaten nothing else!

Our appetiser soon followed; *Citrus cod ceviche* with pink apple and chamomile consommé, calamansi (a citrus fruit) and marjoram.

It was so intricately and prettily presented that it looked like a miniature round cake topped with fruits, piped lemon icing and cocoa.



It was almost a shame to eat it, but it had to be done!

A wonderful explosion of flavours hit the taste buds, including lime, apple and aniseed.



Next came my starter, Ravioli of Lyme Bay Crab, bergamot, coriander, crab, lemongrass and ginger sauce. Ashley chose the Spring pea bavarois with wasabi, mint, crème fraîche and asparagus.

It is such a skill to use so many different ingredients in a dish, but not let one strong flavour overpower another.

My crab was fresh and fragrant and the sauce light, yet buttery.

The bavarois was a silky, smooth sensation - six green and cream boules sitting on a gleaming white plate like chocolate truffles, topped with delicate yellow flowers, caviar and wisps of crunchy asparagus.

For mains, we both had the Lightly salted hake with grilled leeks, mussels, coastal herbs and *Noilly Prat* (a French vermouth, often used in fish sauces).

Our hake looked a picture on the plate, surrounded by a ring of accompaniments, all precisely placed to look their best. Everything went so well together, complementing the fish and adding various textures to the dish.

Finally came the desserts, caramelised banana soufflé with banana sorbet and a Lemon polenta cake with poached rhubarb, rhubarb sorbet and vanilla foam.

The soufflé was melt-in-the-mouth divine – according to Ashley – there was no chance he was giving me a taste!

My polenta cake was rich and moist, offset by the tartness of the rhubarb and the freshness of the sorbet. A visual pink and cream delight with flecks of edible silver and touches of green.

We then retired back to the comfort of the lounge for coffee and petit fours. What a way to spend a lunchtime!

Lunch Menus at Lympstone Manor change every Thursday and all Dinner Menus monthly – sometimes more frequently depending on what's in season.

The wines

The wine list at Lympstone Manor is extensive and the wine advisors very knowledgeable. The hotel even has its own vineyard, eleven acres of 17,500 vines of Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay – all the grapes used in champagne and needed for an English sparkling wine.

Our sommelier picked out three delicious wines for us.

A 2017 white wine from Alsace was chosen for our starter – a full bodied and buttery *Josmeyer Pinot Auxerrois* from old vines.

It had spicy notes of ginger and lemongrass and went perfectly with the crab.

Paired with our hake we had a 2017 oaked Etienne Henri Sancerre Blanc a deep, complex and full-bodied wine from the famed *Bourgeois* domaine.

This creamy, barrel fermented wine from old vines had notes of green pepper and was the ideal accompaniment for our fish.

For the dessert it was a rich and aromatic 2010 *Chateau Filhot Sauternes* with notes of honey and citrus fruits.

I don't often have a sweet wine but enjoyed this classic pairing.

Food ethos

"Devon and the West Country has the best larder not just in Britain but in all of Europe," says Michael Caines.

Michael and his team have nurtured and developed relationships with key suppliers who consistently produce the best seasonal ingredients and products.

Michael likes to know exactly where every ingredient that goes into his dishes comes from so that guest's requirements are met, and land and sea remains respected and nourished.

Partners include Darts Farm, four miles away, who provide beef from their own herd of Ruby Red Cattle and Greendale Farm Shop, six miles away, who catch fish each day and follow a policy of *Boat to Plate* in 48.

This enables chefs to prepare and serve sea food dishes to guests within, you've guessed it, 48 hours.

Not only does this ensure the freshest of catches, but it allows Greendale to fish according to demand and prevent waste.

Michael is a keen advocate of wasting nothing and using as much of a carcass as possible. For example, any remaining offcuts and bones from meat and fish are turned into stock.

The environmental ethos at Lympstone Manor is to reduce, recycle, and reuse as well as develop and improve the biodiversity and environment within the grounds and around the estate.

Lympstone Manor is certainly the place to go for a special occasion, a celebration of just simply to 'push the boat out'.

It's 'dress-up' dining, a chance to wear your best frock and high heels and feel pampered.

In the dining room there was a couple celebrating a birthday, a daughter treating her mum and business clients being impressed.

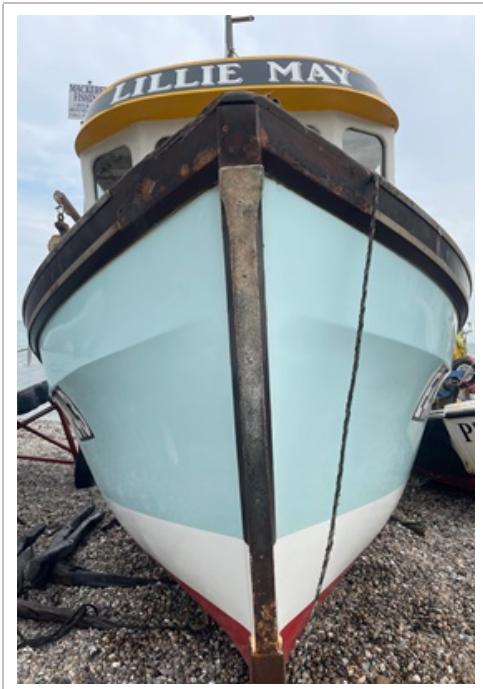
All the staff were friendly, knowledgeable and efficient, with the service impeccable throughout our dining experience.

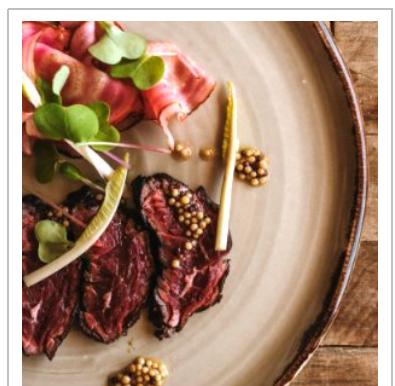
I hope I am fortunate enough to go back and try Michael's eight course *Signature Menu* and spend longer exploring the Manor and its glorious grounds.

More information

www.lympstonemanor.co.uk

A snapshot of East Devon





AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



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www.itwalliance.com



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