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Friday, September 9th, 2010 at 1:33 pm



For a town as saturated with culture and history as Cambridge, it is surprisingly lacking in top-end hotels. There are, to be sure, some characterful B&Bs, and some outposts of well-regarded groups, but up until now, the discerning visitor has looked in vain for a truly luxurious experience. Now, at last, that search has come to an end. The newly opened **Varsity Hotel** – privately owned by a group of former Cambridge students – has seen that there is a clear gap in the market for somewhere to stay that will accommodate people looking for something more than the usual identikit experience, and intends to fill that gap.

Based on a recent visit, it will do so admirably. The hotel is situated in an enviable location next to the river, just off Magdalen St., meaning that it's literally a couple of minutes from the main areas of the town, and yet is both quiet and peaceful. Upon entering, the first impressions – from the 360 degree photographic panoramas in the entrance hall and pictures of famous Cambridge (and occasional Oxford) alumni on every floor and in every room – are that this is somewhere that has managed to offer what a premier 21st Century hotel should, and yet still remaining true to older traditions of hospitality at the same time.

There's nothing old fashioned about the exceptionally well appointed rooms, however. Some have stunning views over the dreaming spires of Cambridge from floor to ceiling windows, particularly on the higher floors, while others have walk-in rainforest showers. The high end suites even come with such amenities as i-Pads and Nintendo Wiis to hire on request; flat screen TVs and DVD players come as standard. The beds – Hypos, naturally – offer the weary traveller the perfect opportunity to relax after a hard day's punting or touring the hostleries of Cambridge.

This would all count for little were it not for the genuinely helpful and keen staff, whose dedication to making your stay a welcome and happy one is a delight. Nothing is too much trouble, and you will leave feeling that you have been less a unit processed for profit and more an honoured and popular guest in an exceptionally well-appointed private house. After you've been here once, you're more than likely to want to return.

Varsity Hotel
Thompson's Lane
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www.thevarsityhotel.co.uk

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