

TRAVEL

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BREAKAWAY



LUXURY: Ragdale Hall offers a relaxed atmosphere, pampering and lovely grounds.

A piece of heaven on Earth!

Kate Woolhouse visits Ragdale Hall

I HAD visited Ragdale Hall before – so I already knew to expect a little piece of heaven on Earth.

When my sister Becky and I arrived, we were just in time for a buffet-style lunch. We had a carrot and ginger soup – which was to die for – and a selection of fish and salads from the buffet, followed by a berry meringue desert.

Our treatments at this Leicestershire health spa had been booked in for 3pm the same day, so we had a little time after lunch to settle into our room, which had amazing picture postcard views.

Stylish, yet warm and cosy, our room was stunning with luxuries including a massive, wall-mounted TV.

We then put on our dressing gowns and made our way downstairs for our treatments – a moisture melt face and back therapy, which lasted a fabulous 50 minutes.

My treatment was done using the Clarins range of products, starting with a cleanse and tone to the face, neck and décolleté, followed by a short but relaxing facial massage and moisturise.



SOAK: The pool with stunning waterfall.

TRAVELGUIDE

Where: Ragdale Hall, Leicestershire

Accommodation: Ragdale Hall Health Hydro and Thermal Spa, Ragdale Village, near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE14 3PB

Call: 01664 434831

Web: www.ragdalehall.co.uk

To complete the treatment, there was a Swedish-style massage using medium pressure on the back, neck, and shoulders, which melted away all my stresses.

We both came floating out of our treatment rooms and got changed into our swimming costumes. Then, we relaxed in the Thermal Spa which cocoons you with different areas, including saunas and steam rooms. We spent most of the afternoon in there and enjoyed a leisurely swim in the pool – which has a stunning waterfall, that you can use to massage your back, as well as the massage jets and a Jacuzzi.

After a shower and change of clothes, we ventured back down to the restaurant. We selected goat's cheese and garlic prawns for starters from the menu, a mushroom, parmesan and pesto pasta and ice cream for pudding.

After an amazing night's sleep, we woke to room service breakfast with a selection of food ordered on our arrival.

With its relaxed atmosphere, pampering, great food and stunning grounds, it is one of my favourite places.

HOLIDAYHEAVEN

GORGEOUS CITY OFFERS A TOUCH OF THE HIGH-LIFE

Claudia Tanner visits **Marbella**

As celebrity playgrounds go, Marbella is one of the most glamorous getaways. Jordan and the entire **The Only Way Is Essex (TOWIE)** gang have donned their barely-there bikinis and high heels to party there recently.

And so my friends were "well jel" (really jealous) that Jet2holidays flew me off on a press trip to see what all the fuss is about – following a "no carbs before Marbs diet", naturally.

Marbella means "beautiful sea" and that is exactly what you see along its golden coastline.

To rub shoulders with the jet set, however, it's safe to say that my journalist's wage does not stretch to even one bottle of Dom Perignon.

But even if you're more Primark than Prada, you can still have a touch of the high-life without the sky-high price tag.

One night we visited Puerto Banus, six kilometers southwest of Marbella, the epicentre of glitz and glamour.

With its marina full of luxury yachts, fancy restaurants and designer shops, it is a favourite of A-listers and mere mortals alike (for the latter, thankfully there's bar touts offering free drinks).

We stayed at the four-star Hotel Iberostar Marbella Coral Beach, which far exceeded my expectations of a budget airline package holiday.

It's set on the exclusive Golden Mile area, where you will find the most elite nightclubs, restaurants and lavish properties. (Nearby is the late King Fahd of Saudi Arabia's Mar Mar palace, a gleaming replica of the United States White House.) This elegant, newly-renovated hotel has a Jacuzzi and sauna and spacious, contemporary, all-white guest rooms with marble floors.

Its peaceful setting is ideal for couples and families and its proximity to the



SUNSHINE: Hotel Iberostar Marbella Coral Beach.

Marbella

Holiday snapshot: Marbella offers not just glitz and glamour but an ideal base for exploring the beauty and culture of Andalusia.

Holiday highlight: Watching wild dolphins from a boat the Benalmadena coast.

Must see: Experience a slice of the jet-set lifestyle in Puerto Banus or people watch at Nikki Beach bar club, legendary for its champagne spraying parties.

Climate check: Typically, Marbella has 320 days of sunshine a year. Close to the African coastline, in the summer the temperatures soar.

