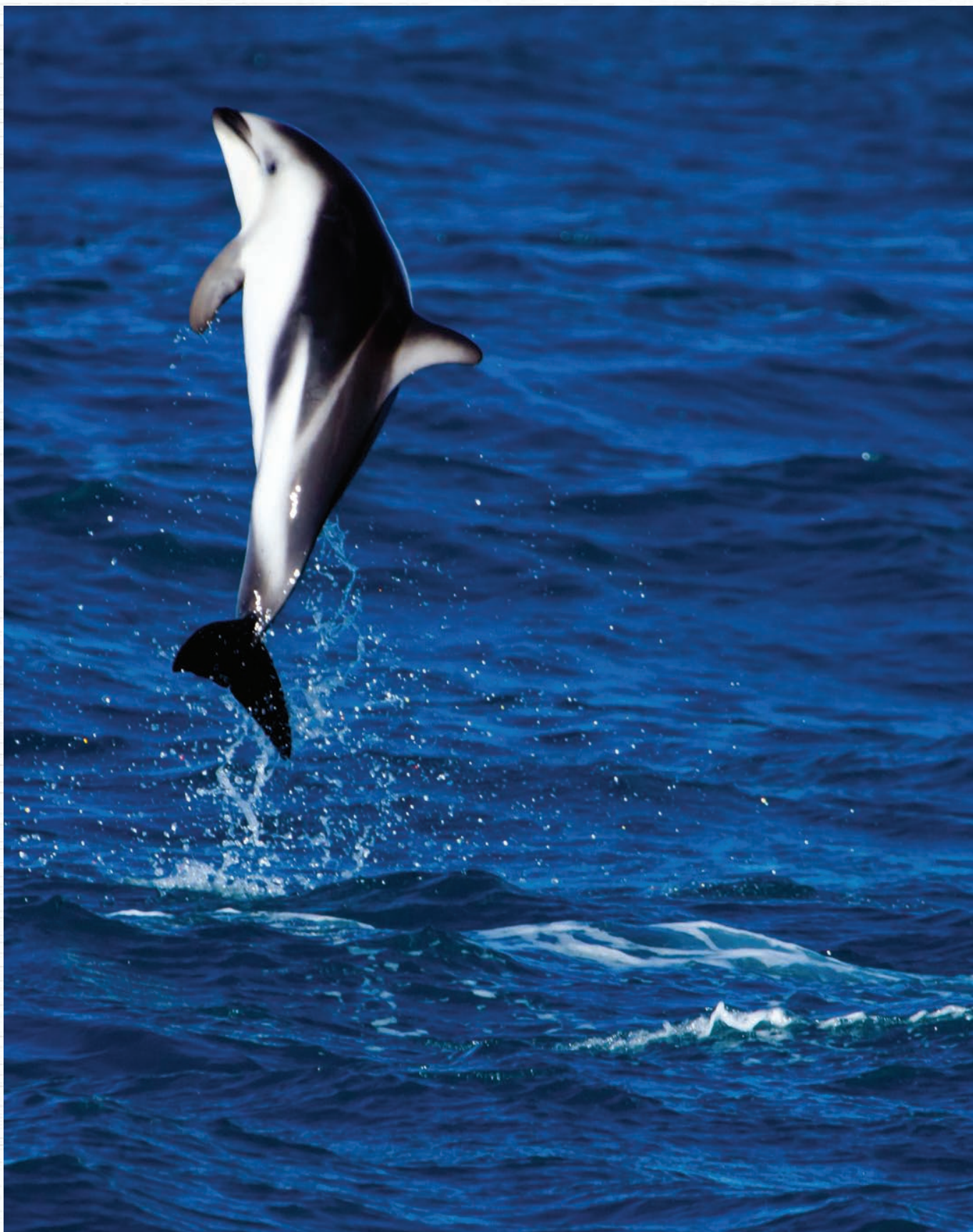


TRAVEL

Discover the land of the Kiwi

Chill out in Falmouth at a spa hotel and take in some teapot cocktails and Artisan coffee





Leave the world behind...

