

# ESTATE ESCAPE

Sitting on the fringe of the Chatsworth Estate in Derbyshire, the Cavendish Hotel is a treat – in more ways than one. Giselle Whiteaker indulges.



The Cavendish Hotel

It is dark when we arrive at the Cavendish Hotel near Baslow in Derbyshire. My friend Andy I are taking a mid-week break from the city, and spilling out into the quiet cool night air, we agree this is a good decision. The hotel's stone façade is bathed in warm, golden light beaming through the windows, enticing us into the cosy interior.

Richard, the Cavendish's assistant manager, guides us through the hotel's picture-packed passageways, the history of the family-line told in the images on the walls. Our recently refurbished room is a delight, balancing the history of the hotel with contemporary conveniences. Not that we stay here long. Our stomachs are rumbling, leading us back to the lobby to make a dining decision.

Taking our attire into consideration, we choose casual, claiming a

window seat in the Garden Restaurant and gazing out into the night. This conservatory-like space offers a menu filled with favourites. Andy selects fishcakes while I opt for the comfort of the steak burger. The fishcakes are large, pleasantly crisp on the outside with a creamy filling, while the burger ranks high on the list of world's best. The freshly ground steak is cooked medium, beautifully tender, yet keeping its form. With melted cheese, garlic mayonnaise and a selection of heritage tomatoes in a variety of hues, it is simply delicious.

The Cavendish Hotel has a long history. There has been an Inn here for so long it is uncertain when it was built. Originally the famous Peacock Inn, it was the property of the Duke of Rutland and served the turnpike between industrial Chesterfield and the spa town of Buxton. It became the Duke of Devonshire's property around 1830



and in the early 1970's was rebuilt as the Cavendish by Chatsworth Estates, faithfully restoring the historic character of the building. The decoration was supervised by the late Deborah Duchess of Devonshire who introduced many objects and pieces of furniture from Chatsworth. More recent refurbishments have been overseen by Amanda Duchess of Devonshire. Today, the hotel exudes a quiet elegance with an extensive collection of original artwork, antiques and charming furnishings that lure guests to linger. Add the view over open fields and the lure of the Cavendish is undeniable.

It is over these fields that we traipse the next morning, following the path to Chatsworth House. Passing through the kissing gate, we find ourselves meandering through the grounds, placid sheep grazing on the grasslands, unperturbed by our presence. In the distance we spot a herd of deer, and birds flutter from tree to tree. It's an idyllic scene, presided over by the vast property.

Chatsworth is home to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and has been passed down through 16 generations of the Cavendish



The character-packed rooms at the Cavendish



Artwork in the grounds of Chatsworth House

family. The house has over 30 rooms to explore, each packed with treasures. We start at the magnificent Painted Hall, a gallery in its own right, before following the recommended route through the regal State Rooms, the Guest Rooms and the and Sculpture Gallery and Sketch Galleries, packed with priceless artworks. Chatsworth has one of Europe's most significant art collections encompassing works by the Old Masters, contemporary ceramics, artefacts from Ancient Egypt, and modern sculptures, amongst others.



Hand-dived seared scallops

Chatsworth is known for its programme of art exhibitions and we catch the tail end of Sotheby's *Beyond Limits*, a contemporary sculpture exhibition, with artworks dotted throughout the spectacular gardens. We while away several hours here, roaming through the kitchen gardens, the rockery, the rose garden and the ponds. We stroll the length of the Canal Pond, the fountain spraying a plume of water into the wind, and get lost on the maze, stopping to admire the Cascade, an a decorative waterway that burbles down a gentle slope. As dusk falls we warm our hands on a coffee and peruse the outlets in the old stables.

Night comes as something of a surprise. We were not expecting to fill the whole day here, but it has been a fascinating look into another time. As we make our way back through the semi-dark fields, we find the deer herd has moved and is now grazing along our path. We pass close enough to admire the stags' branched antlers and not long afterwards we see the lights of the Cavendish Hotel, guiding us towards dinner.

Seated at a cosy table near the crackling open fire in the Cavendish's Gallery Restaurant, we examine the menu and quickly realise we are in for a treat. We had been anticipating traditional cuisine, done well, but instead Head Chef Michael Thompson has created an array of contemporary dishes, promising intriguing flavours. Andy selects Heritage Tomatoes as an entrée, a dish which includes an airily light tomato essence terrine, a flavour-packed olive tapenade and mozzarella tart – naturally topped with juicy red tomatoes – a dollop of fragrant basil ice-cream, and a shot glass with a refreshing hit of clear gazpacho. I am tempted by the Foie Gras, duck and prune terrine, but a last minute change of heart sees my palate tantalised with hand-dived seared scallops, tumbling off a disk of black pudding, with artistic splotches of cauliflower puree. On the side is a serving of something that looks like white pork crackling and explodes into a salty tang on the tongue.

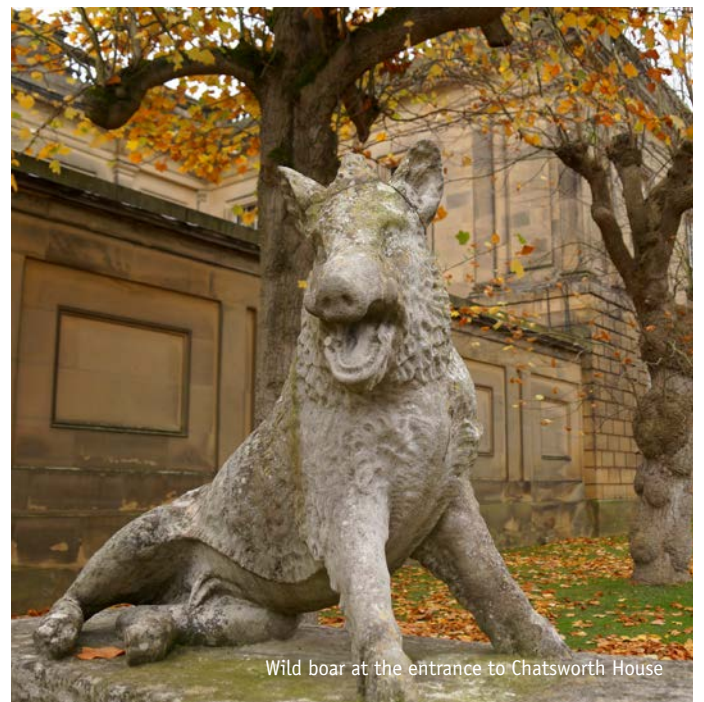




The stunning grounds

We are keen to explore these fascinating flavours further. The roasted venison loin piques Andy's interest, the tender pink meat served on rich haunch bolognaise with celeriac, beetroot, cherries and chocolate adding to the decadent flavours. The roasted loin of lamb melts in my mouth, along with the accompanying feta braised lamb shoulder, served with smoked aubergine and marinated courgettes. Andy completes his repast with a wedge of moist Pecan Pie with chilled blackberries and salted brown butter ice-cream, while I indulge in the sweet tartness of the Tasting of Granny Smith apple, served with vanilla bean ice-cream and accompanied by a cinnamon stick doughnut and a shot of cider mulled wine. It is a fitting end to a phenomenal meal and we roll away from the table beaming smiles of contentment. We are still full at breakfast the next day.

Before we know it, it's time to head back to reality. A final scan of the green fields stretching to the distant hills, Chatsworth House hidden around a bend, and we motor off into the undulating dales and scenic countryside of Derbyshire.



Wild boar at the entrance to Chatsworth House

For further information about the Cavendish Hotel or to book your escape see [www.cavendish-hotel.net](http://www.cavendish-hotel.net)