

# Mother's day *getaways*

Intergenerational friendship – be it that special bond between mother and grown-up daughter, or two friends from different stages in life – is a special thing. Which is why we headed off with the leading ladies in our lives to enjoy time together, away from it all.

## Reflections in the Lakes

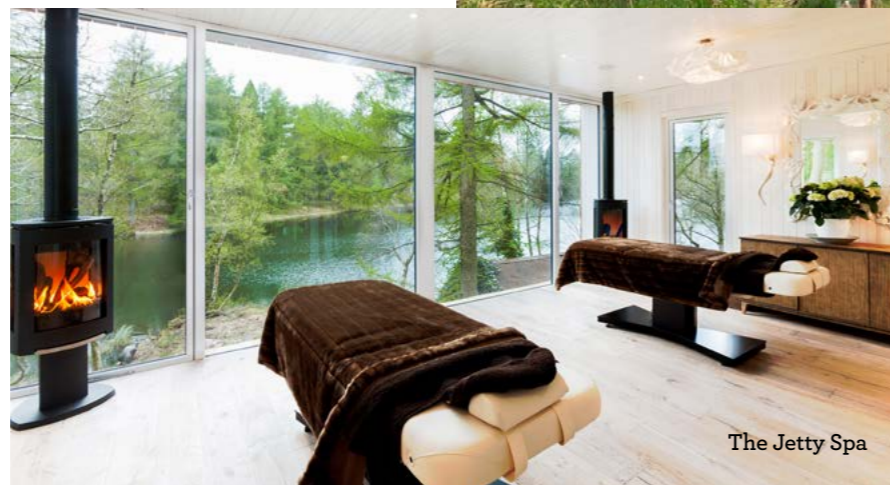
By Emma Winterschladen

### GILPIN HOTEL & LAKE HOUSE, WINDERMERE

It's easy to see where the literary greats got their inspiration from. With its crisp air, still waters and handsome, rugged landscape, the Lake District has a way of clearing the mind and heart. So where better to go for a few days of relaxation and celebration with my friend Nicky. It wasn't just Nicky's birthday we were celebrating, we were also honouring a decade of friendship, one born out of grief and first love. That, and to enjoy a little peace and pampering.

Enter Gilpin Hotel & Lake House. Nestled in the hills near Lake Windermere, this five-star family-run boutique hotel is an oasis. We arrived in the pouring rain and were straight away chauffeured in a Land Rover to the Lake House – the one-time home of the owners and now a more discrete option for guests. We arrived at our room and were greeted with a floor-to-ceiling window overlooking a picture-perfect scene: a lonesome jetty on the lake cloaked in dusk. Perhaps more importantly, there was also a bucket of champagne on ice. We knew then that this was going to be just the place for our getaway.

The value and joy of the inter-generational friendship has long been known to me. After my lovely mum died when I was 16, I met Nicky a year later, through her son – my first boyfriend.



The Jetty Spa

And although the relationship was somewhat short-lived, my friendship with Nicky and her family has endured. We've shared holidays, shopping trips and endless cups of tea (and gin and tonics) – pockets of snatched comfort and joy woven into the fabric of our busy lives. So to be able to have the luxury of spending quality one-on-one time together was a rare, special thing. No less somewhere as removed the Lake District – where we could reflect, unwind and catch up.

And catch up we did that evening at Gilpin Spice, the hotel's more casual dining option. It's a bright, bold, colourful space among the demure, understated interiors elsewhere. We sat at the bar, sipping cocktails and making our way

through a feast of sharing dishes. We were the last to leave the restaurant, four hours later, having only touched the surface of all the big fat juicy topics we wanted to discuss.

The next morning, breakfast was enjoyed in the conservatory overlooking the lake. We plotted our day over porridge, eggs Benedict and a steaming pot of coffee, agreeing to strike the balance between walking, relaxing and eating (preferably the famous Grasmere gingerbread). The day was bright, so we pulled on our walking boots and set off to explore the Lake House's 100 acres of woodland.

We walked and talked; talked and walked – all the time drinking in our surroundings. There was a stillness to

the place that's hard to pinpoint, but one that welcomed deep, meaningful conversations. Having the time, just the two of us, made me reflect too how in another life I would have been here with my own mum. It's amazing how two separate loves and lives can sit side by side, one in your imagination and the other walking beside you. It felt in many ways like Mum was with us too. She was present in many of our chats, and even when she wasn't, she sat quietly between our words.

We returned, rosy cheeked and cheerful, ready for our spa treatments. We'd glimpsed Gilpin's Jetty Spa on our walk; a Swedish-style box-lodge among the tree canopies. Inside it boasts a chic, cosy space with a glass wall and views over the lake. We lay side-by-side, the day fading to dusk, as we settled into our respective treatments: mine an Indian head massage, and Nicky's a holistic facial. What followed was 75 minutes of utter, mind-emptying bliss. As the masseuse worked her magic on my scalp, neck, shoulders, back and arms, I felt any stress I'd carried with me simply melt away.