Contact: Visit www.Jet2Holidays.com or call 0800 4085599.

beach (a stone's throw away), Puerto Banus (one kilometre) and downtown Marbella (four kilometres) is a bonus. Guests can even help themselves to fizz at breakfast, "totally reem" as TOWIE's Joey Essex would say (it means good).

However, while Marbella was as bling as I imagined it, I discovered there is so much more to the city than designer shops, chic bars and celebrated golf greens.

Our delightful tour guide Trinidad Blanco showed us around the charming

GLITZ AND GLAM: Yacht along the Mediterranean littoral.



"Marbella means "beautiful sea" and that is exactly what you see along its golden coastline."

Old Town, a hidden gem of a place contained inside the ninth century Alcazaba wall, popularly known as The Castle.

A delicate scent of orange blossom permeates the warren of narrow white-washed streets, where you'll find old churches, squares and authentic tapas bars and boutiques.

A short stroll away towards the seafront is the Avenue del Mar, notable for its extensive collections of Dali sculptures.

We stayed during the annual fair in

Marbella called La Feria de San Barnabé, a week-long street party with plenty of flamenco and fino (sherry).

We also visited Malaga city, where there's so much to do and a visit to Picasso's birth house and museum is a must. A venture up to the Parador de Malaga Gibralfaro is worthwhile for its unparalleled views of the city (though the sight of the bull ring I found rather nauseating).

If you like wine and tapas, go to Bodega El Pimpi, a Spanish wine bar famous in the area, displaying wine barrels signed by

celebrities including Antonio Banderas (who originates from the city).

We also took a trip to the nearby town of Fuengirola to the zoo, which is small yet designed to allow its residents space in realistic natural habitats while enabling visitors to get right up close – even to razor-sharp-toothed crocodiles.

A visit to Mijas, a delightful, typically Andalusian white-washed village, was also worthwhile for its amazing views of the surrounding mountains.



VISIT: View of Malaga, with the Plaza de Toros in the foreground.

The Wine Museum there offers wine tastings and the chance to learn about the town's small but growing wine industry.

We spent one night at the Hotel Meliá Costa del Sol in Torremolinos, a resort dominated by many high-rise buildings, which is just outside Malaga and popular with British tourists.

A 15-minute walk along the seafront from our hotel took us to Puerto Marina in Benalmadena, one of the largest marinas in Andalusia (with space for 1,000 yachts).

We went on a boat trip when I decided there is nothing better than lying back in the sun, with a beer in hand, watching wild dolphins.

We returned here at night to experience the buzzing nightlife along the esplanade and the marina (light up beautifully at dark). I possible had too much fun at Boal's Icebar (wearing a huge furry coat and flipflops in -11 degrees C) and went on yet another boat trip (who can say no to a free bar on the 35-minute trip). Indeed with tapas, paella and sangria aplenty, there were far too many carbs in Marbs. What would the TOWIE girls say?

"COME VISIT US" The Oyster Catcher

THE PERFECT PLACE TO ENJOY A FAMILY MEAL



The Oyster Catcher is a family friendly pub located on The Kingswood Retail Park in Hull and prides itself on offering a menu that has something for everybody.

It has recently been taken over by new manager Jordan Jones, who has big plans for the future which will include a brand new 2 for 1 menu.

If you are looking for fabulous service, great food and a great place to relax then The Oyster Catcher is the place to visit.

The Oyster Catcher
Kingswood Retail Park, Hull, HU7 3DB
Tel: 01482 370440

DEAL 1

Ladies Day -
Wednesday 10th August
Champagne Breakfast
Coach travel to and from
the races. 3 course meal
Evening Disco
£50 per person
Book Now

DEAL 2

Quiz Night -
Every Tuesday
8pm
Free to Enter
Cash prizes to be
won

DEAL 3

Kids Eat For
FREE
Monday - Friday
Offer valid when
adults pay for a
meal

DEAL 4

SUNDAY
CARVERY,
best of British
produce only
£6.25

DEAL 5

Curry Club -
Every Wednesday
Curry & a Drink
for only
£6.50

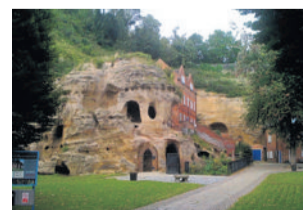
DEAL 6

FREE
FUNCTION
ROOM TO
HIRE

THREE THINGS TO DO



1 Twinlakes Park
www.twinlakespark.co.uk/



2 City Of Caves
www.cityofcaves.com



3 Great Central Railway
Loughborough – heritage
trips, www.gcrailway.com

Its peaceful setting is ideal for couples and families and its proximity to the