



La Fosse

Cranborne, Dorset, England

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8/10

Telegraph expert rating

" Snug in the wave-like green hills of east Dorset, La Fosse at Cranborne is a peaceful bed and breakfast as well as popular restaurant. Run by husband and wife, this simple West Country retreat, embracing both modern and traditional, feels as far from the madding crowds as possible. "

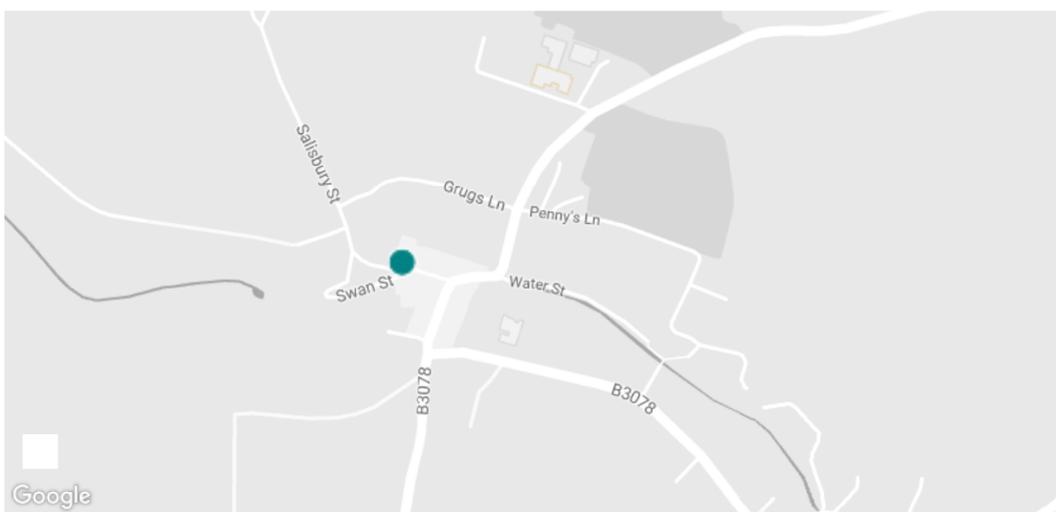
By **Benjamin Parker**,
TRAVEL WRITER

Location

8/10

Bounded on the north by the Blackmore Vale, Cranborne is a quiet village on a Dorset chalk downland. Known mostly for the Cranborne Estate – just under 5,000 acres of farm, wood, park and garden surrounding the grandiose county house of Viscount Cranborne – the village is ensconced in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which covers 40 per cent of the county.

The landscape encourages exploration, whether heading up to the prehistoric Hambledon Hill fort or finding your own path through the Dorset Downs (La Fosse offers complimentary use of bicycles). Beyond Cranborne's two pubs, the manor's walled garden and rows of charming buildings, there are shopping opportunities in Salisbury (25 minutes away) or the Jurassic Coast only 20 miles (32km) south.



Style & character

8/10

La Fosse's exterior is Victorian, all red brick apart from white-framed windows and bright flowers. Downstairs feels like a boutique country home, with pine floors leading to an exposed brick fireplace. Interiors have contemporary touches without letting go of the past, such as the 'Woods' wallpaper pattern from Cole & Son contrasted against leather butterfly chairs.

Further into the hotel, up steep hessian-carpeted stairs, you reach a significantly older part of the house (you'll notice ceilings getting lower). A little dip at the top of the staircase adds to charm; this hotel has worked around the interiors, instead of attempting to make it a sleek modern space.



Service & facilities

7/10

Discreet, friendly hospitality is no surprise given the simple indie vibe of La Fosse. Mark Hartstone owns the hotel with his wife, German-born Emmanuelle – she's good for insider tips on nearby attractions. Together they meet, greet, cook and entertain (with the help of a small team of part-timers). The lack of facilities in this hideaway won't matter; the rooms and location allow just as much relaxation as a spa.

- Bar
- Parking
- Restaurant
- Wi-Fi

Rooms

8/10

The six rooms – named after local cheeses like Dorset Blue – have been individually designed by the owners, and are larger than you'd expect from the outside. No two are the same, but certain aspects are constant: abstract floral patterns, bright colours and quirky antique-style pieces.

Character shines through with varying room shapes dictated by the old building, exposed wooden beams and fireplaces. Some of the modern furnishings seem to have been chosen at random (the design scheme in Old Winchester's lounge is a mystery) but this adds to the sense of a family-run, countryside bolthole. Spacious bathrooms are great, heavy with stone

Food & drink

8/10

The lure of the restaurant is on par with that of the rooms. Owner-chef Mark is a true locavore, sourcing as much from in and around the village as possible. His passion for local, inventive cuisine has seen him named best chef in Dorset. My colourful duck dish, replete with homegrown vegetables, was a highlight, drizzled in a piquant jus. Mark's award-winning cheeseboard is part of the experience, so save some room.

Value for money

8/10

Double rooms from £75. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

Access for guests with disabilities?

No. All bedrooms are on the first floor, with only stairs up.

Family-friendly?

Yes. Cots and high chairs are available, as well as rooms suitable for one or two children in extra beds. Staff can advise on nearby activities for young ones.

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