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HOTEL REVIEW
ESCAPE



CLIFF HOUSE HOTEL WATERFORD

PERCHED ON A CLIFF FACE AND WITH A MICHELIN-STAR RESTAURANT, THE CLIFF HOUSE TICKS ALL THE BOXES, SAYS TONY CLAYTON-LEA

What's it all about?

The Cliff House Hotel is aptly named – there it is, improbably stitched onto the coast, overlooking the popular picturesque summer resort village of Ardmore in west Waterford. Since its opening a couple of years ago, the hotel has garnered a wealth of acclaim, positive reviews, awards and stars (notably in The House Restaurant, which nabbed a Michelin star in January 2010). The 39 rooms here are down to earth while simultaneously exuding subtle, generous luxury and the hotel's GM, Adriaan Bartels, is one of Europe's most highly regarded. The result is an unruffled and utterly rewarding hotel experience.

What are the rooms like?

We stayed in a very spacious Cliff Veranda Suite that had wide-open views of the Ardmore coast and the Irish Sea. There is surely little more comforting than looking out a window upon a raging swell of tide and surf and being cosseted by warmth, cool décor, original artwork, and a split-room with two massive television screens

and two faux log fires (admittedly, not as good as the real thing, but, hey, you can't have everything). Bathrooms are generously proportioned, and come with one of life's ultimate self-indulgent treats: underfloor tile heating.

What about the food?

The entrance to The House Restaurant is via a spiral staircase leading down from the reception area, and while the room is casual and comfortable (with those great sea views), there is little about it that is exceptional. The food, however, is precisely that. Dutch Head Chef Martijn Kajuitier comes from what has been termed the "Tower of Babel" approach to restaurant cooking: many dialects, many influences, and many contemporary gestures. In lesser hands, such a mix could turn nasty, but Kajuitier turns potential conflict into something so original and taste-bud beguiling it's quite amazing.

Thoughts on location?

The Cliff House Hotel is most assuredly on a cliff face that most certainly looks out onto the ever-changing vista of the

sea. Even during the winter months, it's quite spectacular.

What to see and do?

As you leave reception for your room, you'll notice a range of wellington boots lined up alongside the natural slate walls of the hotel. These wellies are not for decoration, but rather a means to experience the cliff walks, which are minutes from the hotel. A short walk into Ardmore will bring you to a lovely, widespread beach (complete with sandcastle-effect public toilets!) that affords great views of the surrounding area. If the weather is bad, fear not, as the hotel has a quality spa and leisure centre.

What to like?

The location, the interior (the walls of the hotel are constructed with slivers of slate, while Irish art is used throughout) and the quite exceptional food.

What not to like?

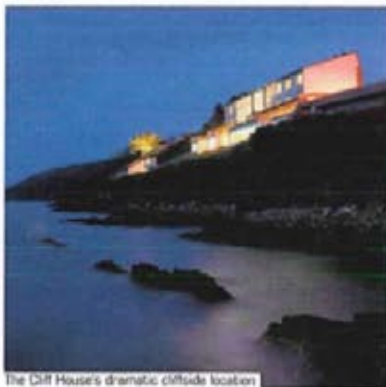
The hotel's layout is a little bit confusing. Another minor issue is that the selection of books in the bedrooms seems to be exclusively geared towards American visitors, and there's not a single author whose name you'd even vaguely recognise.

Hotel details

Cliff House Hotel
Ardmore
Co Waterford
Tel: +353 24 87800
thecliffhousehotel.com
Rooms from €225



The Ballymore Inn



The Cliff House's dramatic cliffside location

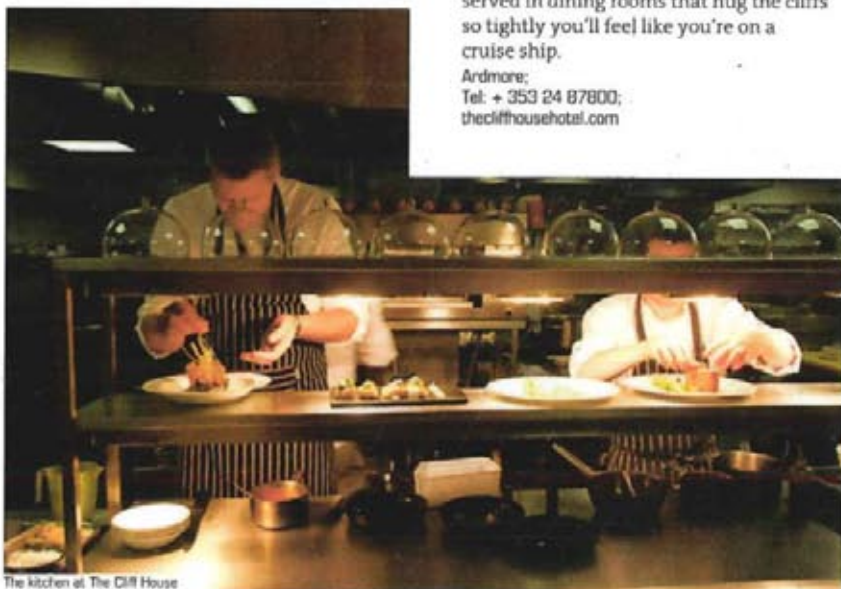
The Cliff House
County Waterford

Chef Martijn Kajüter may hail from the Netherlands, but the food from his state-of-the-art kitchen at the Cliff House is defiantly Irish. And yes, that includes salmon smoked on the plate.

The latter, sourced from Clare Island, is just one of the dishes that helped the House Restaurant win a Michelin Star just 18 months after opening (Kajüter holds Ireland's only star outside of Dublin). "I'm going to be very dynamic on menus," he once told me. "If there's a storm at sea and they catch halibut instead of turbot, that's fine. I'm not going to pick a fight with nature."

Think molecular gastronomy made to a local-and-seasonal mantra. Dishes like Lismore lamb (with artichoke, wild spinach pâté and toasted garlic) or Helvick monkfish (with saffron and lemon purée, charred stone leeks and sea vegetable vinaigrette) are lovingly listed on a €65 three-course menu, and served in dining rooms that hug the cliffs so tightly you'll feel like you're on a cruise ship.

Ardmore;
Tel: + 353 24 87800;
thecliffhousehotel.com



The kitchen at The Cliff House