



AllWays Traveller

The Vineyard, Newbury, Berkshire, UK

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

## Fine food, fine wine and fine art make the finest of occasions

The English county of Berkshire, located to the west of London, is known as the Royal County because of Windsor Castle, which lies within its borders.

Another 'castle' achieving now known worldwide is Highclere Castle (aka Downton Abbey).

And horse racing, the sport of Kings and Queens, can be enjoyed at the Ascot, Newbury and Windsor courses.

Berkshire can also lay claim to The Vineyard, at Newbury, which is part of the Relais & Châteaux group of luxury properties.

This five star hotel, first built as an 18th Century hunting lodge, is now owned by Sir Peter Michael, and it is his passion for fine wine, fine food and fine art - all in magnificent evidence here - that makes *The Vineyard* unique.

[www.the-vineyard.co.uk](http://www.the-vineyard.co.uk)

### Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor  
AllWays traveller



# Eat, sleep and drink wine - to your heart's great content



By Ashley Gibbins

## **Eat. Sleep. And drink wine is the invitation and the activity encouraged by *The Vineyard*.**

The eating presents no problem whatsoever. The Vineyard's restaurant serves superb cuisine as Ann will explain.

And drinking good wine? Well this has never been a drawback.

But, with a cellar of near on 30,000 bottles, where to start?

The answer, Craig Steven, one *The Vineyard's* team of stunningly knowledgeable sommeliers, who is more than happy to provide assistance and advice.



## **Dark and dank**

A short while ago I was enjoying Slovakian wine deep underground in an 800 year old cellar.

It was dark, dank and chilly, with walls layered in mould.

And it was wonderful.

The family producing this wine got great pleasure in sharing their thoughts and their vintage with us.

And now we are enjoying fine wine in a luxury hotel, 90 minutes drive from central London, with the walls a veritable art gallery.

And it is wonderful.

## **A special occasion**

If planning to stay at *The Vineyard*, think very special occasion.

The exceptional quality of the accommodation, the wonderful cuisine, the impeccable service and those sumptuous wines.



## **Windsor and the castle**

The Thames side town of Windsor is dominated by its castle, which is one of the UK's major tourist attractions.

The town is also the location of Legoland Windsor, the only Legoland park in the country and the Windsor Safari Park.

Riverboat cruises operate daily from February to November.

## **Windsor Castle**



Windsor Castle is a royal residence at Windsor with a 1,000 year association with first the English kings and then the British Royal Family.

The original castle was built in the 11th century after the Norman invasion by William the Conqueror.

Since the time of Henry I, it has been used by succeeding monarchs and is the longest-occupied palace in Europe.

[www.windsor.gov.uk](http://www.windsor.gov.uk)

[www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle)

## **Highclere Castle**



Highclere Castle has been home to the Carnarvon family since 1679. The 5th Earl is remembered for his discovery of Tutankamun's tomb in Egypt in the 1920s.

Highclere Castle itself is country house in the Jacobethan style, with a park designed by Capability Brown.

The 5,000-acre estate is in the adjoining county of Hampshire, about 5 miles from Newbury.

It is recognised worldwide as Downton Abbey from the acclaimed British TV drama series.

[www.highclerecastle.co.uk](http://www.highclerecastle.co.uk)

## Art at The Vineyard



The Michael family are avid art collectors and over 500 of their pieces are on display throughout the hotel's public areas.

Dominating the landscaped grounds is *Fire and Water* by William Pye, with flames 'dancing' on a glasslike pool after dark.

Inside the hotel itself, are works by artists such as Henri Martin, Ronald Searle and Doris Zinkeisen.

*Bucolique* by Henri Martin, in the restaurant, depicts rural life at a vineyard.

### Smirnoff's entire collection

Boris Smirnoff's work also features prominently because Sir Peter purchased his entire collection after the artist's death in 1976.

Smirnoff's paintings of nudes to be found in the more intimate spaces of the hotel.

## The judgement of Paris



The other unique feature of The Vineyard is its celebration of an event, which took place in 1976 and has come to be known as 'The Judgement of Paris.

It was then that an Englishman, named Steven Spurrier, staged a competitive blind tasting of French and Californian wines in a small room in a Paris hotel.

Some leading French wine aficionados took part and ultimately preferred the Californian wines to their French counterparts.

This inspired Sir Peter, who also owns a winery in California, to commission a life sized painting of the 'notorious' event, which takes pride of place in the entrance to the hotel's wine cellars.

### Discovery menus

*The Vineyard's* Michelin Star chef, Daniel Galmiche, and wine director Alan Holmes have created their *Discovery Menus*, fusing each dish with two wines - one Californian and the other French (or another wine if preferred).

## Shaw House



One of the UK's finest Elizabethan houses, Shaw House in Newbury is open to the public after a £6million restoration.

[www.shawhouse.org.uk](http://www.shawhouse.org.uk)

### A day at the races

#### Ascot races

Ascot Racecourse, located in the small town of the same name, stages nine of the UK's 32 top thoroughbred horse races annually.

The course is closely associated with the British Royal Family.

[www.ascot.co.uk](http://www.ascot.co.uk)

#### Newbury races



Newbury racecourse stages 29 days of some of the UK's finest horse racing every year.

[www.racecoursenewbury.co.uk](http://www.racecoursenewbury.co.uk)

#### Windsor races



Windsor Racecourse is located on the banks of the River Thames and is one of only two figure-of-eight courses in the UK.

