

# MEDIEVAL MAGIC

*Why a historic spa break on the Sussex coast is just what you need*

Words MADELEINE HOWELL

All of us will at some point have (quite literally) felt the need to throw in the towel and escape London for the seaside. Thankfully, we're never further than an hour or two from Britain's coastline. But if neither Kent, busy Brighton nor the newly hipster Margate appeals, allow me to point you in the direction of West Sussex.

Between the historic market town of Arundel and the cathedral city of Chichester lies the peaceful, secluded Climping beach. It has

pebbles at high tide, and sand at low tide. Universally loved by dog walkers, families and couples alike, it's the perfect place to gorge on ice cream as you eke out the last days of an Indian summer.

The real reason to stay in Climping is in order to stay at the Bailiffscourt Hotel and Spa. It's a member of the Historic Sussex Hotels group, which has just two other properties – the Georgian Ockenden Manor towards Haywards Heath, and The Spread Eagle in Midhurst. The setting – 30 acres of private parkland – is truly tranquil, and the hotel itself made up of just 39 bedrooms within a series of thatched cottages and oak-beamed houses. It boasts mullioned windows, four-poster beds and tapestries, a picturesque rose garden, a helipad, a croquet lawn, and the pièce de resistance: the spa.

More contemporary in design than the accommodation, it's built with natural wood and stone. It's an ambient oasis complete with hammocks under the trees, an outdoor pool, sun beds on the grass, a Californian-style hot tub, relaxation lounges and an indoor pool complete with an integral spa bath, a sauna and a steam room. As soon as I enter, I'm overwhelmed.



For more active guests, there are tennis courts, and the new Surf and Turf fitness retreats. Handily, it also has a Sandy Paws package, which means your four-legged friends will be equally well looked after. And I haven't even mentioned the food yet, either. You can eat al fresco, in a series of warren-like lounges or in the restaurant, where Head Chef Russell Williams serves incredible dishes made with locally-sourced ingredients. At dinner, my meal of asparagus, roasted hazelnuts, poached duck egg and brioche, followed by roasted guinea fowl, was a delight. Oh, and while you're there, make sure to look out for their permanent residents – two spectacular peacocks. **R**

**Climping Street, Climping BN17 5RW; 01903 723511; hshotels.co.uk**



## TRIP NOTES

Stays at Bailiffscourt Hotel & Spa are from £249 per night, based on two sharing a Classic Double Room, mid-week, on a B&B basis. Stays in the sumptuous Baylies Suite are from £555 on a B&B basis, and £615 with dinner included.

