



## Hywel Trewyn and wife Gwenllian put their feet up at Portmeirion



The delights of the spa with a view to die for at Portmeirion

**W**ITH rose-hip pads on my eyes, and a mixture of yoghurt, Welsh honey, kiwi fruit and ground almonds covering my face as I lay on bed in Portmeirion's new spa, I was experiencing my first-ever facial... if only my mates could see me now!

The contents were chosen for me after a consultation by aromatherapist Lindsay Woodman who'd whizzed them up before expertly applying the mixture over a muslin mask.

The facial had followed an hour-long full-body massage, which left me rejuvenated and relaxed.

We had come to the Italianate village near Porthmadog – created by architect Sir Clough Williams Ellis – for exactly that: relaxation.

The village is North Wales' most visited paid tourist attraction last year with 234,000 visitors, making it the fourth most popular in Wales.

Although we'd stayed a night at the hotel previously, this was the first time I'd stayed in

one of the hotel suites dotted in the cottages and rescued buildings that form the village.

We were pleasantly greeted by the staff at the checkpoint and reception where the smell of a wooden fire wafted before we were taken to our rooms at Fountain Suite – aptly enough above a bubbling fountain.

We were immediately smitten by our suite's low ceilings, green carpets and silk curtains adorned with golden stars. There was a Georgian-style chaise lounge and paintings covering the white walls. It had a bedroom, bathroom and shower, but best of all was the view over towards Harlech and the twinkling lights of Talsarnau while we sipped some of the complimentary sherry.

On our first night we were due to dine at the Castell Deudraeth restaurant in the restored castle at the estate's entrance. We walked from our suite to the hotel for pre-meal drink and, strolling along the narrow path and under the walkway by the fountain, we imagined we were in Italy, the

feeling being accentuated by the warm breeze.

Then a complimentary mini-bus took us up the quarter of a mile or so up to the Castell, the restored building near the estate's entrance.

The friendly driver revealed a party of highly-intelligent Mensa members were among the guests staying at the hotel.

Portmeirion is a Mecca for fans of 1960s cult TV series *The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGeechan, which was filmed here. He said the fans often dress up like their eccentric heroes, with some even turning up in Mini Mokes.

There was a pleasant ambience to Castell Deudraeth when we arrived and the smell from the kitchens was lovely.

For hors d'oeuvres we enjoyed lemon and herb marinated olives before feasting on first courses of goat's cheese and salmon, plus salad of wood pigeon, puy lentils, bacon lardons and spinach.

These were followed by mains of Welsh

lamb with mash potato and sea trout – delicious.

We had no room for desserts and chose Irish coffees instead.

We awoke the next morning to the sun shining on another beautiful day. There wasn't a cloud in the sky as we decided to go for an early 40-minute brisk walk around the beautiful headland, returning through the Gwyllt woodland with sights such as the Temple and Japanese bridge along the way.

Portmeirion has something for the eyes to savour at every corner, nook and cranny. We returned to the hotel for fruits and a cooked breakfast and sat by a window to take in the fantastic views.

After breakfast we took a leisurely stroll up to the Mermaid Spa where we had booked an hour-long massage and half-hour facial treatments.

The spa is situated at the top of Portmeirion with superb views down to the village and beach below. As we arrived, one

smiling couple were sitting outside the spa, enjoying the views and a jasmine tea.

The spa has definitely brought another dimension to Portmeirion. It means guests can now be pampered and indulged without leaving the village. The Mermaid Spa Day Package also includes use of the Portmeirion Swimming Pool during the summer months.

The Spa offers everything from aromatherapy to mud wraps, hand and feet treatments, organic make ups as well as a hair and beauty salon – as well as waxing.

Prices at the Spa ([portmeirionspa.co.uk](http://portmeirionspa.co.uk), 01766 772 4441) range from £85 for a full massage with natural facial to £65 for aromatherapy massage and £55 for a back massage.

We had nothing planned for the rest of the day – except relax – which we did by reading the papers in front of the hotel, overlooking the estuary and being entertained by zorbs – air-filled bubbles – being trialled beneath the hotel. We followed that with a walk along the beautiful

sands and took off our shoes before stopping to gaze at a cormorant trying to catch some of the fish jumping in pools by the river.

