

Review: Getting an education in luxury at The Varsity Hotel and Spa, Cambridge

By [Matt Fortune](#)

Last updated at 3:32 PM on 22nd November 2011

Like

'Getting away from it all' is easier said than done when you're a stressed-out Londoner in need of a weekend lift - not all points on the compass head in the right direction.

Journey south and all roads lead to Brighton, which loses some of its appeal in the winter months. Travel east and the only way really is Essex, while to the west, journey times are sufficiently long enough that getting back to town amid the afternoon rush is a tedious affair.

But venture a mere 50 minutes north from London's King's Cross station and the opportunity to experience a world away from London's fast and furious pace presents itself in the shape of Cambridge.



Room with a view: The floor to ceiling glass gives guests the perfect view over the city

But make no mistake, this is a vibrant city, thanks in part to the attitude of the locals, be them born and raised or one of the vast numbers temporarily taken root as part of their higher education.

Despite the tourists thronging the streets and two-wheeled students rattling over the cobbles, Cambridge offers an atmosphere in which one can relax and recharge. Even shopping doesn't feel like a

reasonably new addition to the ever-expanding Mr & Mrs Smith range.



A view of people punting on the River Cam - a short walk from the Varsity Hotel

At first, Varsity feels out of the way but it is in fact no more than a two-minute amble along the River Cam from a small collection of restaurants and the outskirts of the shopping district.

In the opposite direction the meandering waterway widens and is flanked on both sides by parkland and populated by struggling punters as far as the eye can see.

Varsity's seventh-floor rooftop terrace offers the perfect vantage point from which to observe this vista of contrasts. The feeling of being at one of the city's highest points - on a par with the historic protruding spires which mark the numerous university buildings - heightens my rejuvenation - the stresses of London are slipping away already.



Beneath the terrace are the hotel's suites - Jesus, St John's, Trinity and Clare - which boast floor to ceiling glass throughout. A lot can be said for being woken by the natural light which pours through, as opposed to the rude awakening of an alarm clock.

The name of the hotel, along with its rooms and the artwork inside, are obviously inspired by the inescapable theme of the city - higher education. 'Varsity' is an old-fashioned British abbreviation of the word 'university', usually referring to Cambridge or Oxford.

All rooms are decked out with solid oak flooring, sandstone bathrooms with monsoon showers and some offer free-standing Victorian baths. The students would be jealous.



Heritage: Cambridge's history attracts millions of tourists each year, who share the city's streets with locals and students alike

The rest of the decor takes its cue from the city - elegant and classical ornaments sit comfortably alongside proud and modern furnishings, like the four-poster bed, flat screen television and iPod docking station.

All guests are granted access to the adjoining Glassworks Healthclub, where facilities are as one might expect - sauna, steam room, gym, jacuzzi - in the latter you sit in front of an enormous window backing directly onto the river. A full list of classes such as yoga, pilates and spinning are also available, as are beauty treatments at an added cost.

The gym, a Conran-designed space complete with all the usual modern machinery and free weights, is not your stereotypical sweat house, it has exposed brickwork and high ceilings.



Food... The hotel is attached to the splendid River Bar Steakhouse & Grill



... and in the drink: Guests can relax in the spa's jacuzzi and watch the world go by on the River Cam

Once you've worked the weight off, you'll have fun putting it all back on at The River Bar Steakhouse & Grill, which is linked to Varsity.

Backing on to the river and split over two floors, the eatery's brasserie-style cuisine is served in the shadows of Magdalene College, bolstering the education theme of the hotel.

There is an extensive cocktail menu, although the bar is sufficiently close to the dining area to make it merely a place to perch while waiting for your table, rather than as a suitable first port of call on a long night out.

The music is in keeping with the decor and menu too - modern without going mainstream - the perfect ambience to be enjoyed as a couple or in a group of varying ages.

So set your compass and head north to Varsity, a hotel that just graduated.

Travel Facts

Rooms at The Varsity Hotel and Spa start at £150. Visit www.thevarsityhotel.co.uk or call 01223 30 60 30.

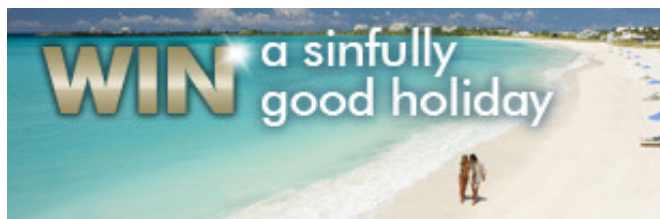
Book your travel CALL 0808 230 1002

- [Holidays](#)
- [Hotels](#)
- [Flights](#)
- [City Breaks](#)

☒ Site ☐ Web



Top Travel Promotions



[Jamaica! Enter Now](#)

[Your chance to win a seven-night holiday at Sandals in](#)



[Nile cruise! Enter Now](#)

[Vote for your top travel companies and win a five-star](#)

LATEST TRAVEL NEWS

- [FCO tells travellers to avoid parts of Cairo](#)
- [Profits at Thomas Cook drive shares down](#)
- [Rocker-turned-pilot heads back to the day job](#)
- [Boris Johnson calls for new hub airport](#)
- [Toll for Australia's Great Ocean Road?](#)
- [Fog causes further cancellations and delays](#)
- [Piranha attacks reported at Brazil beach](#)
- [Titanic centenary dive trips to shipwreck](#)

- [Plane passengers 'held to ransom' over fuel](#)

Ads by Google:

[De Vere Luxury Hotels](#) Enjoy A 1 Night B&B Break At De Vere From Just £65 -Offer Ends 24/12. [Devere-Hotels.co.uk/Autumn-Offer](#)

[4*Hotel Berlin City West](#) Near Ku'damm & Berlin Zoo "3 for 2 Nights" Special from 96,-€ [www.Heckers-Hotel.de](#)

[Cheap London Hotel Rooms](#) Exclusive Online Deals And Specials On All London Hotels. Book

Now! [BargainTravel4u.co.uk/LondonHotels](#)

[Do You Need a Car?](#) 20 Years Renting Cars Fuerteventura 2nd Driver Free & Unlimited Mileage [www.top-car-hire.com](#)

[Hotels in Jaipur](#) Holiday Inn: Top Comfort. Low Prices. Official Site. Book Now! [www.HolidayInn.com](#)

[St. Ives Cornwall B&B](#) Luxury 5star B&B views over Bay Licensed, Car Park, Elegant, Quiet [www.shunleehotel.co.uk](#)

[Hotels Worldwide](#) Lowest price guaranteed, fantastic cheap hotel deals. ABTA/ATOL [alpharooms.com](#)

[Yorkshire Dales hotel](#) Family run hotel, home cooked food real ales in the village of

Askrigg [www.thewhiterosehotelaskrigg.co.uk](#)

Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd

Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

[© Associated Newspapers Ltd](#)

