

A black and white close-up portrait of Audrey Hepburn. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a soft expression. Her hair is styled in a classic short bob with bangs. She is wearing large, dark, circular hoop earrings. Her hand is visible, resting near her chin. The background is dark and out of focus.

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA MAGAZINE

JUNE 2012 • ISSUE 004 • £5.60

Fashion
FORWARD

AUDREY HEPBURN
& DAPHNE GUINNESS

*Summer
Holiday*

FLOWERS, FILMS & FORMULA 1



THE WILD GREEN *Landscape*

OLIVIA SHARPE discovers the best in luxury and home comforts can be found without a flight abroad at Gilpin Lodge & Lake House in the Lake District

IF WORDSWORTH'S PARENTS had decided they had had enough of the Lakes and shipped their young children to the nearby city of Blackpool, the shape of early 19th century literature would be rather different. All one has to do to appreciate why Wordsworth ever "wandered lonely as a cloud" (if you had ever wondered yourself) is take a walk across the Lake District's craggy hills. These bring tourists flocking from around the world to visit Cumbria; not for for wandering, as a cloud or otherwise, but walking, walking and more walking.

Having never been one for exercise, I was slightly uneasy when I

found myself heading to this mountainous region famed for its outdoors activities. It's not that I don't like a good view; I'd just prefer to be taken to it by helicopter. So I knew I needed a luxurious country hotel, somewhere I could return, body aching, to be pampered – hence Gilpin Lodge as the ideal choice.

Family-owned and run, Gilpin Lodge is all about the personal touches. Set up by the Cunliffes family, the aim was to create a home away from home. Although the decor speaks of an old-fashioned English country home, the familiar touches, although homely, are far from quaint; neutral colours, wood



flooring and built-in fireplaces create a contemporary, stylish interior. On a similar note, the staff successfully achieve the perfect level of attentiveness without being intrusive. Greeted by Zoe Cunliffe on arrival, she made sure we had everything we needed before the on-hand chauffeur escorted us to our rooms. From then on, we were left in peace.

The latest addition to the hotel, the Lake House, consists of six suites a mile away from the main hotel; if, like me, you have never been that fond of other people, this is the place to be. Inside, the English country feel is retained, but there is a sleeker finish than the main hotel and the Lake House boasts its own drawing room, open-plan kitchen, and sun-filled conservatory along with the latest magazines, iPads and flat-screens. The best thing about staying here is exclusive access to the spa. After dinner, I recommend a dip in the hot tub, perfectly positioned next to the lake and underneath an Acer tree; with a glass of red in hand, this is the 21st century answer to getting back to nature.

Credit must be given to the food which is superb. Head Chef Russell Plowman has created an excellent balance between using fresh, seasonal and traditional food and keeping it modern with delicious touches including a palette-cleansing rosemary mousse. The locally-produced lamb, served braised, with sweetbreads and garlic potato purée, is everything you hope a lamb dish to be; fresh, tender and full of flavour. To savour true Cumbrian flavours, choose the halibut served with earthy mushrooms and sage. For dessert, the pistachio and olive oil cake, with raspberries and yoghurt sorbet, is delicate, moist and utterly more-ish. Mention should also be made of the in-house sommelier, who never failed to deliver. The restaurant offers a wine pairing with every course and this is definitely worth doing.

Whilst staying at Gilpin Lodge, you can very happily and without judgment spend your entire vacation in the hotel, taking in the views from the comfort of an armchair. Despite this, I felt compelled to venture out and see what Wordsworth and Coleridge made all the fuss about. Well aware that not all of us are on Les Stroud's level, the hotel provides pre-planned walks for varying fitness levels. My guest and I braved the walk up Cat Crag; the 360° panorama stretching as far as the Isle of Man is well worth breaking into a sweat. Situated near Crook Village at the southern end of the Lake District, the hotel is not too far from the district's main tourist attractions, including Wordsworth's home as an adult. Aesthetically, the cottage is modest and our guide brings the experience to life with colourful anecdotes; the most memorable of these involved Samuel Coleridge's visits, when he crept out of the cottage to go for breakfast at the local inn in order to escape another serving of porridge.

To conclude, I feel it only appropriate to turn to the great poet himself to sum up the natural wonders of the Lake District: "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags / A rude and natural causeway, interposed / Between the water and a winding slope / Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore / Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy". ■



MORE INFORMATION

Rooms at Gilpin Hotel & Lake House are from £290 per night including dinner, bed and breakfast and based on two sharing. Gilpin Hotel & Lake House is just two miles from Lake Windermere and a short distance from Oxenholme Train Station with regular trains running from Euston Train Station. For further information visit www.gilpinlodge.co.uk or call 015394 88818