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The Club at Cottonmill: Inside the UK’s first private members spa

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If you’re looking to relax – and I mean, truly madly deeply relax – The Club at Cottonmill is the very best place to start.

The product of a £14 million, much-thought out renovation, this Hertfordshire haven, based at Sopwell House (within easy reach of St Albans), proudly proclaims itself as the UK’s first private members’ spa. It comprises two options: Cottonmill, which gives hotel and spa guests access to an indoor swimming pool, steam room, sauna, salon, treatment rooms and state-of-the-art gym.



The Club at Cottonmill

But it’s The Club at Cottonmill – the inner sanctum within – that’s really special, and the product of a global quest to cherry-pick the very best elements from top spas across the world. The result? World-class, jaw-dropping facilities that include an organic sauna scented with essential oils, panoramic sauna, therapeutic salt steam room, luxury outdoor shower and much more.

There’s no space that isn’t deliciously inviting, from the uber-luxe, roomy changing rooms (including Dyson hair dryers and Elemis products in the power showers), to the garden designed by gold-medal-winning RHS Chelsea Flower Show designer Ann-Marie Power.



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As someone who seriously struggles to achieve any type of zen, I found it hard to envision just how relaxing a spa experience could be. But after reclining in the frothy warmth of the indoor/outdoor hydrotherapy pool, watching birds circle overhead, it wasn’t hard to conclude that everything at The Club at Cottonmill is conducive to complete relaxation. From the moment you walk into the spa’s reception area you’re swathed in a lavender scent, offered a fruity smoothie and invited to sink into a fireside seat.

Every detail is thought of – there’s piles of thick towels nearby the ginormous day beds, just in case yours has got too damp, while attentive staff hover discreetly, on hand to bring a prosecco to one of the outdoor hot tubs scattered across the garden should you wish.



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We lost ourselves in the trance-like dark of the Deep Relaxation room, reclining into gently-moving seats and lulled by scent and sound. In the Whisper Room we curled up with a book – leave your phone behind and embrace the experience! -on the infra-red loungers, letting the heat sink into our skin.

There’s an exhaustive menu of treatments to try out too, including exclusive Elemis experiences designed around the healing properties of sand and water as well as those from ESPA and Aromatherapy Associates. On the Amber and Quartz Crystal bed – the first in a UK spa – warm crystals mould to your body, helping to ease muscle tension during massage, while in the water-based offerings, a Vichy shower directs water at different pressure points on the body.



The Club at Cottonmill

Lunch is included with your spa pass, whether you’re at The Club or not. The buffet-style offering in the Pantry, located within the Cottonmill area, hits the sweet spot between healthy (sweet potato with tahini, salmon) and the indulgent (chocolate pots and mini cheesecakes).

Of course, you might find yourself so relaxed that getting home isn’t an option. We stayed in one of the 16 Mews Suites within the grounds of Sopwell set in the beautifully landscaped gardens, and dined at the hotel’s restaurant. Food was elegantly classic – think pork belly and pate starters, followed by monkfish or lamb.



The Club at Cottonmill

Make sure you get in for breakfast early (a groaning buffet selection) – overnight guests can return to the spa the following morning before they check out. If you can ever leave, that is.

*Day Access to Cottonmill is available to hotel residents, for whom an upgrade to The Club is available at a supplemental charge. Spa day packages are also available for Cottonmill and **The Club at Cottonmill**.*

Review by Miranda Thompson



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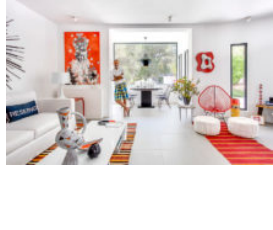
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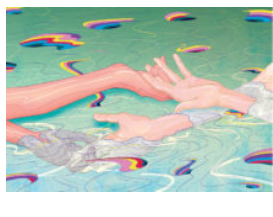
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