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The St Moritz Hotel is the jewel in the crown of North Cornwall's jagged coastline. Located in the tiny village of Trebetherick, perched atop a cliff top looking out to sea, its contemporary, thoughtful exterior jars agreeably with the wild, desolate backdrop.

Inside, the hotel maintains its modernity by rejecting Cornish homeliness in favour of angles and minimalism: all simple, pale colour schemes and walls adorned with experimental art. It's lavish, but quietly and tastefully so. The 21st century feel, a result of a revamp a few years ago, is in keeping with the Cornwall's love affair with the yuppie (blame the likes of celebrity chef Rick Stein who have opened restaurants here) that you'll either love or loathe.

As such, the plush five star lodgings could be mistaken for London show homes (were it not for the compelling sea views from their balconies). There is a pleasing size and price range. Visiting off peak, two people can expect to pay as little as £100 for

Words  
Janis Tabbear

two nights, with the three bedroom abodes offering the best value: a more than decent size for couples. They're light, airy spaces flawlessly presented and basked in streams of sunlight. With fully equipped kitchens and two televisions per apartment, and every gadget from iPod docks to space age kettles, the apartments are practical to the nines but perhaps less personable for it. Similarly, while some of the other standalone residences conjure ambiances of a peaceful homely suburbia, the gigantic central building has the empty shell feel of university halls of

residence. There are some splendid little dashes to enjoy though, plentiful candles, the odd sculpture, classic, moth-eaten looking Penguin book lying around. A few more gestures like these might do the trick.

Indeed, whenever the feeling that this super contemporary hotel was a bit cold crept in, the faultless service would eradicate it. The members of staff were as friendly and hospitable as at your local B&B.

The hotel also boasts the renowned Cowshed spa. Its presence will impinge on you whether or not you choose to use it: not missing a marketing trick, the hotel rooms come fully stocked with an array of Cowshed's own-brand of high quality product. Albeit nailed to the wall – the luxurious items are not for taking home, which sends something of a mixed message. Aren't free toiletries meant to be the best part of hoteling? The spa is certainly worth checking out though: we enjoyed the full body massage, expertly executed and laced with Cowshed's

intoxicating essential oils. It's a reasonable £60 for the pleasure. Other services available include the Hot Stone Massage (£90) and the spa's signature two-hour Sun & Sea Signature Treatment (£100). It's comprised of a facial and full body massage, exfoliation (using sea salt infused with peppermint oil) and a deep sea detoxifying body wrap.

Outdoing the spa in the value stakes however, is the hotel's restaurant. Head Chef James O'Connor publishes a different Cornish-inspired, indulgent menu daily, favouring local ingredients, with fresh fish naturally taking precedence. The food is of a middling price tag – the only main to exceed the £20 mark is the grilled ribeye steak with goose fat chips and sauce diable: excellent quality meat and worth every penny. It's far worthy of city restaurants that would easily charge twice as much. The most affordable option on the menu is the £45 St Moritz Taste Menu, consisting of four courses of the Chef's choice, along

with a selection of mini puddings. An absolute novelty: glorious peanut butter ice cream and sharp lemon sorbet in the same mouthful is quite an experience.

Sandy and pebbly beaches are a stone's throw away, as are a plethora of charming towns and villages. Pozeath, with its charismatic pubs and ubiquitous community of handsome surfers is nearby; a journey straightforward and short enough to make on foot. It's simply a matter of making a ferocious, rocky coastline and fighting vertigo as you do so – not one for the faint hearted but unforgettable all the same. The splendid town of Padstow is also easily accessible. Jump in the car for a five-minute journey to Rock and then it's a short ferry ride across the mouth of the River Camel, which Trebetherick straddles. You arrive in a delightful, colourful harbour. It's picture perfect – tiny, but bustling with activity. Cornish pasty and ice cream shops are naturally in abundance here, as are posh restaurants

and art galleries. After a light lunch, GT rented some bikes (there are a handful of outlets in the area) and cycled the five-mile length of the Camel Trail, a disused railway line that's bendy and flat and chases some of the most beautiful scenery in the area. If you're looking to be thrifty, there are hiking trails and hidden coves to explore, or if the weather's unfavourable enjoy the hotel's leisure club (popular with locals); a fully kitted out gym, swimming pool and sauna.

It's the perfect city escape. And for that matter, the gentle, scenic train journeys to and from close by Bodmin Parkway were among the most relaxing elements of the trip. The atmosphere was laid back and mellow the weekend of GT's visit, but beware – the place is invaded with families during the school holidays. ■

St Moritz Hotel, Trebetherick, Wadebridge, Cornwall, PL27 6SD (01208 862242, stmoritzhotel.co.uk). GT travelled to Cornwall with First Great Western railways.

# Trebetherick

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