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# Hotel De' La Ferns

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The town of Cameron Highlands is sought after for its cooler temperatures and colonial charm. The town's lodging scene is being reinvented with a string of newly opened and renovated inns and hotels.

If you plan a weekend away and want it to be luxurious – The Hotel De' La Ferns swings open its doors, promising a boutique experience but doesn't quite roll out the red carpet as expected. Hotel De' La Ferns is functional minus the extra trimmings – no fireplace or surrounding gardens to sip your tea, a bar for a nightcap,

wellness treatments to wind down to or newspapers delivered to your doorstep. Hotel De' La Ferns, mind you, has got some things going for it – carefully decorated rooms (mostly generous in size), pleasant views, easy location and ample parking – but it remains a modern structure striving to replicate the Tudor charm the town of Cameron Highlands is better known for.

The décor blends elaborate chandeliers and custom-made furniture that's reminiscent of your aunt's holiday house. No soaring lobbies but one that serves its purpose with

an adequate reception desk. Guests make themselves at home on comfy floral sofas in the small lounge area, which boasts free internet. Checking in are large families, travellers and a sprinkling of affluent guests from royalty to government dignitaries longing after a bit of colonial glamour.

The blend hits the perfect note in most of the 75 rooms, arranged to maximize space and natural light, although the standard rooms are a little plain. Some rooms are finished with polished wood floors and bay windows. Others come plushly carpeted while almost all have balconies. Family suites are ideal for large families, sleeping six. Splurge on their pent-suites, both with large balconies, for RM1800 a night. There's the roomy Cameron Ferns and Highland Ferns suites that have mezzanine day areas and a more intimate bedroom plus lounge upstairs.

Décor in corridors and rooms is offset with quirky rose lamps and black-and-white images of the Highlands. In room expect all the mod cons like flat screen TVs (though these come with a limited choice of channels and lacks a connection for a DVD player), electronic safe, coffee and tea making sets, ironing facilities and a mini bar. Rooms attract a charge of RM5 an hour for internet access. With no in-room air-conditioning, be sure to leave your room window open to let in the cool highland air. There's nothing deliciously neither crisp nor lavish about the bedding, pillows or linen. If you're used to European luxuries, the hard mattresses and thin towels can be a little jarring given the hotel's push to evoke a boutique feel and especially since the pricing is a tad aggressive (deluxe rooms are priced at RM380 while the family suite will set you back RM780). Book rooms away from the main road as traffic

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Ferns Restaurant

(and noise levels) tend to build up throughout the day – a major drawback for the hotel. Ask instead for a quieter room facing Cameron's lush greenery.

A nice surprise is that there's wheelchair access to most of the public areas of the hotel. Service may need some work but generally, the staff is mostly warm and friendly, reinventing themselves as front desk crew and travel agents round the clock. The hotel has dedicated meeting spaces to accommodate 200. It's the hotel's restaurant serving steam-

boat that draws the crowds. Steamboat is delightful for the cold nights. The included in-the-tariff breakfast is simple but sufficient, serving a buffet spread of local and international favourites.

While Hotel De' La Ferns lacks any real luxury feel, it remains a pleasant enough hotel to stay at. You'll want to try it. De' La Ferns offers the type of stay that doesn't quite keep you away from the star attractions of your visit – the highlands' cool weather, tea plantations and rolling hills.

### Hotel De' La Ferns

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