



Views of
Falmouth
Harbour

THE SMALL TOWN WITH THE BIG FOOD SCENE

CHARLOTTE SKIDMORE revisits some childhood memories in her favourite town of Falmouth

NOW I have to admit that I am no stranger to Falmouth, having visited regularly as a child. Believe it or not this was where my best school friend and I spent our first 'girls holiday' as teenagers and we had a brilliant time (no further details on this will be forthcoming).

So I was intrigued to see how the town has changed in the 15 years since I last visited.

Well, I'm pleased to say that it still retains its coastal charm, with its lovely individual art and craft shops, and it has become even more of a foodie paradise than I remember.

On every corner there is something to tempt the tastebuds, from the expected seafood specialities to Mexican, Caribbean and tapas. Of course, it would be wrong of me not to mention the traditional cream teas which are served in abundance.

Since I last visited Falmouth, Discovery Quay (Events Square) has been built. It is a vibrant part of the waterfront, filled with well-known eateries. The quay also houses the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, a centre of nautical excellence that attracts people of all ages with its award-winning exhibitions.

Events Square is one of the key open air arenas in Falmouth and, as such, plays a key role in helping to host Falmouth Week, Falmouth Sea Shanty Festival, Falmouth Spring Festival and Falmouth Oyster Festival.

If food is not your main reason for visiting Cornwall, Falmouth has great beaches, parks and gardens and cycling routes to enjoy, as well as Pendennis castle, which is well worth a visit if you enjoy a step back in time.

THE HOTEL

We stayed at The Royal Duchy Hotel, which enjoys a marvellous position overlooking the seafront.

The hotel has the air of a typically English seaside hotel, with a touch of luxury to boot. We're not talking Fawlty Towers here, we're talking beautifully furnished public areas, smart rooms and impeccable service.

The hotel also has an indoor swimming pool, handy for those days when the weather is not so kind, and a great treatment room where you can escape and be pampered in tranquillity. I enjoyed a fantastic massage, mini pedicure and facial during my stay and after a busy week, it was just what the doctor ordered.

Enjoying the spa here is a lovely contrast to a busy day exploring the delights of Falmouth.

There are also heated loungers and a sauna, which add to the overall experience and allow you to easily while away a few hours in peace.

Although we didn't eat in the evenings at the hotel, the main restaurant is a spectacular room and has a great reputation.

The Pendennis Restaurant has been awarded AA Rosettes for its sumptuous cuisine, which uses fresh Cornish produce wherever possible.

But if something more relaxed is your thing, there is informal dining in the Terrace Lounge Bar or al fresco on the beautiful Sun Terrace.

We enjoyed a drink in the Terrace Lounge before going out for dinner and it enjoys lovely views out to sea.

IN THE EVENING

We ate dinner at two different restaurants while in town and both were absolutely wonderful.

The first was Hooked on the Rocks, which overlooks Swanpool Beach. The night we visited it was extremely windy, but the minute we stepped through the door it was like arriving in a cosy, but modern haven, with great smells wafting from the kitchen.

The menu is designed well so that you can enjoy some tapas to share to start with, allowing you a little experience of lots of things the kitchen has to offer. Enjoy the likes of homemade focaccia, Spanish patatas bravas and St Austell Bay mussels steamed a la mariniere style or with a red wine and chorizo sauce, to name just a few dishes.

But the piece de resistance has to be the fish platter that is offered for the main event.

Enjoy the delights of mussels and clams steamed in a chilli, ginger and coriander broth with tempura squid, seared scallops and king prawns with a bucket of thin fries.

Interestingly, you can have this for one or two people, which is great for me as I often lose out because of my husband being more of a meat than fish eater.

However, if there are two of you, you can also



The Royal Duchy Hotel is in a stunning location

DID YOU KNOW?

By replacing the jam with syrup or treacle you are in for a very Cornish cream tea experience known as Thunder and Lightning. Although lively arguments ensue over the definition, Falmouth Harbour is the third largest natural harbour in the world after Poole Harbour and Sydney Harbour.



The seafood at Hooked on the Rocks is to die for



Gylly Beach Café is set in a wonderful location overlooking the beach

add a lobster or a crab. Flavoursome, visually appealing and plenty of it. I was in heaven!

The second evening we ate at Gylly Beach Café. Interestingly I think this is where my cousin had her wedding reception many years ago before it was a restaurant. I thought it was in a beautiful setting then and nothing has changed.

Busy on a Monday evening, this was a good sign and it was ideally situated a very short walk from our hotel.

I had read about the scallops before I arrived and when they appeared they looked absolutely beautiful. Did they taste as good as they looked? Oh yes! They came with crab mousse wrapped in courgette cannelloni, which was to die for.

Opting for a break from seafood for the first time in a couple of days, my dining partner and I enjoyed West Country sirloin steak with peppercorn sauce. It was really nicely cooked and I'm pretty sure I got more than my eight ounces!

There were also some really great specials on the board, which was great news for a Monday night and I was really impressed that there were dairy free options for dessert. Everyone is catered for here!

IN CONCLUSION

Whether with your partner, kids, parents or grandparents - or everyone together, Falmouth is such a lovely place to visit if you fancy a culinary treat. But equally, there are plenty of other things to do in this delightful Cornish town. ♦

Discover more at the town's official website at falmouth.co.uk