

If there's one restaurant you visit this week...

A haven of relaxation

don't miss

IN THESE days of Tweeting, Facebooking, Travel Advising and everyone thinking they're a critic, it's almost impossible to call anything a "hidden gem".

Someone somewhere has discovered it.

But as a Cornishman who thought he knew most hotels, restaurants and venues in the county (albeit a Cornishman with Jewish blood and a cockney grandfather – there's some ammunition for you, Cornish nationalists) I was unaware of the Mount Haven Hotel in Marazion.

Already hugely popular with London's chattering classes and those in the know down west, a quick vox pop of colleagues revealed that it might indeed be a bit of a hidden gem.

However, with the likes of The Hotel Inspector herself, Alex Polizzi, featuring it in her new Little Black Book of Hotels (alongside her mother's Hotel Tresanton in St Mawes. Nepotism? Not at all. It's a very good hotel ...) its reputation is sure to grow.

It's also just appeared at the number four spot in The Times' Top 25 Cornish Boltholes.

Mount Haven is an odd but totally engaging mix. A hideous box of a building from the outside hiding a delightful "new age" interior (don't stop reading, hippie-haters) with 18 fantastic rooms. Throw in a restaurant worthy of its two AA rosettes plus holistic therapy rooms and you have something a little bit special.

On possibly the foulest night in August we arrived with the relaxing aroma of incense following us to our magnificent room; a plethora of art on the walls and a four-poster bed enticing us under the sheets.

But none of that, we had to try the handiwork of head chef James Morris ...

There was talk you could see St Michael's Mount from our room – in fact, all of the rooms – but the driving rain put paid to that, until miraculously it appeared right in front of us as quickly as it then vanished again.



Magnificent views from the lounge in the bar area.

Picture: CLOSP

By Lee Trehwela

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On a summer's day on the balcony this must surely be one of the greatest views from a Cornish hotel? I can only guess ...

Owners Orange and Mike Trevillion took over the hotel in 2001 – the building dates back to the 1840s and has been a hotel since the 1920s.

Orange says in the most welcoming welcome pack I've read in a hotel: "When we bought the hotel the vendor congratulated us on now owning the ugliest building in Cornwall."

"Our response was that we had bought the best view in the world. We have been working on the 'ugly' bit ever since."

She's not wrong – the colourful lounge and bar is a delight. Again boasting a stunning view of the Mount, like the rest of the hotel it is a culture clash of East meets West. Buddhas sit under Cornish works of art and there's a plethora of reading matter to accompany a lazy G&T.

Tucked away in the corner, a flight of stairs takes you down to

the light and airy basement restaurant. And, yes, you can just about see the towering Mount from here as well.

Obviously not as much of a hidden gem as I'd imagined, the restaurant is extremely popular and can get very busy so it's advisable to book well in advance as Orange likes hotel guests to dine at their desired time first.

The food is sourced locally as you would hope and expect – the fish is delivered daily from

Newlyn, the beef from St Just, and the pork is also reared nearby.

The chef tries to use only seasonal local vegetables and much of it comes from the hotel's own market garden.

The meal was superb – not a fault with any of the three courses.

Highlights included a beautifully presented wild boar, celeriac and pork belly starter and a quite sublime main course of monkfish with saffron potato, masala spices and coconut. A posh curry in other words, but much more delicate than that would suggest.

My dessert, a white chocolate cheesecake, was that rare thing – a cheesecake that actually tasted like cheese had gone into its creation, beautifully offsetting the sweetness of the chocolate. Served with strawberries and a dark chocolate sorbet, this was quite some pudding.

The Nurse's main of loin of Gloucester Old Spot pork with apricot, sage and savory and mustard dressing is also worth a mention – good homely British cooking but with a modern twist.

With youth on his side, James Morris is one to watch. The BBC's James Martin could soon lose the "sweet baby James" soubriquet ...

Even if you're not staying the night, the Mount Haven is definitely worth a visit for the food alone. A haven of relaxation in one of the most beautiful spots in Cornwall.



Head chef James Morris at the Mount Haven Hotel.

Picture by CLOSP



Quick Bites

Where: Mount Haven Hotel, Turnpike Road, Marazion, TR17 4BU

When: Restaurant opening hours: Lunch is served from noon to 2.30pm (summer) and to 2pm in the autumn, dinner from 6.30pm to 9pm

Price: Rooms: From £130 per night

Family friendly: Children welcome

Parking: Hotel car park

Contact: 01736 710249

Website: www.mounthaven.co.uk

From the Menu

Starters:

Carpaccio of beef, radish and watercress
Gressingham duck, caramelised cous-cous, carrot, vanilla
Seared scallops, salsify, caers, beurre noisette

Mains:

Rump of lamb, tapenade, red wine risotto, salsify
Turbot, smoked ham hock, baby gems and apple
Bass, herb gnocchi, courgette ribbons and salsa verde

Desserts:

Mille feuille: chocolate mousseline, praline ice cream
Lemon parfait: meringues and lemon curd 'Eton Tidy'

The perfect excuse for a pampering at Mount Haven



Katie Trenary and her 'amazing' hands.

THE INFLUENCE of the spiritual world on Orange and the hotel itself is obvious as soon as you cross the threshold, writes Lee Trehwela.

Mount Haven has a growing reputation for its holistic treatments carried out by freelance therapists from the area. All profits go to the hotel's adopted school/orphanage in Karnataka, India. Orange is also responsible for supporting medical camps for tribal villages and a colony of Tibetan monks, who take care of hundreds of orphans.

So if you've ever needed an excuse for pampering yourself, here it is. In order to get a full taste of all that Mount Haven has to offer I reluctantly took them up on the offer of a massage. I say reluctantly because I'm not one for relaxing when people touch me. I'm not a sociopath honest, but I can't help feeling a



little awkward when someone I don't know is kneading my buttocks. Thank God, or should that be Vishnu, that I saw sense as this put all other massages I've experienced to shame. I was put in the amazing hands of Katie Trenary, who trained in

Norway for several years under Sissel Tvedte, who runs a complementary medicine and self-development centre near Oslo. Unlike many "beauty treatment" massages this was a full-blown 90-minute holistic treatment. Katie discussed my current health and problem areas before giving me a

full deep tissue massage from head to toe.

At times it hurt and it was obvious where stress was taking its toll, but with the right breathing technique and the hushed, private environment this was the most relaxing hour and a half I've experienced.

The rest of the day was a complete write-off as I bathed in my blissed-out state.

It's now made me realise that a bit of me-time can really recharge the batteries. But I only want Katie to do it.

A one-hour holistic massage will cost £35, 90 minutes £50.

Other treatments available include aromatherapy, hot rocks massage, reiki, reflexology, deep tissue massage, Indian head massage, and healing and chakra balancing, as well as beauty treatments.

For more information see www.mounthaven.com