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The Mews Suites at Sopwell House review: A private idyll just outside London



Emily Anderson
September 2022



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The Mews at Sopwell House is a little slice of luxury without the need to take out a hefty mortgage.

I've always fancied myself living in a mews house, sitting by the window looking out onto the quiet cobbled street whilst I edit some very important images. In reality, I live in a terraced house in Runnymede with a view onto the railway tracks that South West trains frequent every half an hour. The Mews at Sopwell House, on the outskirts of, St Albans was a welcome escape from that reality.

Surprisingly close to London, nestled in the Hertfordshire countryside, it is an 18th Century Georgian manor house with a secret oasis: a stunning botanical garden (pictured at the top of this page) designed by Ann-Marie Powell, a gold medal winner at the Chelsea Flower Show, beyond which lie the mews themselves. It's set across from the main hotel, accessed by secure gates and exclusively for use by guests staying in the Mews Suites. The path, lined with alliums and busy with bees, leads you to the entrance of your own private idyll, complete with a wooden gate, courtyard and post box. I couldn't wait to open the door to the Orchid suite, my new home (for the night, at least).



Fresh strawberries and Battenberg cake set up on the coffee table was the perfect welcome. After eating the strawberries and devouring the cake on the tartan chaise and feeling pretty pleased with myself I set about exploring the rest of the room. The glamorous country interior was chic but comfortable as I fired up the Nespresso coffee machine and slouched into the brown leather armchair. The calming room decorated in natural, autumnal colours felt cosy even with the garden full of spring blooms. And if you're staying when it's colder, there's a fireplace which operates at the flick of a switch: push the button, feel the ambience.

The restaurant and spa onside add to charms, and after visiting both in the evening it was a short, refreshing stroll back through a garden glowing with lights to our suite. The Mews at Sopwell House provides guests with a unique, tranquil setting, offering more seclusion and privacy from the outside world than your normal hotel getaway.

Food and drink



The Restaurant at Sopwell House

Within the glamorous main building at Sopwell House there are two restaurants, a cocktail lounge and a glass-fronted conservatory bar. The Brassiere is the value for money option, with what amounts to decent pub food that's ideal for casual dining and families. In the mornings it's where the hotel serves its (superb) buffet-style breakfast.

The Restaurant (no, they clearly didn't spend much time agonising over names) is a more impressive affair, quieter and more atmospheric. It's a two AA rosette-winning place serving modern European food that has won a great reputation locally as a smart and sophisticated place to dine – and the elegant cocktail lounge is ideal for relaxing afterwards.



The cocktail bar at Sopwell House

Things to do

- Enjoy the room, for this place is superbly cosy as hotel rooms go. I grabbed the fluffy dressing gown, adorned my slippers and nestled down in a trusty brown leather armchair. With the fire flickering and my favourite playlist on the REVO sound system I felt exquisitely ready to do absolutely nothing, and in fine style.
- The hotel has a gym, pool, sauna and steam room as part of a spa that's just been through a refurbishment. It's also open late – after dinner, full of food and bubbling with drink, we found it impossible to resist a dip in the infinity-edged hydrotherapy pool, romantically lit on a warm evening.



The Sopwell House spa

- St Albans has plenty of places worth a visit: the [Verulamium Museum](#) is full of Roman artefacts (the city was one of the major centres in Roman Britain), while the unusual [St Albans Cathedral](#) is an intriguing spot, and is the oldest continuously-used place of worship in the country. For younger visitors the [Warner Brothers Studio](#) is close by, an absolute must for fans of the Harry Potter films.

Suites at The Mews start from £244 per night including breakfast for two people. The Mews at Sopwell House, Cottonmill Lane, St Albans. See www.sopwellhouse.co.uk/rooms-suites/mews-suite/ for more details.

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