

Where to stay



Far left, the Courtyard, which has a retractable glass roof. Left, the Drawing Room

THE WEEKENDER LIME WOOD, HAMPSHIRE

What's new in the forest?

WHAT IS IT? A luxurious hotel in the New Forest National Park that feels part sexy, sophisticated party pad, part aristocratic country hideaway. The building is a mix of Queen Anne brick and Regency stone, and there are 14 acres of gardens to explore should one ever want to leave the velvet sofas and wood fires, the cosy library and wine cellar/billiards room, the soothing David Collins-designed cocktail bar and the mosaic-floored Courtyard with retractable glass roof.

BEHIND THE SCENES The proprietor, Jim Ratcliffe, may be relatively new to the hotel business, but he certainly knows how to put together a team: Robin Hutson (founder of Hotel du Vin, to oversee the project), David Collins (interiors), Alex Aitken (food), Justin Pinchbeck (hotel director, formerly of The Zetter

in London) and architects Ben Pentreath and Charles Morris (who designed the Orchard Room at Highgrove). The building has gone through several incarnations since its inception as a 13th-century hunting lodge and then home to the Duke of Clarence. Hutson says he is trying to create a hotel that is 'utterly professional and special, but where I can happily wear jeans'.

SLEEP The 29 rooms range from smaller 'Cosy' doubles in the main house to grand duplex 'Pavilions' overlooking the forest. Interiors are in muted heritage tones such as taupe and fern green, and the finishes are top-quality, with 300-thread-count sheets, Millbrook mattresses, creamy stone floors and solid oak doors. Treats such as roll-top baths and drawers stocked with

Daylesford chocolate and soft White Company socks add to the indulgent feel.

EAT Two restaurants – the formal Dining Room and the informal Scullery – give guests the option of eating what, when and how they want. The Dining Room offers fine dining, with delicious dishes such as creamy *boudin blanc* and wild mushrooms, a terrine of roasted poussin, foie gras and prunes, and the creamiest panna cotta ever tasted. The Scullery is more child-friendly, serving all-day favourites from lobster Caesar salad to tender hamburgers from Alex Aitken's own cows (occasionally fed on local bitter, the maître d' informed us).

WHO GOES THERE? Everyone from retired country squires enjoying elegant dinners to businessmen in the hi-tech meeting rooms and children expending energy on games while their fashionable parents swizzle olives in Martinis.

WHAT'S THERE TO DO? A 16,000sq ft spa will open next year. For now, there's the national park, quaint Hampshire villages and such attractions as Beaulieu's National Motor Museum to explore. The hotel handily provides the postcodes of attractions for drivers with satnav.

WE LIKE The food, the four sitting rooms with fireplaces, the boot room, the trout-stocked ponds, the efficient but relaxed staff, the lack of check-out (the bill is posted), the bedside master switches.

WE DON'T LIKE The odd, Art Deco-ish style of the Coach House, and the fact that the spa hasn't yet opened. Treatment rooms overlooking the forest? I want it now.

PRICE Doubles from £275 at weekends (from £225 midweek) LISA GRAINGER

LIME WOOD, BEAULIEU ROAD, LYNDRHURST, HAMPSHIRE (023 8028 7177; WWW.LIMEWOODHOTEL.CO.UK)

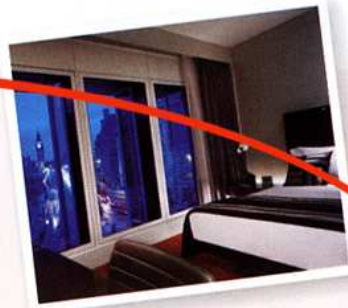
SUITE TALK

SEYCHELLES The new **Constance Ephelia Resort** lies on almost 300 acres overlooking the marine national park of Port Launay on the main island of Mahé. It has 224 suites, 43 villas, five bars, five restaurants, four pools, two beaches, a kids' club and a Spa Village with a yoga pavilion and Shiseido treatments. 00 230 402 2777; www.epheliareort.com. Junior suites from €390

NICARAGUA Near the colonial town of Grenada on a private island in

Lake Nicaragua, the intimate new **Jicaro Island Ecolodge** has nine two-storey casitas built from local, Rainforest Alliance-certified wood and designed for natural cross-ventilation; water is solar-heated. There is a lakeside wellness centre with open-air treatment rooms and daily yoga classes. 00 505 2552 6353; www.jicarolodge.com. Doubles from US\$437

LONDON In a handy location near the Thames, the new **Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London**,



above, has 1,021 rooms, including 54 suites and penthouses. There is a brasserie-style restaurant, a sushi bar, a lounge and a coffee shop. Finishing touches this spring will

include a spa, pool and gym. 0844 415 6780; www.parkplaza.com/london. Doubles from £116

CYPRUS This year two Thanos hotels, **Annabelle** and **Anassa**, launch the Hercules Teens Club (also available to guests at sister hotel Almyra). On offer will be table football, Wii and DVDs, plus sailing, diving, surfing and cooking lessons. 00 357 26 888 800000; www.thanoshotels.com. Doubles at Annabelle from €240; Anassa from €430 FRANCESCA SYZ