

The Wilton Court Hotel, which sits on the banks of the River Wye. Below left, the hotel's impressive restaurant, where the emphasis is on quality local produce. Below right, one of the hotel's stylish bedrooms

A warm welcome awaits

The rain was inevitable. Every one of the handful of brief escapes from family responsibilities we have managed during the past two decades has been conducted during a deluge.

So we were not surprised when we left our home in South Gloucestershire in an unseasonal downpour which did not let up during the 45-minute drive to Ross-on-Wye.

But it was worth braving the miserable weather for the warmth of the welcome my husband Mark and I were given when we arrived at Wilton Court on the banks of the river.

Owners Helen and Roger Wynn had lit the log fire in the hotel's Jacobean-panelled Wilton Bar, and served up some delicious scones with jam and cream and a pot of tea to get our mini-break off to a good start in spite of the weather.

Helen then showed us to our bedroom, one of 10 individually decorated en suite rooms, each with its own character. Ours had a splendid four-poster bed and was decorated in rich red hues. We had to wait a while to get the benefit of the views of the Wye, however, as the rain was still hammering down.

We decided to give up waiting for it to stop, donned our waterproofs and set off to explore the pleasant and prosperous border town of Ross.

Mark — never one for half measures — took his broolly too, much to the amusement of some local youths.

After crossing a picturesque bridge, a

Linda Tanner and her husband spent a relaxing weekend at a luxurious hotel in Ross-on-Wye



15-minute walk took us into the market place, with Tudor timbered houses clustered around the market hall. We returned via a pretty riverside path having worked up quite an appetite for dinner.



The emphasis in the hotel's Mulberry Restaurant is on using the best Herefordshire produce to offer an award-winning classic menu.

Our choices included a starter of red onion

tartlet with local goat's cheese, and beef and lamb main courses.

The dishes vary according to the seasons, and all puddings and ice creams are home-made.

The wine list, overseen by Roger, is impressive, too.

Roger and Helen have owned Wilton Court for seven years, and have renovated the hotel extensively, while reflecting its 16th-century origins wherever possible.

The couple have both worked in five-star hotels including London's Dorchester and Hong Kong's Shangri-La, and have brought a wealth of objets d'art and memorabilia to this retreat.

Their experience and attention to detail ensure that all guests enjoy hospitality of the highest standard. The hotel has earned three AA stars and two AA rosettes in the past year.

Sadly, our short break was just that — only 24 hours — but we departed after a fabulous breakfast feeling very rested and pampered.

We just had enough time for a short walk before our return, so on the Wynns' recommendation we went up Coppetts Hill, above Goodrich Castle, which offered some spectacular views of the Wye Valley.

And by this time, it had actually stopped raining.

● **Rooms at the Wilton Court Hotel, Wilton Lane, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, start at £90 for two people sharing. For more information, call 01989 562569, email info@wiltoncourthotel.com or log on to the website www.wiltoncourthotel.com**



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