

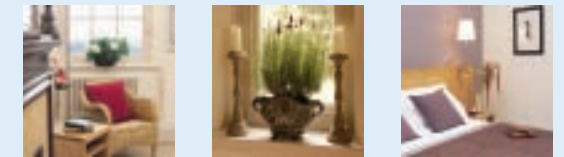
Pelham House, East Sussex

Boutique hotel meets country retreat at this 16th-century property within a short walk of Lewes' buzzing High Street and only 10 minutes from Brighton



PELHAM HOUSE *at a glance*

Jacqueline Head and Diane Rand, managers
St Andrew's Lane, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UW
01273 488600, www.pelhamhouse.com



Sleeps: 43 in 23 rooms (15 double/twins, five doubles and three singles). All rooms are ensuite. It's possible to hire half the hotel (the Manor House with 11 rooms) and get exclusive use of selected rooms such as the Panelled Room where you can have dinner.

Dining: 24 in the Panelled Room at one table, 43 at several tables in the dining room or up to 120 for dinner in the ballroom. Catered on a half-board basis. A typical menu might include chickpea feta fritters with vodka cucumber, crab linguine and chocolate tart. From £25pp.

Other facilities: BBQ, croquet and table tennis.

Children: one cot and highchair plus three Z-beds. Babysitting can be arranged.

Wedding licence: for up to 40 in the Panelled Room or 65 in the Terrace Room. Receptions for up to 80 in the Terrace Room and 180 in the ballroom.

Local attractions/things to do: beaches, shops and nightlife in Brighton, ten minutes away. Charleston House – once home to the Bloomsbury set – and Virginia Woolf's house at Rodmell are an easy drive away, as is Glyndebourne Opera House. Anne of Cleves' house and Lewes Castle are both within walking distance.

Transport: two minutes' walk from Lewes station with regular services to London Victoria (70 minutes). One hour's drive from London.

Price: whole house from £3,000 for one night midweek B&B, £6,000 for one night at the weekend and £9,000 for a two-night weekend.

Note: one room for the disabled on the ground floor.

It's hard to believe that this stylish hotel was previously the headquarters of East Sussex County Council. Today, Pelham House couldn't feel less like a place where debates about planning applications and dustbin collection were waged, despite some remnants of its immediate past that have been cleverly recycled.

The bar has been fashioned from one of the curved desks used in the circular council chamber, now home to a 120-capacity ballroom. The former finance director's office has become a quirky bedroom where two walls are still lined with glass-fronted cabinets. And a wonderfully rich tapestry from the chamber hangs in the library with its double-height ceilings, wooden floors, leather sofas and crystal chandeliers.

The interior of this 16th-century house extended in the 19th century has the look and feel of a boutique hotel decked out with chocolate

brown leather sofas, contemporary bathrooms and neutral decor. Lots of original features such as the window shutters and fireplaces also give it plenty of character. This is most evident in the 16th-century wood-paneled room with its intricately carved gargoyles and ornate fireplace.

Upstairs, all the bedrooms have been kitted out with locally crafted oak furniture and the very latest bathrooms. Everything is top notch, from the Egyptian cotton bed linen and Neutrogena toiletries to luxurious throws and cushions complementing the Farrow & Ball-painted walls in muted mauves, greens and blues.

A swanky bathroom in the bridal suite has wooden floors, fireplace, a shower with a gargantuan shower rose and a contemporary roll-top bath that sits in the middle of the room – perfectly positioned for gazing at the lovely views of the South Downs.