[www.windsor-racecourse.co.uk](http://www.windsor-racecourse.co.uk)

# The Vineyard's Judgement tasting



By Ann Mealor

**As a lover of fine food and wine and long, leisurely meals I was really looking forward to the seven course summer tasting menu at the much lauded Vineyard, the UK's leading wine hotel.**

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The *Judgement Tasting Menu* brings together 12 wines (six Californian and six French) with two paired with each dish.

This gives the opportunity to directly compare the two and guess which is the Californian and which is the French.

We started the evening with a pre-dinner drink in the comfortable bar, a Californian sparkling wine accompanied by a selection of olives, cheese straws and cashews.

The wine a Blanc de Blanc from Calistoga, North West of Napa was 100% chardonnay – a surprise to me as I am not a chardonnay fan – but it tasted delicious.

Whilst sat in a deep cushioned armchair, sipping my American bubbly, I admired the view across the courtyard, dominated by a large circle of water, dramatically lit by a number of small fires.

Many pieces of original artwork decorated the bar including colourful village scenes and various still life.



Browsing the extensive wine list, all 100 pages of it, proved interesting. I was pleased to see a large selection of wines at £30 and under, but there were still plenty more bottles expensive enough for me to enjoy gasping at the prices.

After polishing off all the nibbles we went into the restaurant, which was on two levels and had a conservatory feel.

A huge chandelier hung above us in the atrium and the floor to ceiling windows overlooked the garden and its brightly burning water feature.

Our dining chairs were large and comfy, which was important as I knew we would be sat there for a while.

With jazz music playing softly in the background we were offered a selection of home made bread and the sommelier, Craig Stephen bought us our first wine to taste – a pre-dinner *Pinot Grigio*, the equivalent of an *Amuse bouche* from the chef – a wine with a big aroma, clean brisk acidity and a sweet fruit flavour.

It certainly whetted my appetite for more!



Our first course was a cream of leek and potato soup with white balsamic, which was beautifully presented and tasted delicious.

We had our two wines, both white, a *Morogues* from the Loire valley, France and a *Rudd Sauvignon blanc* from Mount Veeder, California.

At this stage it was hard for us to tell the difference, but with tasting tips from Craig, we soon became more expert.

My second course of Guinea fowl was a feast for the taste buds with an explosion of flavours and textures – orange, almond and chicory.

This was served with just one wine, in a darkened glass to hide the colour. I thought I was drinking red, but it turned out to be a full bodied white *Wind Gap, Pinot Gris* from Sonoma California.

And so our delightful dining experience continued with filet of cod placed with architectural precision on the pristine white plate and served with a *French Chablis* and a *Californian Chardonnay*.

## Our dining experience continues

The next course was *South Coast turbot* with a chicken jus that really brought the dish to life.

It was served with a French and Californian Riesling and then a colourful *Corn fed Tidenham duck breast* with carrot and wild rice served with a *French Bordeaux Blanc* and a *Californian Semillon Sauvignon Blanc*.

There was then *English strawberry and lemon verbena millefeuille* with a *Domaine des Aubuisieres* from the Loire Valley (served in a darkened glass, to make guessing what it was even harder).

The final course, a White chocolate and passion fruit terrine served with *Tattinger French Champagne* and a *Cremant, Demi-Sec* from the Napa Valley.

## A joyous evening

What an evening of gastronomic joy! I have to say, I was slightly tipsy by the end of it, but in a very pleasant way.

The seven courses were easily managed as the portions were small but perfectly formed.



## A treat for the eyes

This allows the diner to experience a variety of taste combinations, without becoming bloated or overfull.

The *Judgement* menu was a treat for the eyes as well as the taste buds with each course exquisite and presented with much care and attention to detail.

The blind wine tasting was fun, challenging and surprising.

I also learned a lot about wine, generally preferring the French varieties but loving the Californian Riesling.

*The Judgement Summer Tasting Menu* with wine pairings comes close to £200 per head.

But, if you have a special occasion to celebrate or you just enjoy excellent, food, wine and service in sophisticated surroundings, than treat yourself to this memorable five star dining experience.

## The Spa at the Vineyard



**I always enjoy spa treatments, especially facials. I find them not only good for my skin but very relaxing and therapeutic. And so when I have the opportunity to make use of a luxury spa, I jump at the chance!**

By Ann Mealor

The Spa at the Vineyard was awarded five bubbles by the Good Spa Guide and so I had high expectations.

Natalie, my therapist, was knowledgeable and professional.

Before my facial started I filled in a form which asked about any medical conditions, what I would like from my treatment, my skincare regime, did I mind products in my hair and was there anything I didn't want done.

I was impressed by this comprehensive pre-preparation.

She studied my responses and then advised me on the Darphin products she would be using during my 25 minute *Predermine Smart Firming Facial*.

The treatment room was spacious, with soft music, candles and low lighting.

The oils used during the facial smelled luxurious and the hot towels were sothing on my skin.

Natalie expertly cleansed, toned and moisturised my face and décolletage with a selection of creams, oils and emulsions from the Darphin range.

Natalie also gave me a relaxing scalp massage.

Once Natalie finished, I was given useful advice on my skincare routine and a list of the products she had used during the treatment.

My skin looked and felt invigorated and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

my only criticism being that it was too short!

**More information on The Vineyard**

[www.the-vineyard.co.uk](http://www.the-vineyard.co.uk)

## A snapshot of The Vineyard



The Vineyard, Stockcross, Newbury, Berkshire, UK RG20 8JU : [www.the-vineyard.co.uk](http://www.the-vineyard.co.uk)

### AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



#### AllWays traveller

*AllWays traveller* provides travel features to destinations worldwide from the journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)



#### The International Travel Writers Alliance

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

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### Ashley Gibbins



Ashley Gibbins



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