

## THE TIMES ONLINE

### **Stunning Views And Seaweed Facials At An Uncrowded Coastal Spa In County Waterford.**

Fran Yeoman

Without doubt its fabulous location, which provides perhaps the best view that I have ever enjoyed from a hotel bedroom. Spa-goers, including day guests, can soak in the vista from the swimming pool, relaxation room and best of all, outdoor hot tub. The pictures of the view on the enticing website looked too good to be true. They weren't.

**AMBIENCE:** Despite being brand new (the hotel opened at the end of April), Cliff House feels significantly older and cosier, thanks to clever décor. The relatively small spa, called The Well, is by contrast all mod cons. While the changing rooms and reception are lovely the treatment rooms could perhaps benefit from a few of the softening touches present elsewhere in the hotel.

**QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE:** I had the Anne Semonin Serenity package, which involved a hot-stone massage followed by a facial, taking a total of almost an hour and a half. My first experience of hot stones was an enjoyable one, with Nicola, my therapist, working hard on the knots in my shoulders before turning to the business of a thorough and glow-inducing facial. My boyfriend had an anti-stress back massage, which he loved, although it is difficult to imagine a place where you are less likely to be stressed in the first place than Cliff House. The outdoor hot tub and relaxation room rounded off a very pleasant couple of hours in what appeared to be an under-used spa. Another plus point was the classical music played in the treatment rooms, which makes a welcome change from whale noises. The only real disappointment was that the door to the sauna did not quite close properly, allowing much of the heat to escape.

**PRODUCTS:** Having never had a French facial, I can confirm only that the products smelt nice and gave my complexion a healthy boost. The Well also offers facials using Voya products, which include seaweed harvested from Ireland's Atlantic coast and claim to be particularly suitable for dry or mature skins. Other treatments range from ear coning and reiki to the more traditional luxury hot shave treatment for men

**FOOD:** Dinner in the hotel restaurant, the House, was a joyous couple of hours. Everything on a six-course tasting menu was absolutely delicious, with matching wines explained to us by a friendly sommelier to complete the experience. Dishes such as scallops with cauliflower and black pudding were beautifully presented, but it was ingenious touches such as fennel sauce in a pipette, a chocolate mousse with olive oil and salt, and a delicious poached egg that had been cooked all night at 62C that stole the show.

The House also offers a three-course menu, but from peering at other guests' food I imagine that also involves a quantity of calories that you probably perhaps wouldn't want to eat for more than a day or two running, particularly if spa-going purity is your thing. For lighter fare, a bar menu wisely makes the most of the hotel's location and is heavy on local fish and seafood with dishes including open crab sandwiches and seafood pie.

**IN-CROWD:** There are only 39 rooms at Cliff House and so 'crowd' is maybe pushing it, although American and upper-crust Home Counties accents were among those heard alongside Irish tones. If you ever did feel the need to escape the other guests, there is a cliff-top walk that starts from the hotel entrance and takes in a 9th-century cathedral, World War Two lookout post and 19th-century lifeboat station, as well as gorgeous sea views, within a few kilometres. Alternatively you can stroll along

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Ardmore's sandy beach or ask the valet to fetch your car and set off along the scenic South-east coastal drive, which begins in the village.

**WALLET WATCH:** Rooms at the Cliff House start at €200 a night (£158 at the current, somewhat unfavourable exchange rate) and reach €395 for the stunning, split level veranda suites. The tasting menu cost €72.50 per person and was worth every Euro and cent. The serenity package in the spa cost €115 and the 45-minute anti-stress back therapy is €80.



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