



Park Plaza Cardiff

Cardiff, Wales

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8/10

Telegraph expert rating

" A city centre hotel within walking distance of Cardiff's main attractions, the Park Plaza is a sleek urban hideaway decked with original art, home to an extensive spa offering and restaurant serving uplifted British cuisine, and where the sound distant of church bells offers a charming wake up call. "

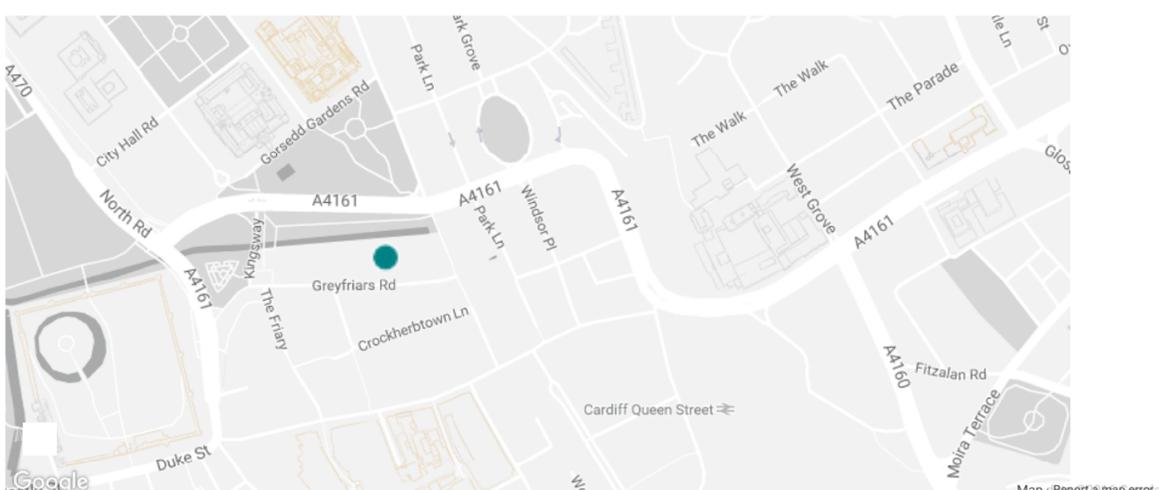
By **Benjamin Parker**,
TRAVEL WRITER

Location

8/10

The hotel is on Greyfriars Road, parallel to the Queen Street shopping strip where you'll find big brands and street performers. Opposite is a string of bars and clubs, and left is the New Theatre, which hosts touring productions and an annual panto. Head right for 10 minutes on foot to the medieval castle and Victorian Gothic revival mansion.

Behind Cardiff Castle is 130 landscaped acres of Bute Park, where you can explore a significant tree collection and drink tea by the river. Half a mile south of the park is the 74,000-seater Principality Stadium. Buses run regularly on the street outside the hotel.



Style & character

8/10

The entrance - wide glass doors flanked by thick shiny columns - sets a sophisticated tone. The lobby, a white-walled space with dark pine floors (stained and polished) and a contemporary fireplace, sits under a high ceiling. From high, abstract artwork by Polish-born Izabella Leszczynska makes the space seductive: spotlights draw attention to 35 sculptured birds, changing every two minutes to alter the animal's shadows, while the centrepiece is three circular frustums, made in Italy and draped down as oversized ceiling lights, hemmed with bulbs that shimmer over contrasting black and white furniture.

This polished look continues throughout; corridors between rooms feel almost like museums, adorned with sculptures encased in glass (also by Leszczynska).



Service & facilities

7/10

Interaction with the reception is amiable but kept short and efficient by staff juggling multiple guests and ringing phones. Elsewhere, staff seem well-trained and polite.

The Laguna Spa is a major lure for Cardiff locals and visitors, with eight therapy rooms for massages, scrubs, peels (the Elemis 'Dynamic Resurfacing Precision Peel' winds back the years on your skin) and other beauty treatments. More casual is a 20m indoor pool surrounded by loungers, spa bath, steam room. The two-storey gym, a white air-conditioned space, boasts lines of modern equipment.

- ✔ Bar
- ✔ Fitness centre
- ✔ Laundry
- ✔ Pool
- ✔ Restaurant
- ✔ Spa
- ✔ Steam room/hammam
- ✔ Wi-Fi

Rooms

7/10

There are 129 rooms, all with long drapes, beds topped by dark cushions and throws, and gentle lighting. Rooms have hand-painted pieces on the wall and sculptures. The carpet looks generic and some of the light wood furniture feels cheap, but overall there's enough individuality to avoid feeling like you're in a carbon copy of the room next door.

The spaces work for business travellers - ample desk surface, fast Wi-Fi, plenty of power sockets - but soft beds and sizeable televisions will also keep leisure guests happy. Rooms facing the Edwardian Baroque architecture of Cardiff City Hall offer the best views. Bathrooms are smart, combing charcoal-black tiles with square countertop basins and shower/baths.

Food & drink

7/10

The Laguna Restaurant & Bar focuses on British, particularly Welsh, cuisine: slow-cooked lamb shank (which slides pleasingly off the bone), roast Brecon venison, fisherman's pie with rarebit crust. Despite being well-versed in the extensive wine list, staff are slow to serve you and bring drinks; it's made all the more obvious as dishes come from the kitchen very quickly.

You help yourself to breakfast: warm items from the kitchen hatch (fresher when it's busier) and a continental buffet featuring fresh pastries, cereals and Welsh yoghurts. There's a machine that pops out two Scotch pancakes at the press of a button: you can drizzle them with berry compote but they won't match something prepared properly.

Value for money

8/10

Double rooms from £99, year round. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

Access for guests with disabilities?

Seven of the bedrooms are accessible to wheelchair users.

Family-friendly?

Not particularly, although cots and high chairs are available on request.

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