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Montpellier Chapter Hotel, Cheltenham



Inner courtyard at The Montpellier Chapter

The lowdown The Montpellier Chapter Hotel, named after its chic neighbourhood in the centre of **Cheltenham**, opened last month bang next door to famous girls' public school, Cheltenham Ladies' College (guests can use their Olympic-size pool and tennis courts). Cheltenham is conveniently less than 100 miles from London and only 2 hours' train ride away, and is an ideal base for touring the Cotswolds, Stratford upon Avon and Bath. And of course the spa town comes into its own during its many festivals – music, literature and most notably the horse racing (the Festival is the highlight of the racing calendar from 15 to 18 March 2011 – book now!).

The hotel Don't expect your traditional reception desk as you enter through the glass doors of the **Montpellier Chapter**. This is a paperless establishment and you will be greeted by a charming, trendy looking young man who will check you in on his laptop. The hotel has been completely re-designed by architect Ken Shuttleworth (of London's Gherkin fame). The original Grade II listed building at the front has retained its early Victorian splendour while undergoing a complete transformation and a modern crescent-shaped structure has been added to the rear. The two are linked by an inner

courtyard (*left*), which is surrounded by a stunning coloured glass structure. Designer Matthew Hilton has created bespoke furniture and the fabulous modern art collection has been put together by Central St Martin's.

The rooms The bedrooms in the new "Crescent" are ultra modern, with stone walls, oak flooring and furniture, and the bathrooms are incorporated within the open plan space. The "Villa" rooms are more traditionally decorated with muted tones and thick charcoal grey carpets, and slate bathrooms. There is also a massive penthouse suite with real wow factor, complete with private roof terrace. Each room has a 3G iPod with a host of apps and music, a complimentary mini bar, and our favourite **Aromatherapy Associates** toiletries.

The restaurant Consultant chef Simon Hopkinson and his team have created a modern British, seasonal menu. Opt for the scallops for starters, while roast pheasant, venison, steak au poivre all gets the thumbs up as mains. The *piece de resistance* has to be the crème brulee for pud – light, creamy and utterly delicious.

The details The Montpellier Chapter, Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3AS (tel: 01242 527788, email: montpellier@chapterhotels.com). Room rates start at £125 per night.

Getting there Great Western train fares from London Paddington to Cheltenham Spa start at £9 each way. For more information or to book tickets, either contact customer services on 08457 000 125, or visit www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

Chapterhotels.com

By Jeannette Arnold