We didn't get off to the best of starts for this quick Cornish break due to some inexplicable hold-up on the motorway that resulted in us driving at a snail's pace from Gloucestershire and arriving seven hours later in Falmouth

BY SUE SMITH

TO say we were slightly fraught and tetchy would be an understatement but as soon as we arrived at St Michael's Hotel and Spa we were scooped up by staff who quickly succeeded at calming us down and eased us into what was to become a gloriously relaxing and rejuvenating seaside break.

We had arranged to have cocktails at Dolly's Tea Room and Wine bar in town, which meant pushing back our dinner reservation at the hotel's fabulous Flying Fish restaurant. No problem

And while we quickly showered and changed a taxi was summoned and waiting

outside the door to whisk us away.

Dolly's occupies a gorgeous Georgian room up a flight of stairs in Church Street serving teapot cocktails, poured into vintage cups with sugar bowls of ice cubes

By day it is a traditional tea room offering, among others, Vicar's Tea for Two (cucumber and cream cheese) and Dolly's deluxe smoked salmon and crab as well as exotic teas and homemade cakes including the now world famous lavender and treacle tart.

As a gin drinker I felt I had died and gone to heaven when I saw Dolly's Gin

Palace menu – a seemingly endless list of gins from Berkley Square 40 percent garnished with basil leaf and lime to Hayman's Royal Dock Gin Navy Strength 57 percent described as a classic "London Dry Gin with additional oomph."

Dolly served us Cornish Gin in pseudo-goldfish bowls (a large balloon glass called a Copa) with lashings of chunky ice.

"Sometimes a drink so steeped in history needs to be created with the utmost detail," says Dolly who garnished my drink with coriander and my companions with pomegranate.

Although it was early the place was heaving with all ages all enjoying their own favourite tipples as the pianist played everything from Chopin to The Smiths and Dolly's favourite, the theme tune from The Muppets.

All the while, the resident pearl clad yellow Labrador Hebe, mooched around unobtrusively with her eyes fixed on the floor for the odd crumb - if her presence is not welcomed the staff will easily divert her.

By now we were well and truly mellowed and made our way back to St Michael's for dinner in the 2AA Rosette restaurant.

Water appeared on the table without being requested and a mouth-watering selection of warm, freshly -baked brown, white and sultana and walnut rolls were offered.

Our journey from hell had now become something that had obviously happened to someone else as we tucked in to Thai Crab Cakes with Coriander, Lime and Chilli and Helford River Mussels with Healey's Farm Cider and Fennel with artisan bread to start.

Mains were Baked Hake with Falmouth Crab Fritter and Pork Belly with Mustard Mash and Spiced Red Cabbage.

The kitchen at St Michaels uses a rich variety of sustainable food sourced daily with freshly caught fish specials.

As we drifted off in our fresh, nautically-themed room with the sound of the sea in the distance we truly had left the cares of the world behind us.

After a hearty breakfast where there was a choice of Continental or hot buffet with fantastic panoramic views over



Hebe the pearl-wearing yellow Labrador at Dolly's Tearooms



the hotel's sub-tropical gardens, we headed down to Espressini in Killigrew Street.

This artisan coffee destination has gained quite a reputation in the town as a showcase for coffees from all over the UK, Europe and the USA.

Owner Rupert Ellis has a passion for William Morris wallpaper which is the perfect backdrop for the cafe's 1930s Hobart grinder and hand-made furniture.

Here all you have to do is describe your preferences and staff will find the perfect coffee bean for you.

There was just time for a light lunch of tapas at The Courtyard Deli tucked away at Bells Court up a little alleyway off the main shopping street.

The pretty courtyard is a lovely suntrap during the summer months and inside the deli you can pick up a variety of tempting foods including an impressive selection of gluten-free.

Despite our fraught start we left Falmouth refreshed and revived making plans to go back again for a much longer break.

• St Michael's Hotel and Spa is at Gyllyngvase Beach, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 4NB 01326 312707