Our final evening was spent at HRiSHi – Gilpin's Michelin-starred restaurant. Course after course arrived of the signature tasting menu, each an exquisitely executed celebration of modern British cuisine – all with a Cumbrian twist. It was a perfectly luxurious end to a luxuriously perfect time. The next day, upon waving goodbye to Nicky, I felt grateful I got to spend time somewhere so beautiful, to tune out from the world and tune into two of the most important people in my life – one of them here with me, one of them not.

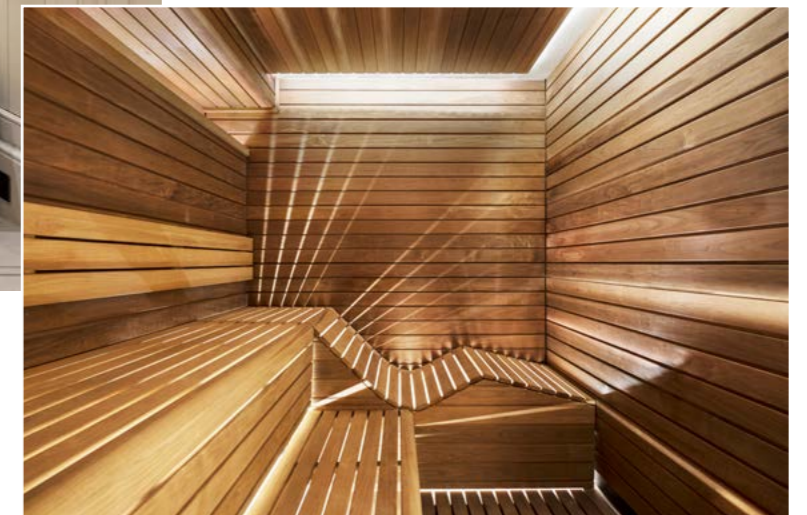
**Gilpin Lake House is available from £445 per night on a B&B basis. Treatments at the Jetty Spa cost from £75. The three-hour Jetty Spa Trail is £100 per person. [thegilpin.co.uk](http://thegilpin.co.uk)**



Gilpin Lake House



*'What a rare treat it was to hop onto a number 22 bus and find ourselves immediately immersed in a luxurious world'*



## Pampering in the city *By Liz Earle*

### LANESBOROUGH, LONDON

Time away with my daughter Lily doesn't happen enough. Too often our busy diaries are hard to organise and there's always the question 'Who will mind Basil?' Short breaks are a lovely idea, but even a weekend away is too often taken up with a tiresome car or train journey, or short-haul flight – all of which can eat into time at your precious destination! What a rare treat it was then to hop onto a number 22 bus from our Wellbeing Studios to Hyde Park Corner and find ourselves immediately immersed in a luxurious world a million miles away from everyday life.

I've long been a fan of the Lanesborough hotel, the five-star Knightsbridge icon opposite central London's largest park. Built as St George's Hospital in the 1800s, this impressive white stone mansion became vacant when the hospital moved to Tooting. Later redeveloped into a

luxury hotel, I have many happy beauty editor memories of exclusive perfume and product launches there. Its elegant style and convenient location (mere moments away from Harrods and Harvey Nichols) swiftly became a favourite with the upper echelons of the beauty world. After closing for renovation in 2013, its gilded doors reopened with even greater opulence in 2015, reputedly as the most expensive hotel in London and winning the coveted No. 1 Hotel in London Award.

After a friendly welcome from veteran doorman Johnny, we were greeted by afternoon tea in the Garden Room, with soft piano music tinkling in the background and an astounding array of finger sandwiches, delicate doll-sized French pastries, and homemade scones with lemon curd and clotted cream. Deliciously divine, Lily noted she was thankful to have skipped lunch. Delving downstairs we discovered the Lanesborough Club & Spa, which reminded me of the fabulous Parisian spa at Le Hotel Bristol, where I used to film in my GMTV days, so it was no surprise to discover this *grande dame* is its sister hotel.

Upon opening, the spa was swiftly described by *Condé Nast Traveller Spa Guide* as 'the best in town' and we were welcomed to its 'wellness hub' with fluffy towels, robes and slippers. The elegant, high-ceilinged salon is designed for every comfort and covered in gilt, marble and mirrors. We wandered the superb thermal suites of steam, sauna and waterfall hydro-pool with its comfy loungers and treatment rooms. I soon discovered the state-of-the-art gym with its amazing SKILLMILL too – a non-motorised sled-style treadmill designed for low-impact, high-intensity interval training (HIIT).

Perusing the extensive treatments menu, we were torn between the Himalayan Salt Scrub, the Amethyst Gel Body Wrap or the most divine sounding Silk & Salt Pedicure, as well as face and body treats from the fabulous *ila* and *La Prairie* ranges. All prices were pretty average ➡

for central London and not exorbitant given the incredible surroundings (manicures from £30). But as we were here for a bit of mother and daughter bonding, we opted for the unique Lanesborough Lather Hot Mineral Mud Bath, a completely private Rasul mud treatment designed to be enjoyed by just two guests at a time. Stepping through the enormous sound-proof doors into the inner sanctum of the private spa suite, our therapists used black soap and organic linen exfoliating cloths with natural brushes to lather, buff and massage our skin. We then entered the private Rasul mud chamber, a mosaic-clad cavern filled with clouds of hot steam and bowls of warm mud. Rasul contains cleansing kaolin clay as well as skin-soothing silica and other minerals.

