

Holidays

Luxury chill-out in Torbay

IT'S the small touches that make staying at South Devon's Cary Arms such a magnificent experience.

The beautiful orchids in each room, the pots of pansies on the cottage terraces, a turn down service with a Cary's Arms stick of rock left on your pillow — and especially the staff headed by Jen the manager and Jo in marketing who are all so friendly and welcoming.

The Cary Arms, an AA 5-star inn and Visit Britain 5-star inn (the only one in Torbay), is on the waterside of Babbacombe Bay.

Eight luxury New England-style rooms have magnificent sea views (seven have sea facing balcony or terrace) and if you're lucky you will catch sight of the pod of dolphins that visit the bay regularly.

Unfortunately we missed them, although we did spend a relaxing and lazy time sitting on our balcony at sunset with a couple of glasses of the complimentary Plymouth Sloe Gin as a nightcap in search of the 'happy fish'.

Some of the rooms even enable you to enjoy your sloe gin and the view while soaking in the bath, a wonderful creation on pedestal feet with a fantastic sea view. This touch of decadence is a quirky design feature by Lann de Salvary, who managed a complete renovation and refurbishment of the Cary Arms, which reopened at Easter, 2008.

Each room also has a 32in flat screen DVD/CD LCD TV, wardrobe complete with comfy robes, cookies, water, exclusive Temple Spa toiletries, Italian sheets and a view like no other over this beautiful bay.

There are also three fisherman's cottages available, which can accommodate two, four or eight guests. Each has a private terrace, while the cottage for eight has a large garden on the hillside which includes an area with a gas barbecue, waterfall and summer house all overlooking the bay.

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From the moment we arrived to the morning we left, fishermen were catching fish off the adjoining pier.

Jen, the Cary Arms manager, told us that the mackerel caught by the fishermen would be used on the menu that night — talk about sourcing local produce and keeping it fresh!

We sampled Ben the chef's 2010 award-winning roasted Creedy duck breast with a bed of braised red cabbage, parsnip and sweet potato crumble — a melt-in-your-mouth, delicious, flavoursome heaven!

It's no wonder the pub was continually busy with visitors throughout the evening, making the most of the fish and chips, ale and terraces leading down to the sea.

With eight moorings in the bay, the gastro pub is also open for business from sailors on yachts and motor boats who are looking to leave the galley behind for a couple of hours and have a home-cooked, locally-sourced wild seabass, Brixham crab, Devon steak or seared ostrich fillet for lunch, from noon until 3pm, or dinner, from 6.30pm until 9pm.

The Cary Arms also has a wedding licence for up to 35 in and around the 'pod' which offers a totally unique wedding venue experience. The glass sphere of the 'Pod', with a backdrop purely of sea and far-reaching Lyme Bay coastal views would make for a wedding day never forgotten.

Other activities that can be arranged are fishing from the jetty, water sports including scuba diving and water skiing, horse riding and golf.

To add to its attractions, the beautiful South Devon coastal footpath runs alongside the pub. And, if you don't feel that energetic, you can relax in the spa at the venue and treat yourself to hot stone back massages, Elemis skin facials, pedicures or manicures.

Alternatively, you can visit some fabulous attractions that are within walking distance to half an hour away by car. Greenaway House, mystery writer Agatha Christie's home — check arrival details for

Avoiding the extra hassles of volcanic ash delays and airline strikes, **CLAIR SKELLEY** discovers a tranquil piece of Torbay



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Cary Arms 'The Inn on the Beach' at Babbacombe, a suite and bathroom, the view from a terrace, the outdoor pod

car parking and ferry times if you decide to visit this stately home — is nearby. So is historic Torre Abbey and charming Cockington Court. Plus families will love to visit Kenta Cavern, the Living Coasts animal attraction, Paignton Zoo, Bygones, a privately run museum which illustrates everyday life during the last two centuries, Babbacombe Model Village and Babbacombe Cliff Railway.

With all this on my doorstep, it got me wondering why I used to feel that a weekend away needed to be a manic dash to a European country, especially now with the extra hassles of volcanic ash, airline strikes and roadworks on the way to the airport.

Now, all I'll do is take myself half an hour away to a tranquil piece of Torbay and chill out to the max. Sounds like a plan.

CONTACT The Cary Arms by phone 01803 327110, e-mail: enquiries@caryarms.co.uk or log onto the website www.caryarms.co.uk.

Rates: April to October, luxury double with balcony £250; double occupancy B&B or beach cottage

TRAVEL facts

with four double bedrooms, three bathrooms, large garden and barbecue £2,500 for the week or £1,250 for three nights.