

primelocation



FEBRUARY 2007

TAKE A BREAK
**PERFECT
RETREATS**

MARTIN WALLER
**A MODERN TAKE
ON ANTIQUITY**

RESTAURANT
**GORDON RAMSAY:
STILL THE CREAM
OF THE CROP?**

SALES
**FOUR SPECIAL
HOUSES**

LETTINGS
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Although Easter is at the beginning of April, it's still a little while away, and with Christmas already a distant memory, perhaps it's time to fit in a short break. Mindful of our collective carbon footprints, now is a good time to explore places closer to home. The British Isles have some of the most beautiful countryside, historic towns and superb beaches - we've picked some gorgeous destinations within two hours from London.

First off is the historic Georgian town of Bath - only about an hour and a half by train from Paddington station. What hasn't been said or written about Bath? It has always been a beautiful place to visit, with lots to do and see. But it's now also a serious shopping destination, with many of the streets pedestrianised so shoppers can take it easy, stopping at good bars, cafés and restaurants to refuel.

Its famous Roman Baths are still a popular tourist attraction, but now the newly opened and fabulous Thermae Spa offers a state-of-the-art day-spa and is the only place in Britain where you can bathe in natural, mineral rich warm waters.

There are lots of hotels and guest houses offering a Thermae Spa package weekend with entrance to the spa included in your room rate.

At the top end is the 5 star Royal Crescent Hotel, surrounded by gardens and containing its own renowned spa, 45 luxuriously appointed bedrooms and an award-winning restaurant. They are offering a special mid-week rate in February which includes a two or four hour Thermae Spa visit, accommodation, full use of their own in-house spa, and English breakfast, all for £360-£380 (including VAT) per room per night (excludes 14 February).

Another attractive and convenient option is the 3 star Abbey Hotel, built in the 1740s as part of John Wood's grand scheme for Bath, and close to the Abbey, Roman Baths, shops and the theatre. It contains 60 well appointed and comfortable rooms.

Or you could try The Francis (also 3 star) which dates back to 1728 when it was originally built as six private houses. The Francis has 95 rooms and two restaurants which pride themselves on their locally produced food. Its Thermae Spa package offers a one-night dinner, bed and breakfast with a two hour session at the Spa for £92.50 per person (Sunday to Thursday only). To book call 0870 420 1278 and quote SPA 105.

Not far from Bath is Whatley Manor, a Grade II listed converted manor house with 23 individually designed bedroom suites, a cinema, the award winning Aquarius Spa, a Michelin starred restaurant and a top class bar with a glorious terrace on which to while away the time with a perfectly made pre-dinner cocktail. In keeping with the interior, the gardens have been meticulously planned to provide perfect spots in which to wander and daydream. This family owned Relais & Chateaux hotel prides itself on being a hotel with a difference - the focus is on privacy and pampering, with attention paid to every detail so that guests enjoy a special experience which they'll want to repeat.

Since opening three and a half years ago Whatley Manor has accrued a clutch of awards, including the prestigious AA's Five Red Star hotel, a Michelin star for its head chef, Martin Barge, and Most Excellent Spa in the UK and Ireland in the Condé Nast Johansen's Awards. A perfect place to retreat from the world for a few days.