To finish off our wonderful two nights in heaven, we left Portmeirion to visit Plas Bronndanw and gardens near Rhyd, which was built by Clough Williams-Ellis' ancestor John ap Hywel around 1550.

The winding route from Portmeirion to the Plas is not obviously signposted but we were guided to our destination by the sight of the ubiquitous trademark turquoise and gold colours on the railings nearby. Although less well known than Portmeirion, Bronndanw's gardens are considered by many to be Williams-Ellis' most important creation.

We wandered from the gardens up a path to the Twr tower with fabulous views over the Glaslyn estuary before heading home. It really had been a very welcome and relaxing break in a beautiful setting right on our doorstep. We can't wait to return.

**TRAVEL INFORMATION**  
 ● Hywel stayed as a guest of Portmeirion ([portmeirion-village.com](http://portmeirion-village.com), 01766 770000) B&B with dinner for two from £159

## late deals

**ISLE OF WIGHT** Wow House Company (01242 220 006) two-night weekend break in the Glass House from Nov 9 or 16 for £2,000 (sleeps 11), saving £1,000.

**LAKELAND** Lakeside Hotel & Spa on Lake Windermere (01539 530 001) two-night pre-Christmas break through December from £208, including dinner on one evening.

**LLANDUDNO** seafront 4\* St George's Hotel (0808 168 6030) offers two-course dinner, B&B from £65pp

**CORNWALL** National Trust Cottages (0844 800 2070) The Old School House, Truro, (sleeps two), from Nov 17 for £293.

**BERLIN** Cresta (0844 879 8014) three nights' B&B at 3\* Hotel Altberlin from £169, ex-Manchester Dec 2.

**TENERIFE** Prestige Holidays (01425 480 400) five nights' B&B at Hotel El Nogal from £499, ex-Manchester Nov 20 and incl group B car hire.

**PROVENCE** Club Med (08453 676 767) seven nights' all-inclusive at Opio en Provence, Cannes, from Dec 1 for £515pp (£275 child), Sports Academy lessons in golf, tennis and circus activities.

**COSTA BLANCA** lowcostholidays.com (0800 111 6271) seven nights' all-inclusive at 3\* Albir Garden Resort in Albir from £205, with flights ex-Liverpool Nov 24.

**DUBAI** Tropical Sky (0843 249 5361) five nights' half-board at 5\* The Palace at One&Only Royal Mirage, Dubai, Dec 10-25, from £1,569, ex-Gatwick and transfers and four-hour excursion incl 4x4 dune drive, sand board experience and camel ride.

**THAILAND** Kuoni (01306 747 008) eight nights' B&B at 4\* Cape Panwa Hotel, Phuket, in superior room, from £949, saving up to £809 per couple, with Thai Airways flights ex-Heathrow on May 12-19.

**NEW ZEALAND** Austravel (0800 988 4834) 15-day independent motorhome holiday from £995, ex-Heathrow and 14 nights' Apollo Motorhome hire during May.

**MEXICO** Thomas Cook (0844 412 5970) 11 nights' all-inclusive at 4\* BlueBay Grand Esmeralda Hotel in Riviera Maya from £905, ex-Manchester Dec 4.

**LAWRENCE OF ARABIA & THE SECRET WAR COURSE** HF Holidays (0845 470 7558) three nights' full-board for £379 at Lulworth Cove, from May 15 and Sep 18, package incl group leader, Tank Museum at Bovington Camp, his home at Cloud's Hill and his grave at Moreton, plus visit to Calshot and Beaulieu Estate, the "finishing school for secret agents".

## DAILY POST TRAVEL DEAL OF THE WEEK

### Christmas in the German Valleys

Five days from £279, December 23. See Germany's Rhine and Moselle Valleys on a half-board festive break. Price includes return coach travel with ferry or Eurotunnel crossings, four nights B&B in a hotel in the Rhine or Moselle Valley area, light lunch on Christmas Day and a Christmas Day dinner with wine, plus visits to Rudesheim and Cochem.

● Details Newmarket Holidays (0151 559 1590, [newmarket.travel/lpe](http://newmarket.travel/lpe))