

STOKE PLACE

Buckinghamshire, SL2 4HT, United Kingdom

★★★★

From £220

By The ELLE Team

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Ilse Crawford-designed rooms in an elegant 17th-century country pad – what's not to love?

Stoke Place is a lot like a Paul Smith collection. It's got that same trad-with-a-twist style we Brits pull off so well; that casual elegance we've managed to master over the years. This 17th-century country house is just 20 miles from central London, but it feels as though it's a world away.

The interiors were put together by everyone's favourite interiors style guru (and, famously, ELLE Decoration's launch editor) Ilse Crawford. Predictably gorgeous, she's worked her magic on every inch of the hotel to give it its glamorous yet effortlessly comfortable vibe. Bedrooms are packed with goodies such as huge TVs, DVD players (there's a DVD library to borrow from) and fragrant Aveda toiletries. The vast beds are dressed in Frette linens so fine, that you won't want to drag yourself up in the morning.

Except, of course, that you'll need to wander around the estate's historic Capability Brown-landscaped gardens, the carp pond and surrounding wood (ask reception for a pair of wellies), if only to work up an appetite for the seasonal, local restaurant menus. On summer afternoons the best thing to do is grab yourself a hammock on the terrace between rounds of croquet, while during the winter months you can cosy up to the drawing room's log fire. Throw in friendly, attentive but still discreet staff and it makes it gut-wrenchingly hard to leave at the end of your stay.

What's hot?

- Lounging in a hammock on a summer's afternoon
- Heated floors and mirrors in the marble bathrooms
- 24-hour bar service – the hotel may be in the country, but its ethos is deeply urban-modern
- Regular outdoor cinema nights

What's not?

- The envy it all induces – after this, you'll want a country park all of your own

Need to Know: Stoke Place

Number of rooms: 40 – including one five-bed cottage and one 10-bed cottage

Check-in/check-out times: 3pm and 11am

Swimming pool: No

Spa: No, but in-room beauty treatments are available, as is a personal trainer so you can work out in those grounds

Dogs welcome: No

Eating and drinking: Fine dining as served up by head chef Craig Van der Meer is available in the Garden Room Restaurant – a gorgeous bright, contemporary space – which has been awarded two AA rosettes. Menus are seasonal and heavily influenced by local produce and you can choose between a Tasting Menu, the A La Carte or a lunch menu. The swish Garden bar with its elegant armchairs and butterfly gallery wall, is the place for cocktails or light lunches. Afternoon tea – including a Champagne version – is also on offer.

Location: Close to Ascot and Windsor, you can hit the races at either or head to the castle at Windsor for an insight into Kate's new life.

Getting there: Gerrards Cross is the nearest railway station and London is 20 miles away – a 30-minute drive along the M4.

Book this hotel

Arrival date

Nights Adults

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Best room: Any in the main house rather than the cottages

Best dish: Oven-baked monkfish wrapped in parma ham with curly kale, fondant potato and wild mushroom jus

Fashion/design credentials: Cool, statement light fittings, on-trend wallpapers, covetable vintage furniture and quirky details – a gallery wall of framed butterflies for one – are just what you expect in an Ilse Crawford design, even if you couldn't dream it up yourself.

Who stays here? Londoners looking for a nearby weekend in the country; Ricky Gervais has been spotted

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