

The Paddy Burt Collection

of places to stay

Daily Telegraph



Mount Haven Hotel, Marazion

Cornwall - Southwest

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I had always assumed that Mount Haven was one of those Cornish hotels set in a time warp – but then discover that new owners took over in 2001. Now, I gather, it's all silks from Mumbai , tapestries from Jaipur, and loads of comfort and style. Plus: a view of St Michael's Mount, rising like a fairy castle from the sea.

Fingers crossed, I phone to see if, they have two rooms - our daughter, who's been visiting her granny, is coming with us. Which is why the Burt family is now driving along the coast road, through Marazion's twisty-turny main street until they come to the driveway, signposted 'Mount Haven', leading towards the sea.

"Would you mind filling out this form?" asks a man, appearing like a genie from a bottle. "We're not M15 you know, but we do like to have your car registration number, just in case there's an emergency. The single room is right here" – he points – "and I'll take you up to your room. Let me carry your bags, don't worry, I promise I won't be holding out my hand for a tip."

And what a room! Decorated in cool, modern colours, it includes a chunky Indian coffee table, a basketwork armchair, a wide-screen TV and a balcony with table, chairs and a sea view.

We have arranged to meet in their lounge, a large and welcoming room with sofas, chairs and tables where, at one end, is a bar and, at the other, a terrace with tables and chairs waiting for better weather. "What would you like to drink?" asks a man, who, we discover, is Mike. "G & Ts please," we chorus. "What sort of gin?" he continues. "We have Plymouth, which is thought to have more flavour, and Tanqueray which is more alcoholic." We choose Plymouth, producing our room

key so that he can identify us. "But I know who you are; that's my job." Er, not exactly. He only knows today's alias.

We spend a lot of time discussing the menu. While making up our minds, Mike brings two small prawn-filled appetisers. "I'm not being mean," he says to our daughter, "but I know you are vegetarian."

I decide on spring vegetable soup, followed by baked spring chicken, with lemon, honey and thyme marmalade; my husband, the Falmouth scallops, then grilled fillet of whiting with a lemon and parsley crust; daughter the grilled Cornish goats' cheese parcel with port and red wine marmalade and dressed cress salad. She then negotiates a version of the pan-fried courgette-cake starter, plus vegetables as a main course. "I didn't feel like something in a pastry case," she says.

Mount Haven is built on a hill, and its restaurant is downstairs - outside, is another terrace with plants and flowers. My husband remarks that if they had left the crab out of the crab and vermouth sauce, he wouldn't have noticed; also that his fish is slightly overcooked. As for my chicken, it's so tiny I feel sorry for it.

Upstairs, the beds, with crisp cotton sheets and fluffy blankets, are comfortable and stylish. The TV, though, is disappointing, with little choice of programmes.

In the morning, just in case they have delivered the newspaper, my husband opens the door but, instead of a paper, finds a bewildered Jack Russell. Downstairs, we meet it again and the woman who was with it. "He's called Freddy," she tells us. "His owner is Tom (he's the one who saw us in). Tom, in turn, tells us that the woman's name is Orange "She's married to the mad monk, the bald one with the tonsure." (meaning Mike)

In the breakfast room, we notice – couldn't miss – a man with a Rod Liddle hairdo. "Ooh, another bad hair day, is it?" remarks Tom, appearing with the man's breakfast.

Orange is at the desk when we pay our bill. She tells us that they have been here for four and a half years and that last night they were full. "Could we have a copy of last night's menu?" asks my husband. She turns to me. "Is he a hotel inspector?" she says jokingly. If only she knew!

Mount Haven Hotel, Turnpike Road, Marazion, Penzance, Cornwall TR17 0DQ has 18 rooms.

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