

# The Quay to the perfect B&B

# Western

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# Morning

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# News



The 25 has been named the world's best B&B twice - and it's right here in the West Country. **TIM DAVEY** heads to Agatha Christie's hometown of Torquay to investigate...

**A**CCORDING to that fount of all knowledge, the internet, there are reckoned to be around 25,000 bed and breakfast businesses in the UK.

Across the years I've stayed in many such establishments, ranging from a long-ago Blackpool B&B whose lurid nylon sheets were so full of static electricity you wondered whether you'd survive the night or end up lightly grilled like their sausages; to one in rural Ireland which, inexplicably, failed to serve up any breakfast to go with the bed.

In between, similar stay-over places have ranged from the mediocre to the pleasantly OK but

none, absolutely, definitely, positively none, have come anywhere close to beating a glorious recent stay at The 25 Boutique B&B in Torquay.

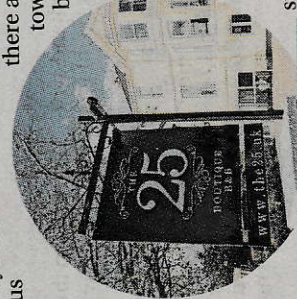
Run by Andy and Julian Banner-Price it has been ranked as the best bed-and-breakfast establishment in the world! An honour bestowed by Trip Advisor Travellers' Choice Awards not once but twice, in 2019 and 2020. It was also Visit England's B&B of the year in 2020.

Knowing it possessed these

fantastic accolades gave a heightened sense of anticipation to a stay there as my wife and I headed towards Devon and the beating heart of the English Riviera, Torquay.

We found the B&B in Avenue Road as easily enough and, always a huge plus point with me, it had ample off-road parking space.

Our arrival day was sunny and, after the traditional meeting and greeting, we soon found ourselves relaxing on the outside front terrace sipping some



The 25 Boutique B&B

welcome glasses of fizz and consuming delicious home-made goodies.

The 25 has six bedrooms. Broad-sands, named after a local beach, was our first-floor room for a two-night stay. It was superb. Overlooking the front of The 25 it was spacious, had comfortable seating and came with every conceivable bit of high-tech you could wish for. This ranged from voice-controlled lighting and bedside table pre-loaded with games and lots of local info, including places to eat. It was air-conditioned, too. The large flatscreen smart TV came with Netflix. And there were more of their wonderful home-made goodies left out daily, a nicely stocked mini-bar and fresh milk available.

But there was more - the Broad-sands bathroom was of similarly generous dimensions with colour-changing lighting, double sinks, a rainforest tropical walk-in shower

and a huge stand-alone clawfoot bath - with a TV to watch while you soaked.

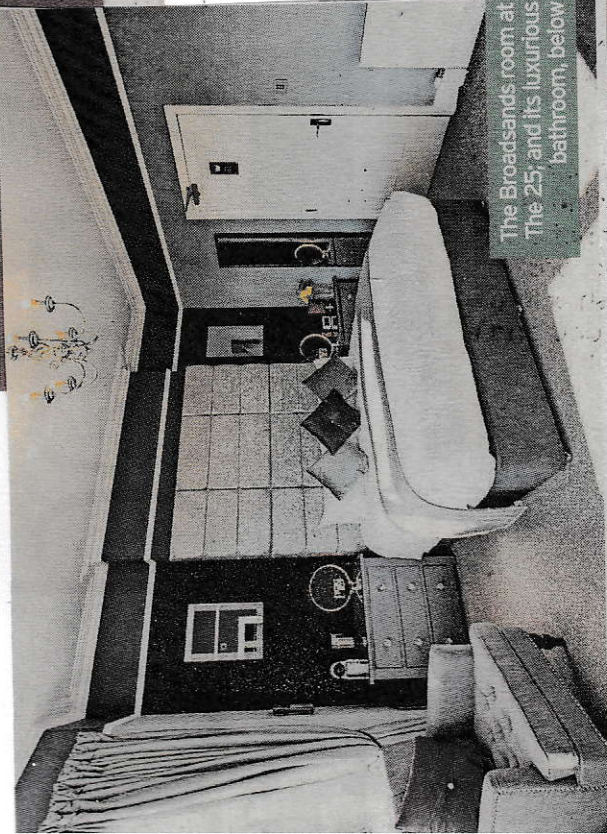
The piece de resistance of our suite, however, was the bed. It was vast and exceedingly comfortable.

