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Chilling out in the UK's first eco spa

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Taking to the waters of the British Virgin Islands

going green



William Blake's *Jerusalem* talks of 'dark satanic mills' and you cannot drive far in parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire without seeing disused mills which were once alive to the sounds of machines and the footsteps of the thousands of people who worked in the textile industry.

Many of them make sorry sights, but one which has had a huge renaissance is Titanic Mill – completed in the same year RMS *Titanic* was launched but fortunately it has not suffered the same fate. The mill took its name from the famous ship and also because it was one of the largest woollen mills in the Huddersfield area. Now it houses the UK's first eco spa – designed to be environmentally friendly with minimum impact on the surrounding Pennines landscape, although I don't suppose the word environment was used much by the industrial giants who built this colossus.

It is nearly 20 years since I last visited this part of Britain, which I once frequented regularly, and, as I drove along the Colne Valley, my thoughts centred on how little it appeared to have changed. This, of course, is part of its appeal. The land known to so many for its part in the TV series *Where the Heart Is* and *Last of the Summer Wine* is one in which you can still find total seclusion. You don't need to turn off the main routes to enjoy the spectacular scenery, but, if it is total exclusion of the outside world you want, you need only wander down one of the minor roads a couple of miles or don your walking boots.

When its life was producing wool, Titanic Mill would have relied heavily on the one resource of which there is no shortage in Yorkshire – water. Rain falls with great frequency in this part of the world and, as part of its eco-friendly pact, Titanic Mill uses water from its own private bore hole for central heating, drinking and washing. Couple this with electricity generated from tree cutting and the sun, and the mill is certainly doing its bit to save the planet.

Saving our sanity is probably more the philosophy of the Spa; an escape from the pressures of life in the type of luxury which those who worked at the mill could never have imagined in their wildest dreams.

As I stepped over the threshold I was not prepared for the stylish interior of the mill – all the more evident because it was in such stark contrast to the outer surroundings. I stayed in one of the apartments which can be reserved for spa guests, part of a redevelopment of the mill which is being turned into deluxe homes.



Style editor
Debbie Tweedie finds
new life in an old mill –
now the country's
first eco spa

When I escape to the country, all I really want is total peace and quiet and this location presented just that. The apartments are sleek and spacious with high ceilings and views of the countryside from their own balcony – although travelling alone on this occasion I did rather resemble a pea rattling around in its pod. Each apartment has a plasma television and DVD player plus a fully equipped kitchen and the bedroom is on a mezzanine over the lounge/dining area with a luxurious bathroom alongside.

Food, as always, was uppermost in my mind and, although the welcome pack contains everything you need for breakfast (plus a half bottle of champagne which was soon consumed), I went in search of something more substantial. The spa has its own bistro which serves everything from filled paninis to the chicken with roasted vegetables, paprika and tomato sauce which I chose. It was delicious and was cooked in the kitchen open for diners to view.

As the champagne and the glass of wine with dinner began to take effect a rest was in order – the peace and lack of pressure to do anything was heavenly.

But I could not resist the lure of the spa for long; donning my velvet-soft gown and slippers off I went to explore.

No expense has been spared here and the designers have cleverly combined a contemporary feel with the original mill; the effect is sensational.

I stepped into the warm pool, which was very welcome on such a chilly day and salt-regulated with no chemicals to irritate your eyes or skin. The gym looked well equipped but far too technical and energetic for me.

The spa uses Declor and Elemis products and there are all the usual treatments you would expect, with treatment rooms far more spacious than many I have experienced. But the pièce de résistance is the Titanic Heat Experience, the idea of which is to alternately heat up and cool down your body. You can warm up in the sauna, the aromatherapy room, the crystal steam bath or the saunarium (less hot than the sauna) and then cool down in the plunge pool, the multi sensory showers and the ice room where you put crushed ice onto your skin to counter the heat. Wonderful!

FACT FILE

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Telephone 01484 843544
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■ Prices start at £99 for an overnight spa break

