



**S**OMETIMES, you need to take a proper weekend break – the chance to get really get away from it all.

Tucked away three miles west of Salcombe, Devon, Soar Mill Cove Hotel makes the perfect retreat.

Hidden down a narrow, winding lane, it's so tranquil that all you can hear is the call of birds and the gentle sounds of cows and sheep as they graze on the surrounding hills.

I spent the weekend there with my husband John and 11-year-old daughter Fran. Having arrived on a grey, damp and misty Friday evening, all feeling rather fraught and end-of-weekish, we left on the Sunday morning revived, happy and more relaxed than we had been for weeks.

The hotel wears its four stars lightly. Service is friendly and efficient without being intimidating and the on-site amenities were all we needed for the weekend.

Indeed, as long as you have transportation, the hotel makes an ideal base for a longer stay, and many guests return every year.

We stayed in the Jenny Wren Suite, which had a spacious bedroom, neat bathroom, comfortable sitting area, private terrace with chairs and sunbeds ...and a fabulous view through the cleft of the cove out to the open sea.

The food was *fabulous*, local

# Great escape

Ruth Meech relaxes on a family break in Devon

and eaten in the Serendipity restaurant, which has massive picture windows overlooking the cliffs and sea.

Saturday dawned bright and clear and, after a swim and hearty breakfast, we set off to explore.

A short walk down from the hotel lies Soar Mill Cove, a Blyton-esque crevice of golden sand, climbable rocks and inviting, creature-filled rock-pools.

With the gulls crying overhead and the sound of the sea against the rocks, it was tempting to spend the day there – but we decided to strike out over the cliffs to Hope Cove, a few miles away.

By the time we made it to the clifftop along a winding path fringed with ferns and spring flowers, the sun was hot on our backs and the combined smells of sea air, blossom and sunscreen made us feel as though we were properly on holiday. The sun glinted off a blue sea dotted with sailing dinghies and the occasional fishing boat trailing clouds of greedy gulls.

We could see for miles, over fields of red soil, green crops and yellow rape to the

looming presence of Dartmoor. The air was loud with larksong and swallows zipped past at nose height. It was the English coast at its most beautiful.

Hope Cove is a gorgeous little holiday enclave of thatched cottages and a sandy beach.

We arrived there at lunchtime and made to the busy Hope and Anchor for a

pint of cloudy cider and yet more fabulous food before tightening our bootlaces, loosening our belts and heading back to Soar Mill Cove.

The reality of work and chores seemed like another world – in less than 24 hours the Soar Mill Cove Hotel had taken us into a wonderful and all-too-rarely visited dimension of relaxation.

## getting there

◆ The hotel has 22 en suite rooms, junior suites and senior suites all with coastal or garden views. Evening meals in Serendipity Restaurant cost £29.99 for two courses and an appetiser, £39.99 for three courses plus appetiser.

◆ The hotel's Ocean Spa offers a full range of organically-based massages and health and beauty treatments. Sporting facilities include indoor and outdoor pools, tennis court and pitch-and-putt and there are also a host of local opportunities



including a full range of watersports, horse riding, wildlife safaris, golf and painting.

◆ Current rates are from £140 to £240 per room per night including cream tea on arrival and breakfast. There are also discounts and special rates. Call 01548 561566 or visit [soarmillcovehotel.co.uk](http://soarmillcovehotel.co.uk)