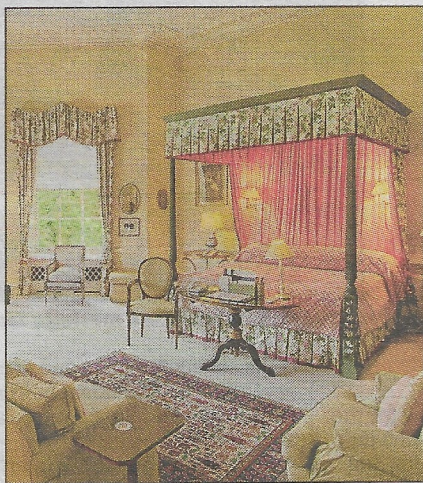


# Lording it up at a hotel rich in history

**NICOLE STINSON** finds that life is grand during a visit to the converted 17th-century stately home Hartwell House and nearby Oxford city



**LUXURIOUS:** One of the hotel's rooms

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Hartwell House is a stunning 17th-century honey-coloured Georgian stately home which has been converted into a luxury hotel.

It sits within an area of lush, rolling National Trust parkland and is reached via a regal drive bounded by stone walls topped with statues.

In front of the property sits a statue of Frederick, the Prince of Wales, who was a close friend of one of the Lee family, former owners of the estate.

Entry is by way of the Great Hall with its enormous fireplace, plenty of inviting lounges and old portraits – just as one

would expect from a building of this vintage.

Among many other features, Hartwell's gardens boast a pavilion, the remains of an 18th-century chapel and the centre part of London's Kew Bridge, bought to adorn the path over a lake frequented by swans and

geese.

In 2002 former US president Bill Clinton visited the house, whose gardens were designed by the famous landscaper Capability Brown.

## SLEEP TIGHT

There are 48 rooms, all ornately and individually decorated with antiques, rich wallpapers and printed floral drapes. Some have four-poster beds and overlook the landscaped grounds.

For those who prefer a little more seclusion, or want to throw a private party, there is a separate Georgian House with its own access, four bedrooms and a reception area.







**MAGNIFICENT GROUNDS:** Hartwell House Hotel, Buckinghamshire sits within National Trust parkland

### TICKLE YOUR TASTE BUDS

Hartwell House's dining rooms are located just behind the Great Hall.

With its grand ceilings and fireplace, the Soane Dining Room is the largest of the three and diners are accompanied by music from the baby grand piano.

The dinner menu is exceptional with dishes such as locally-sourced Aylesbury duck, chicken cannelloni, pan-seared halibut with prawn dumpling and chocolate and espresso ganache.

Afternoon tea is always a crowd-pleaser and can be taken in the library or the Hartwell Café.

### RELAX AND INDULGE

The Roman bath-style pool, with its ornate statues and arched windows, is a lovely place to chill out.

You can also relax in the hot tub, sauna and steam rooms.

### ON YOUR DOORSTEP

The university city of Oxford is a half hour's drive and wandering its narrow cobbled streets lined with Tudor houses is a delightful way to spend an afternoon.

Visit the Bodleian Library and the Divinity School, located in one of the oldest buildings on the university campus, which were used in the filming of the Harry Potter movies.

Don't miss the Weston Library, which houses rare first editions, and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History which is home to more than seven million exhibits – walk through the Parade of Skeletons, see the skull of the Oxford Dodo and wander beneath whale skeletons.

Nearby Blenheim Palace – the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill – is nothing short of stupendous. Surrounded by vast lawns, this beautiful property

has magnificent state rooms, priceless antiques and intricate tapestries.

Be sure to catch the Churchill exhibition, chronicling the great wartime leader's life, including his paintings, clothes and personal effects.

### FASCINATING FACT

France's exiled King Louis XVIII held court at Hartwell House for five years from 1809 and in 1814 signed his accession to the French throne in the library, following the defeat of Napoleon.

### ● GETTING THERE

*Hartwell House (01296 747 444/ hartwell-house.com) offers dinner, B&B from £185 (two sharing). The special National Trust break offer includes £15 allowance for dinner Sun-Thurs. Buckinghamshire tourism: visitbuckinghamshire.com*