



Holm House Hotel

Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales

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7/10

Telegraph expert rating

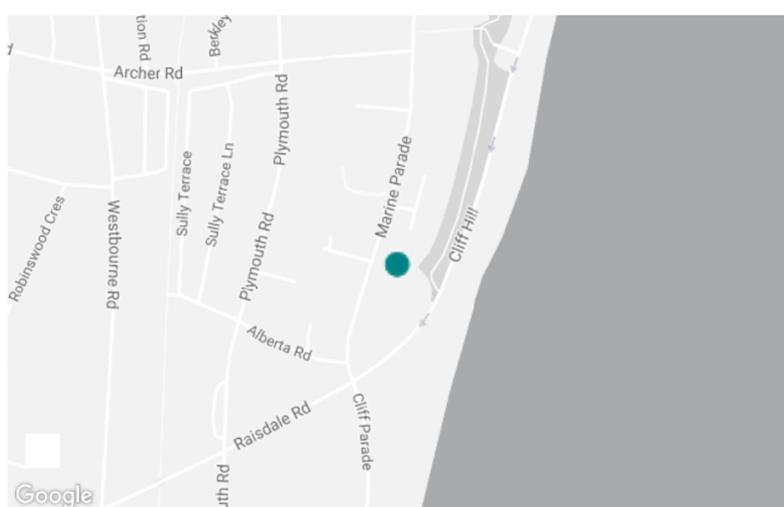
" Holm House sits atop cliffs in Penarth, a town of gorgeous 19th-century architecture that Victorians dubbed 'The Garden by the Sea'. This former private residence on 'Millionaire's Row' is now a collection of individually styled rooms, a boutique spa and a popular restaurant-bar. "

By **Benjamin Parker**,
TRAVEL WRITER

Location

7/10

Penarth is the monied seaside haunt four miles from the city – if you believe the local taxi drivers, the best place for drinks before a night out in Cardiff. Holm House, on an avenue lined by grand Victorian houses and twisting trees, is high enough to see over the Bristol Channel. Down a sloping path, the seafront is less than five minutes away. The esplanade makes for pleasant strolls, with an Italian-style garden, iron railings painted green and white, and festoon lights. The Art Deco pier juts out above grey stone beach, where changing tides reveal slithers of soft sand. Boat trips from the pier go to nearby islands, and regular trains and buses can take you into Cardiff.



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Style & character

7/10

The property was built in 1926 as a home for a local fishing fleet magnate. The residential surrounds, a stony drive and unfussy reception room mean it still feels like a home. The last decade has seen a full refurbishment, bringing in the more contemporary home-and-spa vibe. It now has distinctly traditional elements – the thick stone walls of the original building are visible in some parts – as well as 21st-century design in the low-slung lounge chairs and colours to subtly match the sea. A pretty garden of hedges, lawn and gravel faces the sea.



Service & facilities

7/10

Staff are enthusiastic and chat without pretension. Unpolished edges (wrong wine to the table, items not appearing at breakfast) are minimal. The reception – where you can get the low-down on Penarth – is manned at all times, and hot drinks can be ordered to your room.

The hotel's spa, a calm space of muted greys, features a gym, hydrotherapy pool, steam room and relaxation area. A long list of wraps, scrubs and rubs have international influences, such as Japanese rice facials and Ayurvedic massage.

- ✔ Bar
- ✔ Parking
- ✔ Pool
- ✔ Restaurant
- ✔ Sauna
- ✔ Spa
- ✔ Steam room/hammam
- ✔ Wi-Fi

Rooms

7/10

A boutique-style brush has been taken to each room, with none of the 12 spaces quite the same. Coastal charm flows throughout, with non-vivid shades and prints depicting seaside scenes. Some rooms feel more modern, with shiny metal furnishings, while others have embraced a more traditional look (accompanied by sloping ceilings). Noise flows through walls, but the Welsh cakes that welcome you mean occasional thuds can be forgiven. Min y Don, a mid-range sea-facing room, features a white bath sat below mullioned stone windows, buttressed by heavy whitewashed wooden shutters. All but one room has a bath; the best choice for a soak is the freestanding copper tub in Flatholm.

Food & drink

6/10

A 2014 renovation added the Welsh Room restaurant, sun-soaked in the day and candlelit at night. The menu is slightly hit-and-miss (underwhelming scallops, tender pork loin) but remains popular with locals and guests. The bar is throughly sleek: a curved wooden counter, illuminated by bright lights, with hand-made glass panels designed to mimic the hotel's nearby waves. Stools are cushioned with iridescent faux leather, and a centrepiece chandelier is a hand-sculpted bronze piece from the Netherlands.

Breakfast is a good combination of buffet – including the oft-missing Nutella – and a menu of hot dishes; a full Welsh missing baked beans without explanation (on eavesdropping, they'd run out) was disappointing.

Value for money

7/10

Double rooms from £120. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

Access for guests with disabilities?

One double/twin room on the ground floor allows for wheelchair access.

Family-friendly?

Yes – a family bedroom features bunk beds along with a double bed, and a number of 'zip and link' beds can be split. There is no extra charge for cots to be put in rooms, and the restaurant offers a children's menu.

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holmhousehotel.com