

Travel



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Scarborough's FAIR

We are going to Britain's oldest seaside resort, a true love of ours



LIVELY: South Bay. Inset, Stephen White and Wrea Head Hall



by **Stephen White**

THERE'S something about the beautiful Yorkshire coast that makes you want to pull on a pair of boots and head for the great outdoors.

Fine views, the sweetest fresh air and enough exercise to justify huge platefuls of delicious food explain why so many keep returning.

Spectacular scenery, pristine beaches, busy harbours, great pubs and restaurants and friendly locals make this one of the most diverse and attractive areas of Britain.

Our break began with a bracing walk 75m above the grey North Sea at the RSPB's Bempton Cliffs nature reserve, four miles north of the old fishing port of Bridlington.

Armed with binoculars, we were able to get up close to the 200,000 feathered residents and watch the manic comings and goings of, among others, mainland Britain's biggest breeding colony of gannets.

The RSPB describes Bempton Cliffs as "easily the best place in England to see, hear and smell seabirds". And all it costs is a £5 parking fee.

Windswept and hungry, we then hit the road for the 20-mile trip to our base for two nights, Wrea Head Hall, near the village of Scalby just outside Scarborough. It's ranked No1 hotel in Scarborough on TripAdvisor and I soon learnt

why. Built on 250 acres in 1881 by MP John Ellis and his wife Maria (of the Rowntree chocolate family), Wrea Head is a beautiful gothic mansion with lawns and woodland all around.

The splendid main hall with its grand staircase features spectacular stained-glass mullion windows, oak panelling and a huge fireplace.

Wrea Head's present owners took over last year and owner-director Gerry Aburrow plans to return the building to its original sumptuous state within three years.

Parts of the ground floor, which include the dining room and bar, have already been transformed from stately to spectacular.

The roof has been repaired and eight of its 20 bedrooms refurbished, some with luxurious green marble

bathrooms. The old kitchen garden has also been rescued – homegrown vegetables will soon be on the menu. And chef, Andrew Riley, from Halifax, knows his stuff. Dinner, from the impressive Indulgence Menu (three courses £30, four for £35), was nothing short of superb.

My starter of smoked duck breast with chilli melon and fig chutney was interesting and extremely tasty.

Feather

My main of sirloin steak with a mini steak and kidney pudding, garlic and herb mash, flat-cap mushroom and red wine reduction, was substantial and delicious.

Fresh air, mountains of great food, red wine... I was asleep before my head hit my soft feather pillow. Another beautiful day dawned and after an enormous breakfast we headed back towards the sea.

Scarborough – the first seaside resort in Britain and the biggest in Yorkshire – is split in two. The quiet, non-commercial North Bay and the louder, more popular, South Bay are divided by the ruins of the hilltop 12th-century castle and the busy harbour at its foot.

We parked on the North Bay's seafront Royal Albert Drive and walked around the headland to the harbour – a colourful jumble of old fishing boats, pleasure craft and yachts and a lighthouse.

South Bay is all about fun and

games – a sandy beach, donkey rides, amusement arcades, fish and chips, pubs, cafes, ice cream, candy floss and bucket and spade shops.

The atmosphere changes again as you approach the peace of the Spa – where the town's mineral waters were first recognised in the 17th century and Scarborough's history as a holiday resort began. From there we headed back to the car, via the castle and St Mary's Church to find the grave of writer Anne Brontë who died in the resort, aged 29, in 1849 from tuberculosis.

In the evening, we took a taxi to Beiderbecke's, a boutique hotel in a smart part of Scarborough dubbed "Little Bath", where we had dinner at its Marmalade's restaurant.

A nice variety of locally sourced dishes was available on its Taste of Yorkshire menu. My pork medallion with apple potato cake was moist and flavoursome. After sticky toffee pudding, I raised the white flag.

Next morning, after another huge breakfast at the Wrea Head, we wished Gerry the best of luck with his venture – and promised to call again when the work is complete.

FACTFILE: Rooms at the Wrea Head Hall Hotel start from £74.95pp, DB&B (wreaheadhall.co.uk, 01723 371190). Marmalade's at Beiderbecke's (beiderbeckes.com, 01723 350349). Bempton Cliffs Visitor Centre (01262 851179). For more ideas on what to do in Yorkshire, see yorkshire.com

TRAVEL TIPS

- VISIT Bempton Cliffs between now and mid-June to see bird life at its busiest.
- IF the sun shines, buy a drink at the Grand Hotel. The huge Victorian building has seen better days but its terrace has one of the town's best views.
- FOR cricket fans, the 127th four-day Scarborough Festival is at the North Marine Road ground from August 28.
- FIND peace and quiet in the beautiful Italian Gardens, above the Spa on The Esplanade.

£1,000

ORLANDO (7nts, r/o, 3*)

June 10
Gatwick, £989
virginholidays.co.uk

MEXICO (14nts, a/i, 4*)

May 30
Bristol, £959
www.firstchoice.co.uk

£750

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (7nts, a/i, 4*)

June 2
Manchester, £584
icelolly.com

JAMAICA (7nts, a/i, 4*)

May 30
Manchester, £749
thomson.co.uk

£500

SHARM EL SHEIKH (7nts, a/i, 3*)

June 6
Gatwick, £499
monarch.co.uk

ALGARVE (7nts, s/c, 3*)

June 2
Manchester, £240
monarch.co.uk

My PERFECT day

Danny Newby, director of music travel company Big Green Coach

MORNING

I'd wake up in a beachside villa in Pula, Croatia, with my wife and one-year-old daughter. I'd have a fresh coffee and croissant while gazing out at the sea and showing my girl the beautiful surroundings.

NOON

Time to explore the lunch options at Festival on the wonderful Isle of Wight. I would maybe grab an early cold beer and watch everyone in their crazy festival outfits walk by.

NIGHT

I'd head to V Festival (which takes place in Chelmsford and Staffordshire) and see Kings of Leon headline, while watching the sun set behind the stage.



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YOUR £ ABROAD

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Croatian Kuna	8.26
Czech Koruna	28.33
Egyptian Pound	9.55
Euro	1.13
Hungarian Forint	315.20
NZ Dollar	1.79
Polish Zloty	4.60
S African Rand	13.69
Swiss Franc	1.41
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