



# Yorkshire glee

Katie McGonagle finds out how to sell a UK staycation to retirees

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**I**t was a glorious summer's day spent sipping Pimm's in the sunshine while rowing boats ambled to and fro along the river and the occasional train trundled over the viaduct ahead. If I add it was that rare British event – a sunny bank holiday weekend – it might start to sound like I'm embellishing the scene for artistic effect. I'm not.

The row of tea rooms, pubs and occasional ice cream vans that line the walkway along Waterside, on the banks of the

River Nidd in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, really are as quintessentially British as it gets.

That was in keeping with the theme of this stay, though, based at the Grade II-listed mansion Nidd Hall – all ivy-covered walls and manicured gardens, where afternoon tea or a spot of croquet are the order of the day.

It's part of Warner Leisure Hotels' portfolio, aimed at a more mature audience, for whom its classic British touches are a key selling point. So what is a stay at

this adult-only hotel really like, and what is there to do in the surrounding area?

## ▶ HARROGATE

Guests who don't want to venture too far will find stately home Ripley Castle just moments from the hotel, or the small spa town of Knaresborough – with its picturesque Waterside area, souvenir shops and market square – within a 15-minute drive.

Harrogate is just a few minutes further, and rewards

day-trippers with a compact, pedestrianised centre where the typical high-street chains and charity shops are interspersed with independent delis and shops, including the delightfully old-fashioned frontage of Mr Arkwright's Tool Emporium.

Anyone looking for recommendations here will be directed to enjoy afternoon tea at Betty's Cafe Tea Rooms, something of a Harrogate institution in the artsy Montpellier Quarter – hence the two-hour ➔



PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK



→ queue snaking around the corner when I visited – but for equally good food without the wait, try The Fat Badger nearby, home of quality pub classics. Then walk it off with a gentle stroll around the pretty Valley Gardens. Nidd Hall publishes leaflets outlining local walking trails or points of interest and runs regular day trips for a nominal charge, worth flagging up to solo travellers or those without their own transport.

▶ YORK

This Roman city has played a key role in British history as a centre of medieval trade, a focal point for the church, and a hub for the manufacturing of railways, Rowntree's sweets and Terry's of York chocolate – and it depends on how sweet-toothed you are as to which of those seems more important.

Those who fall on the side of sweets can make a beeline for

York's Chocolate Story (entry £12.50 for adults, £11.50 for senior citizens), while more conservative sightseers should make time for the artworks, stained glass and fascinating history of York Minster (entry £15/£14, including guided tour; check in advance for opening times).

But for guests who'd rather amble around, York is a pleasant place to wander down cobbled streets, duck in to one of the little walled-off pub gardens set back from the street, or stop to watch street entertainers drawing in the crowds.

The Shambles, a medieval shopping street, which was actually mentioned in the Domesday Book by William the Conqueror in 1086, still boasts late 14th and 15th-century buildings, and is worth a visit. Though if clients are at all unsteady on their feet, do warn them it's frequently packed with



PICTURES: ADRIAN BRISCOE; VISIT ENGLAND/DIANA JARVIS, JAMES MCCORMACK



ABOVE: Betty's Cafe Tea Rooms, Harrogate

LEFT & BELOW: Nidd Hall

visitors, many crowding in to the shops along the street, which is said to have been the inspiration for Diagon Alley.

It's also worth noting the park-and-ride system, which is a time-saver for most clients, might not be the best option for visitors with limited mobility.

▶ MANSION HOUSE

Nidd Hall can't help but impress on arrival, with its grand honey-coloured mansion set in 45 acres of Yorkshire countryside, and a fishing lake, tennis courts, archery and a bowling green dotted around its grounds. The terrace is a good spot to take in the view over afternoon tea, or there's an elegant reading room to retreat to during rainy days.

The property comes with an interesting history of its own; it was built in the 18th century by a Bradford wool merchant and is said to be the place where Edward VIII met Wallis Simpson in the 1930s.

There's a mix of standard, signature and historic rooms, which are spacious and comfortable with modern furnishings including reading chairs, a bathroom with grab rails, and all-important tea, coffee and biscuits. Our ground-floor room

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opened on to a patio and chairs which, although overlooked by other guests, was a pleasant spot to sit on a sunny afternoon.

The good-sized pool seemed to be well used by guests, judging from the number of swimmers in there, with a small

gym and spa alongside.

Most meals are served in the main Rawson Restaurant, with cooked breakfasts and three-course dinners of classics such as fish and chips, roast lamb or stuffed pork belly.

Dining was a bit on the regimented side – guests are assigned the same table for the duration of the stay, and service lacked polish – but more can be said for speciality restaurant Great & Small. Set in a more intimate downstairs venue, it serves 'Yorkshire tapas' – small locally sourced dishes – with highlights such as Whitby potted shrimp, Nidderdale lamb medallions and a Yorkshire Dales cheeseboard. Guests on the



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