

A MATTER OF TASTE

BEACHY HEAD PUB: DINING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

There are very few places in East Sussex where the journey to dinner feels quite as dramatic as the destination itself.

Perched high within the South Downs National Park, overlooking the breathtaking Seven Sisters coastline and rolling countryside beyond, the Beachy Head Hotel has long been one of our favourite spots for lunch, dinner or simply a quiet drink with a view.

This particular visit, however, felt very different.

Having spent the afternoon and evening inside the nearby Belle Tout Lighthouse, we found ourselves looking across at the very lighthouse we were staying in — something that felt equally surreal and exciting in equal measure. For years, conversations at the Beachy Head pub had always centred around wondering what it must be like to actually stay inside Belle Tout. This time, we knew we'd be heading back there to sleep.

As we entered the pub, we were greeted warmly and immediately shown to our table. The service throughout the evening remained attentive, friendly and relaxed without ever feeling intrusive.

The pub itself is deceptively spacious, with multiple areas for both drinking and dining. Evening dining had been thoughtfully concentrated within the window-side restaurant area, creating a calm and cosy atmosphere while leaving the larger dining spaces free for the busier daytime crowds.

Naturally, we opted for a table overlooking the far-reaching views across the downs and towards Belle Tout itself.

Even in gloomy weather, the landscape here never loses its impact.

The menu was varied and appealing, offering a strong mix of comforting pub classics alongside more elevated dishes and seasonal options. Smaller “Whilst You Decide” plates included Mixed Olives, Mini Chorizo Sausages and Padron Peppers, all around the £5 to £6 mark.

Starters featured favourites including Chicken Liver & Fig Pâté (£8.75), King Prawn Cocktail (£8.95), Garlic Mushrooms (£7.95) and Salt & Pepper Calamari (£8.50), but we eventually settled on the Honey & Truffle Baked Camembert (£15.25) to share.

Served whole and beautifully molten in the centre, the camembert was rich, creamy and indulgent, while the rind had developed those slightly chewy, caramelised edges that add so

much texture and flavour. The sweetness of the red onion chutney paired perfectly against the earthy truffle oil, while the lightly toasted rustic bread was sturdy enough for generous dipping without collapsing halfway through. Importantly for a sharing dish, the bread portion was generous too.

For mains, narrowing down the choices proved difficult.

Dishes including the Home-Baked Pie of the Day, Smoked Haddock Fishcakes (£17.95), Indulgent Beef & Red Wine Lasagne (£17.75), Fish & Chips (£18.75) and Slow-Cooked Beef Shin (£25.25) all sounded incredibly tempting.

Unfortunately for Paul, the Pie of the Day had already sold out by the time we ordered, though he happily switched to the Grilled Bacon Chop (£17.25), served with free-range fried egg, grilled fresh pineapple, triple-cooked chips and peas.

The chop itself was exceptionally well cooked — tender, flavoursome and still wonderfully moist, which can often be difficult to achieve with pork. The sweetness of the grilled pineapple balanced the saltiness beautifully, while the thick-cut chips delivered exactly the comforting satisfaction you hope for from a proper pub dinner.

I opted for the Fillet of Salmon (£21.25), described on the menu as pan-roasted and served with crushed baby potatoes, chargrilled tenderstem broccoli and a creamy king prawn and white wine sauce.

The salmon was excellent.

Pan-roasting had given the fish a firmer texture and lightly crisped exterior while still retaining its flavour and moisture beautifully. The tenderstem broccoli had been cooked slightly softer than al dente, which actually suited the dish perfectly, allowing it to absorb more of the accompanying flavours.

Somewhat surprisingly, and a very welcome bonus considering they weren't mentioned on the menu, the dish arrived with four king prawns alongside the salmon too, which felt like an unexpected little treat.

What particularly stood out, however, was the vibrant green herb jus surrounding the plate. Rich, fresh and full of flavour, it tied the entire dish together wonderfully while also making the plate visually stunning.

The pub also caters extremely well for a wide variety of tastes and dietary requirements. Vegetarian and vegan dishes are clearly available throughout the menu, while allergy requirements were discussed immediately upon arrival, showing genuine attentiveness from the team.

Steak lovers are also well catered for, with options including a 10oz Rib-Eye (£27.50) and 8oz Sirloin (£23.50).

Together with a glass of Prosecco and a pint of Proper Job, our total bill came to £65.85 — working out at roughly £33 per person for starter, main course and drinks, which felt very fair given both the quality of the food and the truly spectacular location.

The Beachy Head pub has always benefitted from one of the finest settings in Sussex, but thankfully the food and atmosphere ensure it's far more than simply "a pub with a view."

Warm service, comforting food, dramatic scenery and the quiet magic of dining atop the cliffs make this somewhere we return to time and time again.

Only this time, for the very first time, we got to look across at Belle Tout knowing it was waiting for us to return home.