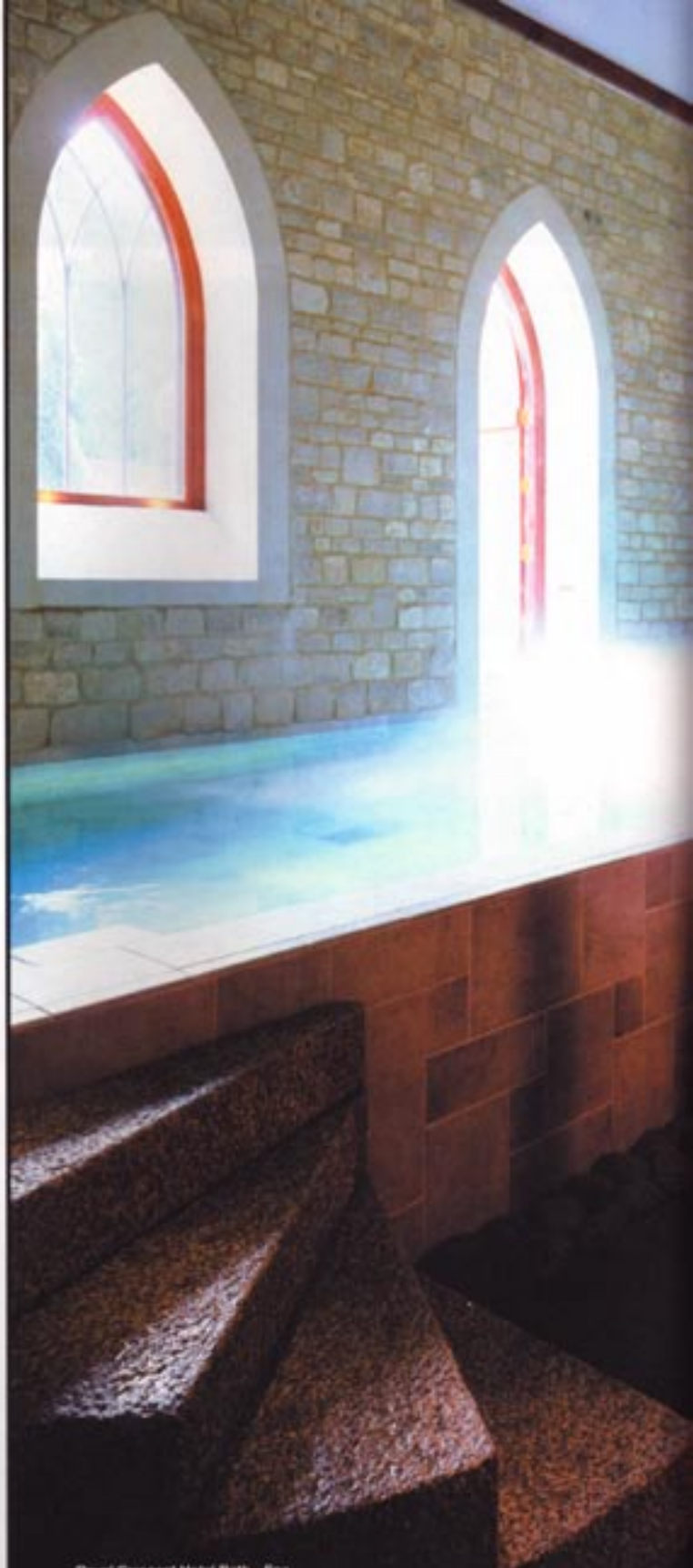
But, if you prefer, you could rent a house, giving you more freedom than staying in a hotel or guest house. Whitstable, on the north Kent coast, has both options - great hotels and B&Bs, and funky sea-side houses to rent. If you want the former, the Hotel Continental has sea views and a great restaurant/brasserie only moments from the beach. But if you want to do your own thing, then the privately owned Beacon House might be just the place. It's a dreamy house right on the seafront with a distinctive New England style verandah for summer lunches, romantic drinks and lantern-lit dinners. The interior has been well thought out and lovingly restored and renovated. A beautiful darkwood Arts & Crafts style staircase contrasts with muted seaside tones used elsewhere. There are five bedrooms, a Smallbone classical kitchen with all the modern appliances, an open fire in the sitting room (perfect for cooler evenings), a sloped lawned garden with woodland and parking for two cars.

The owner, Katrina Brown, clearly loves the house and it shows in the décor and in the care she's taken with the finishing touches. For that reason, she prefers to let to couples or groups of adults rather than families with small children or hen/stag groups; it's also ideal for photographers or film-makers looking for a really interesting location.

There's a glorious pebble beach with multi-coloured beach huts along the front; a locally famous fish restaurant right on the beach; and a working harbour (also selling fish and shellfish to take away). On the high street, there are plenty of tempting individual shops and some of the high street chains (Boots, Threshers, Somerfield), as well as some excellent independent food shops. Whitstable is served by a regular 1 hr 20 train service from London. A perfect remedy for the winter blues!

Harriette Dew is Deputy Editor of Primelocation Magazine.

Contact details overleaf



Royal Crescent Hotel Bath - Spa



Beacon House - Whitstable

PERFECT RETREATS

WITH CHRISTMAS A DISTANT MEMORY
AND EASTER STILL A COUPLE OF MONTHS
AWAY, THERE'S TIME TO FIT IN A SHORT BREAK -
HARRIETTE DEW HAS SOME SUGGESTIONS



Royal Crescent Hotel - Bath



Beacon House - deck view

Contacts

Thermae Spa, Bath

Telephone: 01225 331234 / www.thermaebathspa.com

Royal Crescent Hotel, Standard tariff double rooms from £235 to £380 per night including breakfast.

Telephone: 01225 823333 / www.royalcrescent.co.uk

Abbey Hotel, Double rooms from £90 to £140 including breakfast.

Telephone: 01225 461603

The Francis, Standard tariff double rooms from £130 to £150 including breakfast.

Telephone: 0870 4008223

Whitley Manor, Rooms from £280 - £480 per night, including breakfast, membership of the Aquariae Spa and service charge. Minimum two night booking is required at weekends.

Telephone: 01666 822888 / www.whitleymanor.com

Hotel Continental, Double rooms from £60 - £100 per night Monday to Thursday; £75 - £135 Friday and Saturday. Room rates include breakfast.

Telephone: 01227 280280 / www.hotelcontinental.co.uk

The Beacon House

Telephone/text: / e-mail: