

# Ship Shape

Emma Cassidy checks into the newest hotel on the coast



**T**he Ship hotel in Brancaster has been brought back to life by the Flying Kiwi Inns team, with Chris Coubrough very much at the helm. What was a tired, rather grotty pub with not very much of a welcome, has been transformed into a busy buzzy foodie destination with something for all the family. Chic interiors with original, quirky design touches to boot, and thankfully not a chintzy sofa or swagged curtain in sight.

**Location:** Bang on the coast road, opposite the church, ten minutes walk, and you're on the wide sands of Brancaster beach.

**Ambience:** Gastro pubby, and dogs welcome; our mutt sat regally on his doggy bed in our room with a view, while we dined. Fine dining in flip flops. A much needed 'local', but posh enough for a special night out or weekend away.

**Styling:** Heritage paints, quirky reclaimed zinc tables, driftwood wall lights, roman blinds made from sacking, cool mirrors and panels sourced from Newark Antiques Fair etc-make the Ship cool and stylish, but comfortable enough to head there straight from a beach walk with the dog, and relax in the bar with a pint.

**Clientele:** A mix, which is good; holidaymakers and weekenders, from the midlands and

London town. Red trousers and deck shoes, stripey tees and Havaianas. Kids in Boden with sandy feet, tucking into early supper in the bar. Couples out for dinner with friends all dressed up and hitting the vino. Great atmosphere.

**Rooms:** We stayed in the very stylish room 9. Loved the signwriting on each bedroom door; huge handwritten numbers; so no excuse for finding yourself in the wrong room! Large smart, colourful bedroom with high beamed ceiling, fur throw on the bed, and fab roomy bathroom with roll top bath and walk-in shower (room for two!).

**Eat:** Starters-we had beetroot cured salmon with parmesan salad-pretty on the plate, light and delicious, Brancaster oysters with red wine and shallot vinegar-the best, followed by halibut with linguine and wild mushrooms, and crisp beer battered haddock, handcut chips and tartare sauce. Fresh and yummy. We shared a pud -the poached peach, raspberry mess and pistachio ice cream. Good artisan bread- service with a smile, all in all a great meal.

**Drink:** Gin and tonics lot of ice in the bar; we got talking to a couple who live in Thornham, (it was their first visit to the Ship), then Pinot Grigio, Botter, Venito. The Ship sells lots of wines by the glass which is good to see,

including two great ones from Martinborough in New Zealand, a Sauvignon Blanc and a 'surging red fruit' red Pino Noir, Te Tera.

**Best thing:** The styling and the food, and great location for post beach imbibing.

**Worst thing:** No obvious front of house or 'manager' to welcome you :overseeing all and coordinating the proceedings. It needs an efficient 'personality' running the show. The man himself was there dining when we were, so good to catch up for a chat with the dynamo that is Chris Coubrough. Feel that a sofa or two would be good for those booking in, to chill out on, and we hated the wall-mounted TV in the bar. It only plays a repetitive news channel, so unnecessary and intrusive and frankly not the right market.

**Don't leave without:** casting an eye over the great black and white photos in the bar, some by Sir Geoffrey Cory-Wright. Local beach scenes of happy family days gone by, with a touch of the 'Hamptons' about them.

**Book me in:** Room rates: Dinner, bed and breakfast from £140. Starters: average price £6, mains £14, puds £6. Blackboard with daily specials. Sandwiches and children's menu.

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