

Great location but big let down

The Nethy Bridge Hotel, part of the Strathmore Hotel group, is described in the promotional material as a charming Victorian manor house.

This imposing, granite-built hotel appeared that way as our taxi rolled up to the entrance. I was looking forward to some good Highland hospitality. However, the 70-bed hotel spectacularly failed to live up to that billing.

It is ideally situated in the Scottish Highlands and surrounded by heather-clad hills in a quiet village near Aviemore, but it needs serious investment and lashings of TLC to lift standards. One wonders what thoughts international travellers take away of the establishment.

Impressions are quickly created. For example, the frayed carpet on the main staircase leading to the rooms was an indication of what was to follow. The lounge area next to reception looked dated and, as I climbed the stairs, the floorboards creaked.

The room was clean but dowdy. The bed was comfortable but the room was more utility than cosy. At least there was a desk to work at the the wi-fi worked well and was easy to access.

The bathroom was sizeable but I was drenched trying to work out how to get the taps to co-operate.

When water began to flow from the tap into the bath the air in

the pipes would have woken the dead, it was that loud. Luckily, this was teatime so I let it continue.

So, what about food. Lentil soup was not exceptional. The two mini red snapper fish – and I mean mini – sat on a bed of tasteless mash potato and arrived with five green beans and a whiff of greenery.

I was therefore looking forward to the apple pie and custard. Disappointed here too. The filling again lacked a distinctive taste.

Surely a hearty Scottish breakfast would lift spirits and the blurb described their offering as “wonderfully hearty”.

Sadly, it was another let down. It was self-service. Fine and they had oat and soya milk. A plus.

However, the warm buffet-style selection left much to be desired. The black pudding was greasy, the haggis dry after spending too much time under the lamp, the sausage lacked taste and the bacon was not memorable.

We are in the Scottish Highlands, surely hand-made local sausages and locally cured bacon could have been on the menu. However, local produce costs money. The mushrooms were mushy and the fried egg was rubbery.

Overall, not a great experience. I was with a party of journalists, some of them food writers, and many of whom had flown up from London. This would have been a ideal promo for the hotel, but they missed the chance.

Nethy Bridge has everything going for it. The splendour of the Cairngorm mountain range, great for walkers and naturalists, and, in winter, it is one of Scotland’s leading ski resorts.

It is also a good location for sightseeing as Nethy Bridge is just off the A9 and around 30 minutes from Inverness.

However, I'll by-pass it if I ever have to stay in the area.
Oh, almost forgot, I'm still waiting for my 7.30am alarm call.
Luckily, I was awake.

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