



Welsh mountain hideaway

If you're looking to escape the rat race, Bodysgallen Hall and Spa offers a tranquil hidden retreat and oozes cosiness

On the winding drive up to Bodysgallen Hall and Spa you'll spot a small townhouse and a sign reading "Welcome to your hotel... no, only kidding!"

It's a first indication of the good-humoured, warm welcome that lies ahead as you ascend higher into the hills, through woodland and finally into the hotel entrance – now in no doubt



Country classic: Bodysgallen Hall – a spectacular rural setting, cosy interiors and a blissful spa



that you've left the rush of urban life far behind.

Bodysgallen Hall and Spa – near Llandudno – is a National Trust-owned, Grade I listed house set in 220 acres of gardens and parkland. It has been named AA Hotel of the Year for Wales 2012-2013, adding the honour to a long list of awards. As we hurried in from the pouring rain, we began to see why – the quiet, cosy warm lounge with its stunning fireplace couldn't have been more welcoming.

The hotel boasts a total of 31 bedrooms split between 15 house and 16 cottage suites. We were cheerily shown to ours, Smithy Cottage, which was situated a short walk from the main reception. Smithy is a spa cottage, adapted from an old farm building, with its own private garden. Full of history, the cottage is decorated with antique furnishings – brass lampshades, vintage ceramics, paintings and vases adorn the surfaces, adding to the cosy, lived-in feel. And

with a comfy sofa, plenty of books and a desk for any (hopefully fleeting) work duties it's easy to imagine holing up here for the entire duration of your stay.

But, once the North Wales rain had subsided, the sun came out gloriously and offered the perfect opportunity to explore the attractive gardens. Exclusive to hotel members, they have won awards for their restoration work and include lily ponds, 17th century parterre box hedges, a rose garden and shrubs. Take a stroll there first thing in the morning and you'll have the amazing smells and the morning dew all to yourself.

From the gardens you can access the Woodland Park and spend hours exploring. Be sure to stop off at the terrace that offers fantastic views of Conwy Castle (the oldest part of the hotel is thought to have originally been a watchtower for the fortress). But if you don't want to venture outdoors you can relax and enjoy pampering treatments in the townhouse spa that houses a gym, sauna, whirlpool and a stunning heated swimming pool.

We enjoyed dinner in the Main Hall, where the excellent British cuisine has been awarded three AA Rosettes and the delicious food is prepared from fresh local produce. The hall also has an impressive view overlooking the gardens – so a window seat is a must. For something more informal, try Bistro 1620 where they serve light bites for lunch as well as an all-day menu.

Bodysgallen offers so much to see and do without you having to leave the calm surroundings of the hotel grounds that it is the ideal place to unwind – the definition of being busy doing nothing at all.

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FACT FILE



Getting there Bodysgallen Hall and Spa is two miles from Llandudno Junction station and taxis can be arranged on arrival. Trains from London Euston take approximately three hours and tickets start at £79.30 for an off-peak return. Hire a car with Hertz (www.iod.com/carrental).

Accommodation Rates vary between house and cottage suites. Cottage suite prices range from £155 to £265.