



A hotel to brighten your day

Brian Ellis travels to the Lake District to enjoy a room with a view . . . although not at night

IT must rate as one of the most bizarre visitor reviews a hotel has ever had.

A guest was incandescent with rage after he flung open his bedroom window at the dead of night and saw nothing but . . . darkness.

Surely a room with a view of Windermere should have at least that, 24 hours a day, he later complained on TripAdvisor.

Instead everything was pitch black.

"It takes all sorts, I suppose," smiled the young lady on reception as we checked into the sumptuous Beech Hill just a couple of days after the "Darkgate" scandal had made it on to the TV news.

"That must be the first time we've had a guest complain because it's dark at night."

As we had arrived well after dusk, my first task as a serious hotel reviewer was to put our disgruntled predecessor's critique to the test.

Sliding open our patio windows and stepping outside on to the decking I can confirm it was dark, very dark.

"There's a lake out there somewhere," I told Mrs Ellis. "Imagine not being able to see it at night. I've a good



mind to write to The Times."

In an attempt to show balance I repeated the process after daybreak the following morning. And, sure enough, there it was. Windermere in all its stunning majesty.

But even that hadn't satisfied the man on TripAdvisor, signing himself only as Paul S.

There happened to be a blanket of mist across the water on the day he was there, one of the hazards, you might think, of booking a room in a lakeside beauty spot in late autumn or early winter.

Quite what Mr S expected the hotel manager to do about it is another matter.

Daybreak over Windermere for us was not as spectacular as it might have been on a gorgeous summer's day. After all it was raining cats and dogs, something which had been happening since the previous evening and something which would continue throughout our entire stay.

But you can't blame a four-star hotel for the weather, nor for the fact that night follows day.

I have to say, though, the



view was still stunning with the hills just visible in the distance through the greyness. It would have been wonderful to have had breakfast out there on the veranda – patio furniture provided – listening to the water lapping up against the shore. But this is Britain not the Bahamas.

The Beech Hill, on a good day, is probably as good as it gets in the beautiful Lake District. It is a sumptuous hotel, oozing character and class.

Our room, or suite as it turned out, was the height of luxury from its seven-foot

bed, its leather sofa and armchair (great for looking out of the patio windows at the dead of night) and its fresh flowers.

We could quite happily have stayed in and had dinner delivered. But duty called, and so we had to dress up and sample the in-house Burlington's Restaurant (again overlooking the darkness). When I jokingly asked the waitress: "Can you not do something about the view?" she responded with a tolerant smile.

After canapés, served in the lounge next to the roar-

ing log fire, the meal was simply superb, a mix of French and English cuisine. Breakfast the following morning was, as you might expect from a restaurant which has held AA rosettes for the last 20 years, first class, too – and came, finally, with a table view over the lake.

Had the weather been better we would have used the Beech Hill as a great starting point for a day discovering the delights of nearby Bowness, Windermere, Ambleside and Grasmere.

As it was we made an effort to drive the route in torrential rain, but chose to remain in the car.

"Imagine coming to the Lake District and not being able to go walking," I complained to Mrs Ellis. "I blame the hotel. Wait while I get on TripAdvisor."

Fact file

THE BEECH HILL HOTEL: Newby Bridge Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 1LR.
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57 ROOMS AND SUITES: Many with private balconies or access to the gardens.