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The Dragon Hotel

Swansea, Wales

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6/10 Telegraph expert rating

"The Dragon Hotel has been a fixture of the Swansea hotel scene for decades. It's a reliable base for most of the city's attractions with minimal frills, a relaxed spa offering and style that seems anchored around different tones of the colour red."

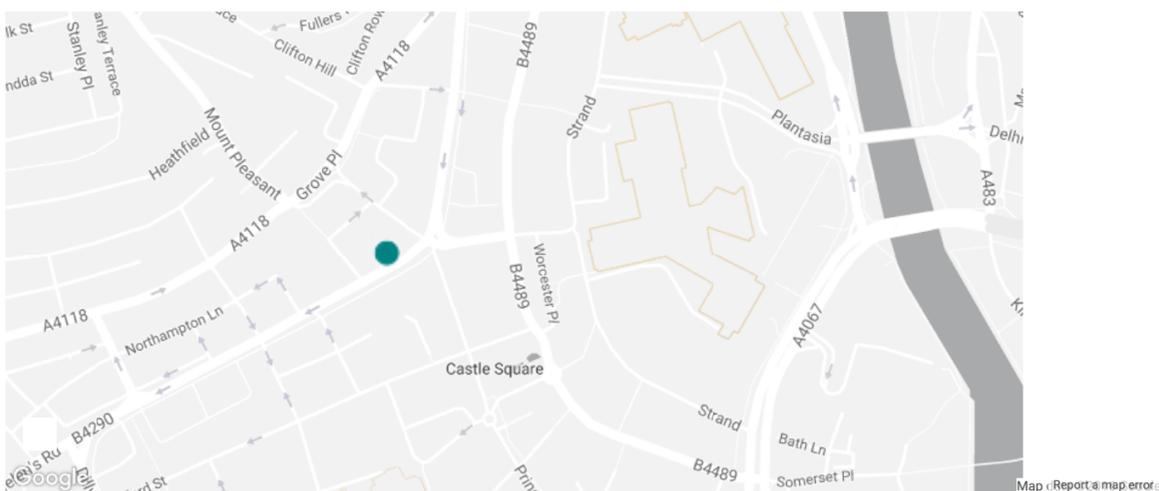
By Benjamin Parker, TRAVEL WRITER

Location

7/10

The hotel is in an open area surrounded by dull boxy buildings. The main road outside is the Kingsway, which used to be the nightlife hub; Wind Street, five minutes away on foot, is where the bulk of pubs, bars and clubs are now found. For retail therapy, you can choose from Oxford Street, Quadrant Shopping Centre and Swansea Market – all within a five-minute walk. The redeveloped maritime quarter and Swansea beach is two miles south.

The National Waterfront Museum, with a focus on the Industrial Revolution in Wales, is also here. For golfers, there are over 70 courses in a 60-minute drive. The train station, a 10-minute walk from the Dragon, has lines east to London (via Cardiff) or west into Pembrokeshire.



Style & character

7/10

The Dragon's exterior stands out among uninspiring buildings nearby, with a smart tile wrap, coloured copper and charcoal, around the lower levels. Beyond the name's connotations, you won't forget you're in Wales: shades of red abound – from rossa corsa to electric crimson – across carpets and walls (accentuated by spotlights), and dragon motifs are unavoidable.

A red and orange design found in the same spot on each floor (and in the Margam Lounge), a circular pattern of the tails of Welsh dragons. Despite a strict 'on-brand' feel, the hotel isn't part of a chain; paintings on corridor walls and in rooms were commissioned for the Dragon.



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Service & facilities

7/10

Overall – despite disappointing service from behind the bar – staff are efficient and friendly, every-ready to lament the Swansea weather ("miserable" and "grim" are the most common adjectives), or discuss Swansea's Beaujolais Day celebrations (Cardiff's will never be as good).

The hotel's health club, a white and blue space offering respite from the hotel's red, features an 18m swimming pool, saunas and a gym. There are also two beauty rooms, with treatments (facials, mani/pedi, massages, waxing) using products from Dermalogica and Jessica Nails.

- ✔ Bar
- ✔ Fitness centre
- ✔ Laundry
- ✔ Parking
- ✔ Pool
- ✔ Restaurant
- ✔ Sauna
- ✔ Spa
- ✔ Wi-Fi

Rooms

6/10

Bright rooms don't offer much diversity, with the same warm design scheme: soft red bedheads, dark wooden surfaces, and abstract patterns across cushions and throws. The more expensive room categories give you more space (reaching 'Executive Suite' level, with a separate lounge area and the option of an in-room minibar) but the standard rooms are a decent size. Beds are cosy and face televisions; you can definitely feel the groove in the centre of double beds, though (they can become twins). White tiles cover the plain bathrooms, clean but basic, and with shower-baths in each.

Food & drink

5/10

The ground floor Dragon Brasserie has with tall windows open to the street and smooth jazz playing. Like the rooms, there's an emphasis on darker woods (chairs, tables). The menu has a European essence, and dishes are reasonable (soggy tempura on a courgette starter was disappointing). You can drink at the restaurant's bar but one particular bartender will have you turning away; so surly it was laughable.

Breakfast is a mixed bag: simple continental options (two types of cheese, both sealed in plastic) or a hot buffet featuring cheap-tasting sausages, a tray of beans that quickly spawn a skin when not touched; the winning choice was slices of thick, juicy bacon.

Value for money

6/10

Double rooms from £79 in low season; and from £249 in high. Breakfast only included in certain rates. Free Wi-Fi.

Access for guests with disabilities?

Lift access is available to all floors, as well as disabled access rooms with walk-in showers and additional mobility aids in the bathroom.

Family-friendly?

Yes. A number of family rooms can accommodate two adults and two children, and travel cots are available. Children can use the swimming pool, and there is a children's menu in the restaurant.

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