

A sensory journey



Name: Cliff House Hotel
Address: Ardmore, Co Waterford
Telephone: 024-87800
Email: info@thecliffhousehotel.com
Internet: www.thecliffhousehotel.com
Spa treatment: Voya Deluxe Facial
Cost: €135

Review: Catherine Shanahan
Treatment: "I am taking you on a sensory journey," the therapist said, and she wasn't kidding. Against a backing track of gentle mood music and inhaling the expertly bottled and bracing aroma of rock pools and seaweed, I spent 90 minutes being brushed, oiled, massaged and generally spoiled in a manner not experienced since the first throes of a new romance. This was the Voya Deluxe Facial, an holistic treatment, using seaweed hand-harvested on the Atlantic coast and incorporating a back body brush and back, neck and shoulder massage.

Score: 9

Staff: Blend in with the mood music: calm and friendly without conversation overkill.

Score: 8

Hygiene: Not a stray hair in sight in the glorious infinity pool, outdoor Jacuzzi, poolside steam room and sauna or changing rooms which are hung liberally with the thickest of towels and bathrobes.

Score: 10

Spa quality: First rate. Softly-lit noiseless rooms; an infinity pool extending outwards over Ardmore Bay; a tranquility room with a full frontal view onto the bay where loungers can watch nature at its magnificent best. Relaxation is accompanied by a choice of herbal teas.

Score: 10

Food: If the amuse bouche had been the end of my dining experience, I could not

have complained. A combination of carrot panna cotta, Ardsallagh goat's cheese mousse, saffron foam and wild fennel bread, the taste was exquisite.

Starters: McGrath's Black Angus Beef with a 62C egg. This, the waitress explained, is considered the perfect egg, cooked in the oven for two-and-a-half hours at 62C. It was a very good egg, along with the potato cracks, scallion juice and Blethe Glethan Cheese that made up the starter.

I tried to squeeze in some dessert of local rhubarb, poached and dried, with yoghurt spheres, tonka bean pudding and rhubarb red wine sorbet. It didn't disappoint.

The cost per person was €62.50, with the option of tasting menu instead of a starter for €80.

My only criticism is I would have liked a lighter dinner option, as we ate after 8pm.

Breakfast was superlative: breads and scones are baked inhouse and accompanied by the freshest of fruit and excellent coffee. I also had delicious smoked salmon with poached egg, spinach and tartar sauce.

Score: 8

Accommodation: The Ash House Cliff Veranda Suite is a split level heaven replete with a veranda, stunning sea views, a fine-sized bed and crisp cotton sheets. Below stairs was a tasteful lounge area, with flat screen TV, CD and DVD player, minibar and safe, and a smattering of books to cater for all tastes and ages.

For those with cash to splash, this top-of-the-range suite comes at a cost of €450 a night. My only concern was the table and chairs on the veranda, a climbing frame to a toddler with few years and less sense. My advice? Leave the children at home.

Score: 9

Total score: 54 out of 60