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A grown-up, laid-back, seaside escape at **The Gallivant, Camber**

We all have them: certain aromas, tastes, or places that stir up the fondest childhood memories, and one such place for me is Camber. Located just five minutes away from the quaint town of Rye, this East Sussex coastal bolthole is a typical 'English seaside' resort, famed for its dunes and miles of award-winning sandy beach, and was, for me, the destination of many a bucket 'n' spade childhood holiday. **BY SARAH THORP**



It's fair to say that the allure of sand-filled sandwiches and a melting '99' ice cream aren't quite what they used to be. So, it was with sheer delight that I had the chance to revisit my youth while maintaining the holiday standards to which I've now become accustomed as a guest at The Gallivant.

Preferring the adage 'restaurant with rooms', The Gallivant is primely situated opposite Camber's famous sand dunes and provides just the right mix of laid-back seaside charm with contemporary style and sophistication - think of the most glamorous, yet cosy beach hut and you're halfway there!

Checking into our newly refurbished Garden Room, my guest and I were immediately drawn in by the whitewashed oak floors, floor-to-ceiling pale green cupboards and headboard-cum-bookcase showcasing an array of

handpicked books, all of which aid the 'kick off your shoes and relax' vibe. There are little seaside touches: the model boat above the cistern, the 'gone fishing' do not disturb sign, and the pulley key fob, but basic beach hut this is not. The sleek rollaway sliding door reveals a roll-top bath, which can either be made part of the bedroom space or hidden away into the sleek marble bathroom, a room that also boasts mood lighting and an amazing shower. Welcome touches such as the Nespresso machine, mini bar of (too) tempting snacks, the bluetooth Ruark system, and the flat screen TV and DVD player (for which you can borrow films from a bursting DVD library) combine to create a sumptuous seaside haven.

While it was tempting just to move in and never leave, we had heard the words "afternoon tea" upon check in and needed no prompting to join the other guests in the lounge for the

complimentary tea, coffee and cake served each afternoon. After my second (okay, third!) slice of orange cream gateaux, my guest and I decided a much needed evening stroll was in order to work up an appetite for dinner.

As I said before, The Gallivant is a restaurant with rooms and the restaurant here is a destination in its own right. The dining room is spacious and airy, yet comfortable and secluded; having only 45 covers makes it intimate, but the atmospheric buzz is welcoming and relaxed.

Part of The Gallivant's core ethos is 'fresh and local', and head chef, Oliver Joyce and his team have embraced this so much that 95 percent of all the fresh ingredients are sourced or foraged within just 10 miles.

We were certainly in for a treat...

Taking our seats at the beautifully reclaimed wooden farmhouse window table, it wasn't long - just a few wonderful sips of Chapel Down rosé in fact - until our starters arrived. My guest's ceviche of Dungeness cod was simple, delicate and beautiful; the fresh slivers of cod were served with a sharp and zingy lime, dill and cucumber salad, and my starter of smoked chicken ballotine was divine: the warm flavoursome chicken served in a delicate crumb with hints of garlic.

Next up, my guest's rump of Romney salt marsh lamb served with pearl barley, root vegetables and a rich, warming lamb consomme to complete the dish. My grilled saddleback pork chop was huge and perfectly cooked, nestled proudly on a mound of wholegrain mustard mash with a flavoursome red wine jus and some fresh spring greens.

Literally not wanting the feast of flavours to end, we opted for pudding. My guest chose the dark chocolate pavé. The slab of smooth chocolate mousse with its rich ganache topping and hunks of honeycomb was delicious; just the right side of bittersweet and perfectly paired with the malted ice cream. The dish of the day was undoubtedly my lemon meringue tart however; this deconstructed pudding masterpiece was a concoction of sweet biscuit crumb, sweet and sharp lemon



mousse, candied peel, mini meringue and a new one for me, crème fraîche sorbet, which just pulled the whole thing together.

After a comfortable slumber induced by the heady combination of fresh seaside air and delicious food, my guest and I were treated once again as we headed back to the dining room for breakfast. The centre table laden with goodies such as homemade granola, gluten-free flapjacks and pastries was only beaten by the 'recovery station' boasting 'Bloody (or Virgin) Marys and Berocca! There was also a host of cooked breakfast options offering Burford brown eggs and The Gallivant's own cured bacon and sausages.

I can't wait to make some more (grown-up) Camber memories, right here at The Gallivant!

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