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Please excuse us if we come across a little snobby, but we've resolved to only ever stay at hotels as nice as the Bildeston Crown... [read more](#)



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Barceló Billesley Manor Hotel - Warwickshire

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www.barcelo-hotels.co.uk
Review by Emily Hirschmann

Before we begin, allow me to make two things quite clear - I have visited very many extremely plush hotels and I am extremely picky. If there's been a dodgy touch-up to the paintjob of a fire door, I will notice it. If the showerhead is not the size of a dinner plate and fails to produce a G-force-like pressure, I will be disappointed. And you don't even want to get me started on the use of UHT milk on the tea tray. However, location, ambience and the all-important service, all play a part in softening my steely critics' eye and a favourable opinion is sometimes garnered against all odds.



The Barceló Billesley Manor Hotel is not a boutique destination. Comprised of 72 rooms of varying size and standard, boutique is not something it could ever aspire to be, without the destruction of several walls and a downsize of capacity, but that need not necessarily be a bad thing. Located roughly three miles outside of beautiful and historic Stratford-upon-Avon, this lovely old manor house boasts a history that can be traced back to 705 AD, has the obligatory (for the Stratford area) link to Shakespeare (his daughter was married in the estate's church and there's every reason to suspect that the great man pledged his troth there too, not to mention supposedly writing *As You Like It* in the Manor library) and the more interesting claim of bringing the Black Death to the region, embedded in a coat stolen from London.

The hotel itself is a charming blend of original features (stone window frames, wood-panelling, enormous fireplaces), Tudor additions (a priest-hole in the Shakespeare suite, beautiful ceiling work) and modern touches (a very tempting swimming pool!), all tied nicely together by consistent decor, thus avoiding the schizophrenic feel often experienced in such establishments. The on-site spa is extremely reasonably priced, with treatments starting at £35, and the double rosette-winning restaurant is superb, with fantastic ambience and food that lives up to its reputation.

I stayed in one of the Deluxe Guest Rooms, not massive in proportion, but extremely comfortable and well thought out. The decor was tasteful and relaxing, with a wonderful view out into the 100 year old listed topiary garden and across the Warwickshire countryside. The bathroom sadly lacked my much-desired showerhead, but the double-ended spa bath more than compensated for the power missing from the shower, all but cleaving the flesh from my bones at top setting! The only part of the room that could be viewed as truly disappointing was the refreshments tray and that sits firmly in the "must try harder" column. However, with room rates starting at £69 per night (check the website for Best Available Rate offers) even that is perhaps not to be quibbled over. That said, I'd hope that the £289 suite would have more to offer.



Overall, I must conclude that if you're in the area, you could do worse than visit the Barceló Billesley Manor Hotel. All the staff I came into contact with were friendly and obliging, without scrimping on efficiency and what the hotel lacks in intimacy it more than makes up for in charm, warmth and history. It is perhaps in want of the wow-factor at present, but with a very little effort it could soon find it.

Hotel Stratford-upon-Avon

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