

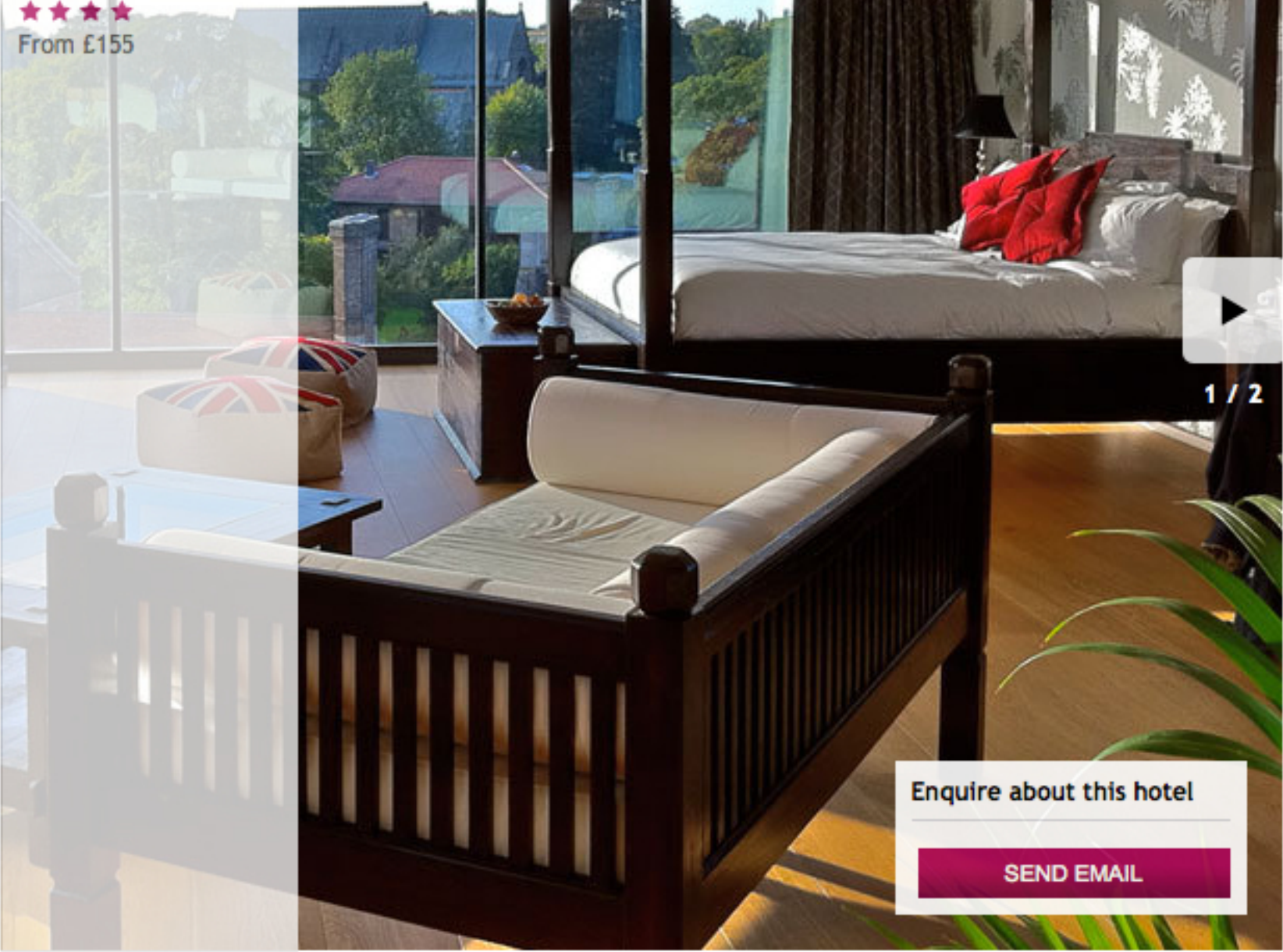


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BOOK PLACES TO STAY

The Varsity Hotel

Thompson's Lane
Cambridge
CB5 8AQ
United Kingdom
★★★★★
From £155



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TRAVEL

Book places to stay: The Varsity Hotel

By Lisa Johnson

Why go? For great views, a great spa and great grub...

Oxford might be more vibrant, but Cambridge has the edge on beauty, especially when seen from the top of The Varsity Hotel, a new 48-room boutique hotel in a converted warehouse overlooking Magdalene College.

The four sixth-floor suites have floor-to-ceiling windows and breathtaking views over the antique city, from Midsummer Common to the Pepys Library and the Gothic spires of St John's Chapel. Views from the roof-top garden, which is open to all hotel residents, are even better.

All rooms are hi-tech, with oak floors, dramatic print wallpapers and Elemis amenities. The two penthouses (or master suites) are the best of the lot, though: 611 (St John's), is vast and has near-panoramic views, while 613 (Trinity), has the fanciest bathroom; 614 (Jesus) is the smallest but most stylish of the four sixth-floor rooms. On the lower floors, four rooms have four-poster beds and seven have free-standing baths.

The River Bar Steakhouse & Grill is right on the river, with dramatic teapot-print wallpaper, navy-leather banquettes and a more private mezzanine level. Breakfast, eaten overlooking punters and swans, is buffet-style but they will do eggs to order.

The Glassworks health club, a state-of-the-art facility in a 300-year-old, brick-and-wood interior, offers Aveda massages, yoga classes and hours of contented wallowing in the Jacuzzi watching the world go by on Magdalene Bridge (happily for all, the window is one-way only).

Highs:

- The views from the rooftop garden
- Complimentary access to The Glassworks Spa

Lows:

- Having to walk outside to get to the restaurant and Glassworks Spa
- The buffet breakfast strikes a slightly wrong note

Facilities & Important Info at The Varsity Hotel

Number of rooms: 48

Check-in/check-out times: 3pm and 11.30pm

Room service: Yes

Swimming pool: No

Spa: Yes

Child-friendly: Yes. Cots and extra beds are available on request, as are a selection of board games, children's books and DVDs. Super-king and above rooms are best as they are larger, but any would work.

Dogs welcome: No

Restaurant & bar: Buffet breakfast and steaks and grilled chicken and fish at the River Bar Steakhouse & Grill; cocktails in the bar.

Rates: Room rates are higher on Fridays and Saturdays

Location: Spend Saturday afternoon shopping on and around Trinity Street and in the Grand Arcade, dine at Côte brasserie on the corner of Thompson's Lane, and re-emerge on the Sunday for a chauffeured champagne-punt along the backs, or a riverside, willow-shrouded walk from Newnham to Grantchester for tea at The Orchard.

Distance to nearest train station/airport: The Varsity Hotel is 10 minutes by taxi from Cambridge train station, 45 minutes from Stansted airport or 1 ½ hours by car from London.



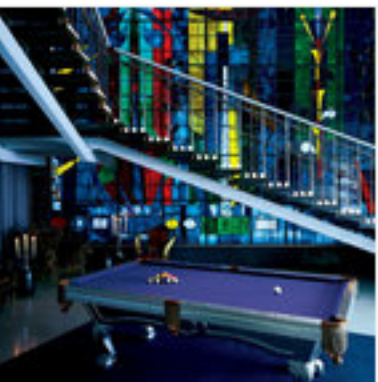
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