The doors, main and bedroom, operated from the same fuss-free



The quality of the food was top class. Home-made yoghurts, fresh fruit salads and a great choice of hot breakfast dishes, including a full English to smoked salmon and scrambled egg

# Travel



The Broadlands room at The 25, and its luxurious bathroom, below

our second night's choice. Each evening, after a pleasant meal, it was so nice knowing you were wandering back to The 25, a warm and welcoming place, immaculate and imaginatively decorated, faultless and flawlessly run.

It's really no mystery to me why it has amassed so many accolades and I reckon even Agatha Christie's famous fictional sleuths would have arrived at the same conclusion.

Andy and Julian are at the very pinnacle of the bed-and-breakfast industry and long may they stay there. If fancy, they will take a fair bit of catching.

Gallery, with exhibits including a poisons cabinet!

Not too far away is Babbacombe with its cliff railway. This funicular transport has been descending and ascending from the Babbacombe cliff top to Oddicombe Beach far below since the 1920s.

Venturing further afield you'll find Agatha Christie's home, Greenway ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway)). It overlooks the River Dart estuary and is now administered by the National Trust.

Neighbouring Brixham with its buzzy harbourside and working fishing boats is worth a look, too. We stopped for some seafood here, eaten al fresco on the harbourside at Crab and Claw. They keep their seafood menu nice and simple, the way it should be.

The 25 supplies a handy list of suggested Torquay locations to eat out at lunch or dinner for its guests and we picked a couple from that for our evening meals. They didn't disappoint. Rockfish ([therockfish.co.uk](http://therockfish.co.uk)), part of the seafood chain owned by celebrity chef Mich. Tonks, is close by the harbour here and was our first night's port of call. Greek restaurant Ephesus ([ephesusstorquay.co.uk](http://ephesusstorquay.co.uk)) was



with her second husband, the archaeologist Max Mallowan, you could pull out a drawer, for example, and inspect, close-up, her hand-written notebooks containing the plot ideas for classic mysteries such as *Death On The Nile*.

The abbey's gardens are great, too, and do take a wander through their glasshouses full of luscious plants. Mention must also be made of Torquay Museum ([www.torquaymuseum.org](http://www.torquaymuseum.org)) on the road leading out of the town centre towards Babbacombe. This is packed full of many and various artefacts, including a complete Egyptian mummy, as well as a permanent Agatha Christie

overdose of electric scooters.

The 25 is about a 10-minute walk from the sea and there's a pleasant route on foot through the park which encloses Torquay's historic Torre Abbey ([www.torre-abbey.org.uk](http://www.torre-abbey.org.uk)) On previous visits to Torquay we had found this important heritage site closed, but this time we were fortunate to hit the jackpot and it really was well worth taking a peek inside. Torre Abbey's lineage is fascinating. It dates from 1196 and was home to the Carey family for three centuries from 1662. It's now in the care of Torbay Council.

Our visit was enhanced by the presence of an intriguing Agatha Christie exhibition in the abbey. The enduringly popular, world-famous whodunnit author grew up in Torquay and is a huge tourist draw for the town. At this particular exhibition, focusing on her travels

mini keyless fob. You can also order up some home-made grazing platters of an evening if you weren't minded to head into town to seek out the culinary pleasures of night-time Torquay.

Come the morning and breakfast beckoned. Could things get even better? Well, yes, they could. The quality of the food was top class. Home-made yoghurts, fresh fruit salads and a great choice of hot breakfast dishes, including a full English to smoked salmon and scrambled egg.

We paid our visit to Torquay last autumn, a couple of weeks ahead of the clocks going back. The weather was kind, enabling us to stroll along this classic English seafront with its iconic palm trees on your way into the centre of town. It's a very pleasant promenade which appeared to have so far avoided a plague of that current curse of our pavements, an

## TRAVEL FILE

■ **TIM Davey** stayed at The 25 Boutique B&B in Avenue Road, Torquay, which reopens after its winter break on Friday, February 11. Prices range from £169 to £249 dependent on time of year and room chosen.

■ **BOOKING** is always direct via its website at [www.the25.uk](http://www.the25.uk) and is usually for a three-night minimum stay, although two-night stays are occasionally available and are listed on The 25's homepage.

■ **THE 25's** telephone number is 01803 297517.