



# Magical transformation

The Grade II listed Victorian mansion, De Vere Tortworth Court, is nestled on a tranquil 30-acre estate in Wotton-under-Edge. Elise Britten checked out its recent £5m refurbishment



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Entering the grounds of De Vere Tortworth Court, it is hard to believe you are just minutes from the M5. Driving through the mature gardens immediately puts you at rest, before you are struck by the grandeur of the mansion before you.

I was lucky enough to visit on a lovely bright afternoon and immediately joined guests mingling on the lawn with champagne and canapes. Tortworth was holding its relaunch party after an impressive £5 million refurbishment.

The hotel only started work last November, but by June, 44 of the original rooms in the main house had been totally gutted and redone, and 11 new bedrooms were created. This has made an already stunning hotel almost too beautiful to believe.

The smell of new leather greeted me as I stepped into my suite. I was impressed by the state-of-the-art bathroom and the modern luxury of the room, not to mention the enormous bed.

But just as important for me, was the preservation of the historical feel. The cushioned window seat in the large bay window overlooked the gardens, while the lofty ceiling stretched above me. Thematic décor has been added, such as the quaint radio which was playing classical music when I entered the room and old phones and typewriters in communal areas.

After the launch party festivities, meeting and

events co-ordinator Stacey Morgan gave me a tour of the hotel’s extensive facilities; from their many meeting rooms, to the sparkling spa.

A new restaurant in the old church is still to come, with the current library dining area to become a specialist whisky bar. If the standard of current renovations is anything to go by, these spaces will be spectacular.

But the highlight for me is still the Victorian Orangery. If I wasn’t already married, I would be signing up for a wedding here. When I visited it was set up with tea lights set into the stones, and greenery flowing down under the clear glass roof. Stacey pointed out the stone hearts framing the windows, which seem very apt. “I think it was always meant to be a venue of love,” she said.

Later, drawn in by the relaxed atmosphere, I chose to eat in the airy Atrium Bistro. With a glass roof several stories tall, and trees shielding private cosy booths, the restaurant has an al fresco feel. But it truly comes into its own in the dark, when fairy lights twinkle in the trees and romantic low lighting is set off by the rustic stone walls.

I took note of the range of prices on the wine list, suitable for all tastes, while my husband pointed out to me how immaculately presented his Cotswold Hobgoblin beer was. I enjoyed a perfectly tender sirloin steak, and my partner

went for a flavoursome burger. Everything we sampled was delightful and I wouldn’t have traded the ambience for anything. However, for those looking for more formal dining, the Moreton’s Restaurant in the original library offers a stately alternative.

The staff were unfailingly polite and efficient. At breakfast, I saw that despite the vast variety on offer at the buffet, special orders were still attended to.

The only slight problem I experienced was that my room felt a little warm on a summer night, when two out of four of my windows seemed to have been stuck shut during the painting. I mentioned this upon checking out and was advised the issue would be raised with maintenance.

Regardless, the experience as a whole would be tough to rival. I am confident that any guests checking into Tortworth Court are in for a magical stay.

And watch out for the friendly hotel cat - a stray who never went away. If only I could be so lucky.

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