



Breakaway

Away FROM IT ALL

Just a stone's throw from the sea, yet backed by vast expanses of wild moorland, it's easy to lose yourself at the idyllic Raithwaite Sandsend

The drive to Sandsend from points south, north and west (and east should you arrive by boat, although it isn't necessarily recommended) takes you through some spectacular scenery, and provides a fitting foretaste to your stay in this very special part of the world.

Tucked between the sea and the moors, and just a few miles from historic Whitby, Raithwaite Sandsend is an oasis of calm within a contrasting landscape of tranquil woodland, manicured gardens, streams and lakes. When we visited, the country was just tentatively emerging from lockdown and it's fair to say that the many guests (us included) seemed a trifle nervous about what was clearly their first trip away for some time. We need not have worried, such was the obvious care of the hotel staff, despite the fact the hotel was very busy all weekend, and they would have been far from match-fit under the circumstances.

The hotel has undergone a bit of a transformation over lockdown and now boasts a new restaurant, and chic Bar 1822, and there's even a new Crab Shack a short stroll away down on the beach serving fresh locally-caught fish.

Our (dog-friendly) room was in the courtyard, just across from the main hotel reception. Full of character and set over two floors, the small sitting room had an adjoining terrace overlooking the stream that runs through the grounds, whilst upstairs was a generously sized bedroom.

Settling in is always fun in a new hotel, and as we'd had a fairly busy week we thought a walk followed by a visit to Bar 1822's outdoor terrace might be in order... which proved an excellent strategy. There are lots of opportunities for walks through the hotel's expansive grounds (all 100 acres), and our first excursion took in lakes, the formal gardens and some of the surrounding

woods. The early summer was bringing out some of the very best colour in the formal garden, whilst the shaded woods were carpeted in wild garlic.

The hotel might have been busy but we didn't pass anyone on our walk, and successfully doubled backed on ourselves to the terrace. Ordering an early evening drink, we enjoyed the peace – it was just what the doctor ordered – and with fast and friendly service (a common feature of our whole trip) and a view of the gardens below we couldn't have been happier.

After a somewhat leisurely turn around we headed to the restaurant for dinner. The style is contemporary and polished, but with a relaxed feel, and in one designated area four-legged friends are welcome, which seemed popular all-round. The menu builds from a base of local produce which at its closest includes the hotel's gardens for herbs and vegetables, nearby

Whitby for fish, and game from the surrounding moors. The dishes didn't seem overly complex but were really enticing.

Dressed Whitby crab and king scallops and pea and sorrel purée stood out to start, and roast hake and Ilkley chorizo with cherry tomatoes and clams and a classic bouillabaisse sounded just right as our next choices. There were some great looking dishes from the grill too (which luckily we sampled the following evening). The wine list is comprehensive and we settled on a decent Rioja Crianza 'Noralba' Castillo de Mendoza – a good choice. Although busy, service was informed and slick, not rushed – just right. Our conversation ebbed and flowed, from the various artworks for sale around the hotel, to our plans for the following day. We agreed a walk to Whitby was the main focus and with that, further sustenance was probably required, so we happily selected a strawberry Eton mess and cheese of the day to round off the meal. Resisting a nightcap, we headed to the comfortable confines of our room, where after a short-time we were safely in the land of nod.

We woke to a beautiful day and the deep blue sky promised much. After a filling breakfast we headed out. Raithwaite enjoys an enviable position and walking through the grounds you see a number of self-catering cottages which are also available to guests, as well as early signs of exciting new plans for more lodges towards the end of the winding drive. Leaving the estate, we crossed open farmland and dropped down steeply to the beautiful wide sandy bay that is Sandsend. The steep cliffs are speckled with wonderful properties all enjoying views of what is surely one of Yorkshire's best beaches.

Despite the warm sunshine the beach was relatively quiet, and we headed south towards Whitby along the sand. It's a great walk, and Whitby is a really beautiful town, riddled with history. Captain Cook looks down from one side of the Esk estuary, and the ruins of the historic Abbey oversee the other. Between is a collection of multi-coloured cottages, small boutiques, gift-shops and cafés which tumble towards the harbour. Then there's the fish and chips... the scent wafted in the air and we simply couldn't (and didn't) resist. It was just so good people watching, having a cold glass and chatting in the sunshine. Whitby was very busy, but we decided that out of season (is that a thing this year?) it would be a great place to explore a little more. Heading back to Raithwaite, the tide and lowish cloud had ventured onto the shore so we walked along the cliff top to the hotel.



‘The menu builds from a base of local produce which at its closest includes the hotel’s gardens for herbs and vegetables, nearby Whitby for fish, and game from the surrounding moors’

In an action-packed day, we had just enough time to get changed for our next mission aboard an SUP – better known as a stand-up paddleboard. When I say ‘our’, that really means my beloved wife with myself in support (poor balance you know). The hotel has an in-house surf school and can arrange tuition in surfing and SUP, and with my wife suitably attired in a borrowed wetsuit we were taken into Whitby by Head Concierge, Simon James. Every hotel should have a Simon, but trust me, very few do. Knowledgeable, charming and amusing in equal measure, he looked after us brilliantly.

Leaving us by the Esk, we met instructor Anita. She was great, as was the weather, with the Esk in a particularly benign mood. I walked the riverbank where a steam train chugged by, whilst my nearest and dearest paddled upstream towards the Victorian viaduct. It's a Whitby walk I'd never done before but one I would heartily recommend, but apparently, the journey upstream is even better by SUP.

Back at the hotel The Terrace bar beckoned in the late evening sunshine, and we reflected on a great day with a sense of real achievement.

As we left the following morning after a leisurely breakfast the sun continued to shine as we turned inland and headed back over the North York Moors. More relaxed and refreshed than we had felt for some time (even though we hadn't found the time to try out the hotel's spa), we realised we had found a beautiful, peaceful spot which offered a real taste of Yorkshire at its best.

*Raithwaite Sandsend
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