# Is this the most glamorous hotel room in London?



**So, where are we?**

Monkey Island, a funny little, well, island about ten minutes from Maidenhead, which is 45 minutes from central London on the Elizabeth Line. Windsor is just fifteen minutes away, Bray and its famous Fat Duck restaurant is walking distance and the River Thames is quite literally all around.

**And where we’re staying…?**

Monkey Island Estate, a… what should we call this? Resort?… that dates back centuries and comprises a couple of buildings with grounds (riverside grounds obviously), some attached houses so you can do the full wedding take-over thing and a fantastic Floating Spa housed on a barge (planning restrictions on such a listed property meant they had to think laterally), where Sophie will give you the ‘floating massage’ that will change your mind about massages.

**What’s the style?**

Well, the buildings are from 1738, which is Regency, so it’s mainly white and stealthily grand, no big showing off. Public spaces go from the funny little Monkey Bar, with its 18th century clothed-monkey paintings on the ceiling and wood-burning stove, to the restaurant, which is classic but modern with river views and a terrace.

**And the rooms?**

Well, we lucked out and got the legendary Wedgewood Suite, which is perhaps the grandest room we’ve ever stayed in. Not huge (most of the 40-odd rooms are on the small side) but lavish with a Wedgewood-style blue and white moulded ceiling the likes of which you’ve never seen in your life. Bathrooms are classic/modern (metro tiles, all white, you know the kind of thing) and furniture dark and classic/contemporary.

**Is there a story?**

So much story. For a start the Monkey Island name comes from a nearby monastery meaning the monks – not monkeys – would use the little island for contemplation and doing their nails. Following the Great Fire of London, a lot of the débris was brought down the river and dumped, increasing the size of the island. Charles Spencer, Duke of Marlborough, built the original Temple and Fishing Lodge in 1738, buildings that were added to over the years until we have this little beauty today with its lawns and shepherd huts serving champagne to folks watching the river from their fire pits.

**And to eat?**

Before you eat, have perhaps the best vodka martini in London in the little Monkey Bar then swish through to the Monkey Island Brasserie with its contempo-funky wallpapers, its little leather booths and its views down to… you know what, the river. The food is contemporary British, hearty and delicious veering from steaks and fish to a vegan menu with some great choices all done with an eye to the way it looks as well as tastes. The wine list is good and starts at very reasonable. There’s also a Whisky Snug tucked away somewhere for late-night tipples.

**To sum up?**

Who knew this strange little hideaway was just an hour outside London. On the tube! It feels like you’re a million miles away and, while there might be a whole lot to do here, if your idea of a relaxing weekend is lazing around on lawns watching water with something alcoholic to hand, you couldn’t pick a better spot. And if you were thinking of getting married (they even have a tiny little ‘proposal suite’ in a shepherd’s hut, by the way), well, this would be worthy of Hello! magazine itself.

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