As our body temperatures rose, we slathered each other with the nourishing mud, every so often hosing the other with a blast of icy cold water to cool down amid hoots of laughter. I don't think I've ever laughed so much in a spa setting. Following our muddy steam and warming massage we felt rubbed, scrubbed, polished, cleansed and thoroughly renewed – in both body and mind.

We floated back to our room in a bit of a blur, marvelling at the lavish furnishings and beautiful view over Hype Park. We even had our own personal butler to serve us fresh mint tea, which we enjoyed while catching up on all the important things that can so often slip through the net of daily conversation. After a sound night's sleep we woke to a white-clothed trolley trundling into our



The Lanesborough's sumptuous interior



*'We slathered each other with the nourishing mud amid hoots of laughter. I don't think I've ever laughed so much in a spa setting'*

room, piled with treats including poached eggs with cherry tomatoes, kale and ginger on toast, served with blueberry and pomegranate smoothies. We left reluctantly, but at least had time for a leisurely stroll together across to Hyde Park, watching the mounted Queen's Life Guards parade their magnificent ebony steeds; helmets and breastplates glinting in the sun. We followed them down through Green Park to Buckingham Palace, giving the Queen a cheery wave in her absence before heading back to the reality of work on the number 22 bus.

Yes, it was without question an exclusive and extravagant treat. But oh so memorable, too – and easy to get to. Less than 24 hours in this perfect palace felt like a week's worth of exotic travel elsewhere. Highly recommended for something very special, with someone very special, to make the most of every precious minute.

**Prices start at £650 per night, based on B&B for two people sharing, including access to the gym and spa. With thanks to [oetkercollection.com](http://oetkercollection.com)**

## Chocolate-making in Belgium *By Polly Beard*

### MAISON 12, GHENT

My daughter Ella and I have different views on how best to spend a few precious days away together. I like my holidays to be hot, whereas she would choose cold and crisp any day. I'm good at lying around with a book, while she prefers to stay active. She also loves to clothes shop given half a chance, which is my personal idea of hell. But one thing we always love doing together is cooking, and so we agreed that we'd both be happy learning a new culinary skill as part of a city break away. The question was what culinary skill did we both want to learn? The answer (as is so often the case in my life) was chocolate! And so we decided to head to Belgium, home of the finest chocolatiers, to learn from the masters themselves at a chocolate workshop in Ghent.

We take the Eurostar from St Pancras and arrive in Brussels in the blink of an eye – well almost, but 300km an hour does seem super-fast to me. Travelling to Europe by train is so much less hassle than flying – no trekking to an airport, shorter check-in times, fewer baggage restrictions, plus you get to admire the view on the way. From Brussels, our 'any Belgian station' ticket takes us on to Ghent, and I'm impressed by the Belgian trains, with their double-decker carriages allowing plenty of seats, even during peak hours.

Ghent is a city with a pretty chocolate-box historic centre but with a young, buzzing vibe about it – full of students, exhibitions, regular festivals, trendy bars and fantastic places to eat. Just next to Graffiti Street – one of Ghent's spaces where street art is positively welcomed – is Atelier Maison 12, where Mia Ackaert and Hendrik Mesuere share their chocolate wisdom.

We enter the studio space and are instantly greeted by delicious aromas and a cup of warming hot chocolate to get our taste buds going. We get started on the perfect vanilla ganache (the key is perfectly soft but not melted butter) ready to use later in truffles.

Next, we learn about chocolate's structure. After melting chocolate in a bain marie at 45°C, the cocoa butter and mass begin to separate, so it needs to

be mixed and cooled down to exactly 31°C degrees for dark chocolate (for milk chocolate it's 29°C and for white it's 28°C). To do this, Hendrik pours a lake of molten chocolate on to the marble worktop, and shows us how to work it to get the temperature down.

The chocolate lake starts to become thicker. Once we get the nod that it's ready to use, we spoon it into piping bags to fill various moulds and make wafer-thin discs on greaseproof paper. You can see the chocolate crisping up, so we quickly sprinkle on dried fruit and nuts, and a pinch of Himalayan salt to create an array of mouth-watering chocolate delights. Then it's time to quickly finish off our truffles, dropping our set mounds of ganache into molten chocolate and learning a nifty fork trick to make them look beautifully patterned, before rolling them in a cocoa powder coating.

As we package up our treats to take away with us, Ella and I are equally chuffed with the fruits (or should I say chocolates...) of our labours and the knowledge we've acquired. Our finished chocolates look pleasingly professional and we leave fully inspired to become amateur chocolate-makers back home. It's been a pleasure to learn something from scratch together – a great leveller on all fronts and a truly lovely way to bond.

**For information on workshops at Maison 12, head to [lamaison12.be](http://lamaison12.be). Many thanks to [visitghent.com](http://visitghent.com) and to [eurostar.com](http://eurostar.com) for their help with this trip.**



Polly and Ella make chocolate