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Palé Hall, Gwynedd

October 15 2017, 12:01am,
The Sunday Times



TIM WINTER

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First impressions count. Palé Hall strikes you immediately, from its imposing Victorian architecture, with a clock tower, turrets and a porte-cochère, to its dramatic woodland backdrop. (It's on the edge of Snowdonia National Park.) And the instant you cross the threshold, you're offered a complimentary glass of champagne. This arrival is a step up from the usual.

You'll then be whisked, bubbles in hand, into one of three formal drawing rooms, all so opulent they wouldn't look out of place in Versailles. No square inch has been left unfilled: silk swags, gilt cornicing, marble fireplaces and Biedermeier divans that are far too fancy to actually sit on. The grade II listed building was once the Duke of Westminster's shooting lodge, but he rarely used it, so it retains many original features, including colourful tiles and panelling.

Palé Hall was a run-down hotel before it was snapped up by Alan and Angela Harper, who intended to make it their home. Somewhere along the way, they decided it was so special they really should share it with paying guests, even though neither had any previous hotel experience. He used to be a director of Vodafone UK, and she was a headteacher in Somerset. The renovation has been a labour of love, particularly for Angela, who spent weeks restencilling the library walls after the faded outlines of the original artwork were discovered under countless layers of wallpaper. They take their hosting duties seriously, joining guests for pre-dinner drinks most evenings.



An opulent bedroom at Palé Hall
TIM WINTER

Dinner is likely to be good. The Harpers brought in the Michelin-starred chef Michael Caines to oversee the kitchen and the food is predictably fabulous: French influences, local provenance. Try the succulent Welsh black beef and native lobster.

The 18 bedrooms are as lavish as the public rooms, with Zoffany wallpaper, sherry decanters and TVs hidden in gilt mirrors. All have views that entice you out to hike Snowdonia's hills – probably wise if you're ordering the tasting menu.



Friday:
Enjoy a tasty
treat or two.

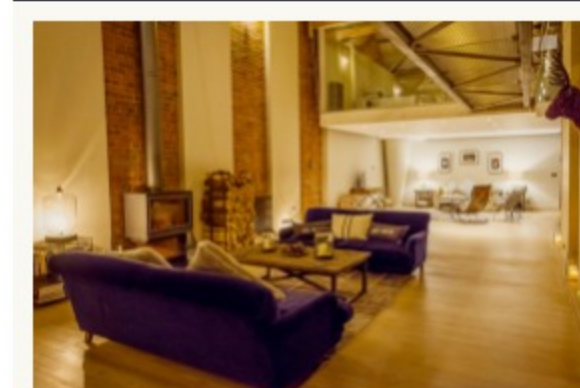


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