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Luxury and Legend Meet at Great Fosters, Surrey's Storybook-Style Mansion Hotel

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— Categories: Real Estate



A striking 16th-century mansion in Surrey, believed to have played a part in inspiring Disney's 1951 animated classic "Alice in Wonderland," is now one of the region's most prestigious countryside hotels. Great Fosters, situated near Egham and only a short drive from Windsor Castle, is said to have captivated Walt Disney during a visit in 1935. Its elaborate knot garden maze is thought to have influenced the design of the Queen of Hearts' labyrinth in the famous film.

Spread across 50 acres of landscaped grounds, Great Fosters is steeped in history and charm. The estate features a Saxon moat, herb gardens, ornate topiary, pink-leafed cherry blossom trees, rose gardens, wisteria-covered arches, and a Japanese bridge. Its arts and crafts-style gardens are regarded as some of the finest in Europe and include a 500-year-old sundial that, according to local lore, was a gift from Sir Francis Drake. The grounds also contain a series of yew rooms used for private dining in the warmer months.

Inside, the hotel blends historic character with modern luxury. Guests walk through oak-panelled corridors and past leaded-light windows before reaching one of 56 individually designed rooms. Each is decorated with distinctive period details, with categories such as the Historic Suites offering a unique sense of place. The Tapestry Suite, linked to Anne Boleyn, is adorned with 17th-century Flemish tapestries, while the Italian Suite retains its original early 20th-century fittings.

Dining is a highlight at Great Fosters. The Michelin-starred Tudor Pass offers an intimate setting with just seven tables, serving a menu that mixes British and European influences with inventive twists. The Estate Grill provides a more relaxed option, serving seasonal dishes from the grill in a vaulted dining room and leafy outdoor terrace. Afternoon tea is available in various parts of the estate, and in summer, guests can order picnic hampers to enjoy in the gardens.

The hotel's Utopia Retreat spa offers treatments using locally made Temple Spa products. Several private rooms are nestled within the grounds. Guests can also unwind at the Art Deco outdoor pool, complete with sun loungers and a bar service on sunny days.

Great Fosters is conveniently located around 21 miles from central London, making it a peaceful alternative to high-end city hotels. Heathrow Airport is only a 28-minute drive away, offering easy access for travellers. Public transport users can reach the hotel via Egham station with a change at Reading, followed by a short walk.

Nearby attractions include Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world, which remains an official royal residence. The town of Windsor offers cobbled streets, traditional pubs, and boutique shops in charming Georgian buildings. For visitors looking to combine city and countryside, an itinerary could start with a few days in London, visiting landmarks such as Big Ben, Kensington Gardens, and the street art of Brick Lane, before heading to Surrey for a stay at Great Fosters.

With its rich heritage, landscaped gardens, and luxurious hospitality, Great Fosters offers guests the chance to enjoy a setting steeped in history while experiencing the comfort and elegance of a top-tier countryside retreat.