

The cool hotel guide

The Gallivant, Camber, East Sussex

From the outside you might wonder whether The Gallivant actually is a hotel; it looks more like an American motel, with bungalows in an L-shape set around a car park. Come here to stay right by one of Britain's most beautiful beaches — the glorious sandy expanse of Camber Sands is just a few paces across high dunes from this 20-room New England meets Scandi-style hideaway.

In a nutshell

The Gallivant was originally called The Place at the Beach, but the name changed six years ago and it has undergone several makeovers since. The latest, just completed, involved a serious smartening up of rooms and a clever redesign of the back garden with palmettos, lavender, and pink and violet flowers planted amid wooden decks and gravel paths. A "spa hut" for treatments is almost complete in the corner of the garden (it's due to open next month).

What are the rooms like?

Expect reclaimed wood walls and neutral colours with extras such as Bakelite phones and digital radios. The marble bathrooms come with rainforest showers and organic Bramley products. In the main building, there are 16 rooms, including a few facing towards the car park, though this view is well obscured by shrubs. Of the 16 rooms in the main building, the "Baby Hampton" rooms are perhaps the best, with daybeds and blue walls (from £145 B&B), although smaller "Cosy" rooms are comfortable, with

Tom Chesshyre was a guest of The Gallivant (01797 225057, thegallivant.co.uk). New Lydd Road, Camber, East Sussex TN31 7RB; B&B doubles are from £95; wheelchair access rooms; single occupancy discount of £10; dogs allowed in some rooms

Need to know

king-size beds (from £95 B&B). "Garden" rooms at the back of the hotel have french doors (from £115 B&B).

Which is the best room?

The four "Luxury Garden" rooms in the short part of the L-shaped hotel are the best, with stand-alone bath tubs and private decks (from £165 B&B).

So what's the food like?

It's served in a room with a low ceiling, scuffed wood floors, spotlights and not-the-best acoustics. This is an



open-plan space with slatted windows and a few sheepskin-covered armchairs for drinkers at one end. There's a five-course tasting menu (£55), but I opted for three courses à la carte, finding myself slightly disappointed with the crab, heritage tomato and basil starter, which was tasty but tiny. For £9.50 it ought to have been twice the size. My main course of skate with chickpeas and roasted pepper with a side dish of new potatoes and crispy bacon was more substantial, with warm rich flavours, if a bit buttery (£20). The deconstructed lemon tart, meringue and raspberries pudding was a touch fiddly, although nicely sweet and sharp (£8). The wine list includes 22 English wines from nearby vineyards.

Who goes there?

It's popular with Londoners on weekend breaks.

What else is there to do?

Take a long walk along the beach or go for a dip. Visit nearby Rye (ryesussex.co.uk) or Chapel Down winery (chapeldown.com).

The highs, the lows, the verdict

Seven and a half out of ten
The location by the beach is marvellous and the rooms have a cool Scandi look, but prices shoot up at weekends and the restaurant is a little underwhelming.
Tom Chesshyre

Do you agree?

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