

Sopwell House, Hertfordshire Hotel Review

- By Fiona Logan

It's not often that a spa hotel doubles down as a total foodie hotspot but hidden in the leafy countryside of St Albans sits the gem that is Sopwell House.

This four-star Georgian country house hotel is redefining the food scene when it comes to spa breaks, meaning spa-seekers can swap humdrum sandwiches for sashimi and cocktails. We had the privilege of getting a taste of the action; find out what we thought of Sopwell House below.



Tell us more...

Set in Hertfordshire's leafy countryside, roughly a mile outside of the popular Roman city of St Albans, Sopwell House is one of the UK's leading spa hotels. There isn't much this country house hotel doesn't offer; highlights include a top-of-the-range spa with sensory experiences and two excellent on-site restaurants.

Why it's great

It's a well-known fact that the reputation of Sopwell's spa makes people flock there just to try it out. The award-winning "Club at Cottonmill" facilities are impeccable. There's an infinite amount of pools, outdoor hot tubs, and relaxation areas as well as a beautifully landscaped spa garden. What sets Sopwell apart from other exceptional spa hotels is the equal attention to food. Dining at Sopwell isn't something you do just because you're visiting the spa, it's as much a destination too.

What's the food like?

No matter the time of day, there are plenty of options. Head for some light fare, such as pan-fried Scottish salmon or coronation spiced roasted cauliflower, both of which are served up in the hotel's all-day brasserie, alongside a mixture of British and Mediterranean classics, and a seriously top-notch Sunday roast. There's afternoon tea also, which can be had in the pantry (you don't even need to change out of your spa robe!). For a special occasion, head to the hotel's brand-new restaurant Omboo which is drumming up a lot of local praise. Inspired by the spice routes of Asia and the Far East, Omboo serves up mouthfuls of fragrant Asian flavours, in a made-for-sharing environment.



The setting of Omboo alone is quite theatrical. The Asian-inspired decor is really quite beautiful and will have you gazing as soon as you enter. The large tables, positioned in secluded pockets throughout the restaurant will make you feel like you're having a completely private dining experience, even when the restaurant is full to the brim. Omboo's menu is extensive, from sashimi, to miso black cod, but the staff are on hand to explain and guide you through the best selections that'll suit your tastes. A visit to Omboo wouldn't be complete without a glass of their sparkling sake, or a handcrafted cocktail.



At the helm of the ship is Executive Chef, Derrick Chen. Derrick has over 20 years' experience under his belt at many leading hotels and restaurants, including the Michelin-starred Hakkasan – a pioneer in Asian fine dining.

What's in the rooms?

The hotel is made up of a range of different rooms and suites, many of which offer dining and spa packages, which can work out beneficial on the pricing front. We stayed inside the newly-renovated Mews Suites – charming red brickwork annex apartments tucked inside a privately gated garden, with private hot tub access. Each suite has everything you need for a cosy overnight stay; including coffee machines, treats from the kitchen, a large bathroom and dressing table. You could spend hours wandering through the beautifully manicured gardens (designed by Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medallist, Ann-Marie Powel) taking in the scents of fresh orchids and wild flowers. Or you could spend all day long tucked up under the king-size beds' duck-feather duvets. Either option sounds idyllic to us.



What's nearby?

If you've got time, do make sure you take a trip into the centre of St Albans. This bustling market city is a vibrant showcase of boutique shops and top-notch restaurants. Head to Hatch for the best brunch in town, drop into the Boot for a pint in an old-fashioned pub or try out Infuse for the best Indian food you'll have tried in a while. If you're lucky enough to be in town on Wednesdays or Saturdays, you'll be able to browse the famous St Albans market.

What's not so great?

Given the nature of it being a country house hotel, the location is slightly isolated. This makes it the ultimate relaxing getaway but admittedly, you can't access local amenities by foot and it's likely that you'd need a car to get there, or you can jump in a 10-minute taxi from St Albans City train station.

What's the damage?

Stay and dine packages start from £161 per person, per night, with overnight accommodation in a deluxe bedroom, breakfast, 3-course brasserie dinner and spa access.