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RH England Review: When Jumbo American Style Hits the English Countryside

The California-chic interiors don't exactly match the 17th-century surroundings, but it's worth a visit on the countryside circuit.



The view of RH England, The Gallery at the Historic Aynho Park as you drive up to the property. *Photographer: Courtesy of RH England*

By [Sarah Rappaport](#)

American home furnishings company [RH](#) has taken over one of the most well-known English countryside manors and transformed it into a new destination to dine and browse for decor.

The grade-one listed (reserved for places of the highest historical significance, like Buckingham Palace) 73-acre estate formerly known as Aynhoe Park is now [RH England](#), the Gallery at the Historic Aynho Park. (For some reason, they dropped the “e.”) Situated just 70 miles from London, it comes complete with three restaurants, a wine lounge, a tea salon and a juice bar.

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“Wall Street likes to refer to us as a lifestyle brand, but no one knows exactly what a lifestyle brand is,” joked CEO Gary Friedman at the opening night party, explaining that RH retails home furnishings, operates a luxury hotel in New York, a yacht, private charters, and restaurants around North America. Branded luxury residences are also on the way, according to the company’s latest earnings report.

RH England is the first overseas expansion for the Marin County, California-based company known previously known as Restoration Hardware. I visited six days after its June 9 opening to check out the scene, having taken a one-hour train ride down from London to the Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire borders.



The 400-year-old, grand, imposing building is now RH England. *Photographer: Courtesy of RH England*



A unicorn statue guards the entrance. *Photographer: Courtesy of RH England*

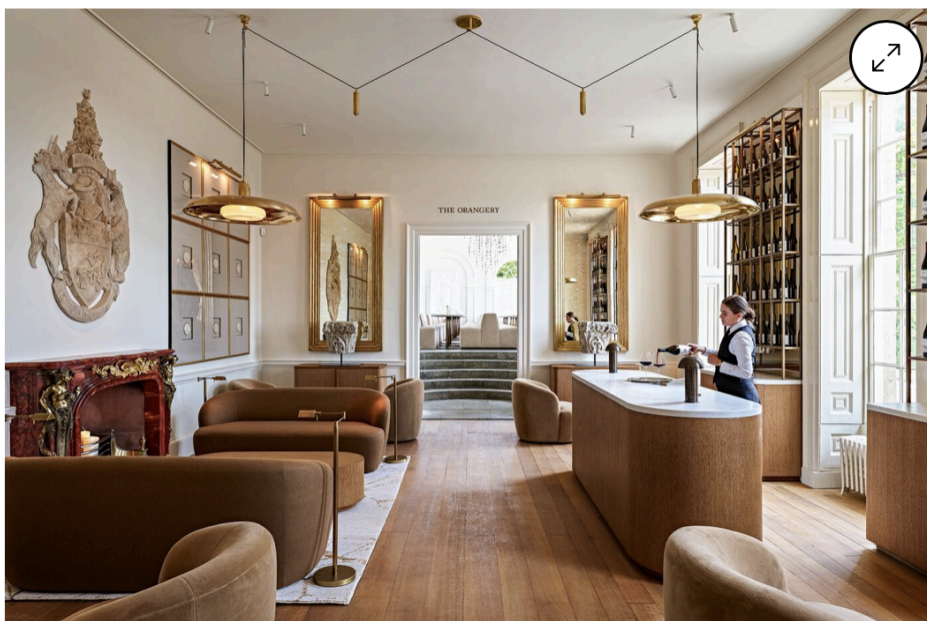
The grand, classical revival building from the 1600s looks like a *Bridgerton* filming location (and indeed, *Bridgerton* star Regé-Jean Page was at the glamorous launch party), and at the entrance there's even a bit of the series's whimsy: The first thing you see upon entering is a unicorn, an eccentric art piece by former owner James Perkins that's a preserved model of a horse. If you've never been to an RH, you would be forgiven for thinking the furniture or design at RH England would be likewise English aristocratic-quirky or have sumptuous color of the hit Netflix series. It's not and it doesn't. The upper floors are filled with the latest RH collections, like soft chairs and wooden statement piece tables and beds, displayed in varying shades of beige, white and cream.



The Orangery and its centerpiece lighting installation *Photographer: Courtesy of RH England*

There are antique pieces in the showrooms and stairways, but the interiors of Aynhoe-now-Aynho Park lack the intrigue one typically gets from visiting stately homes. I missed the oil paintings, cozy colorful couches and bright patterns of fellow 17th century national historic property Cliveden House, but Cliveden is a hotel and not trying to sell anyone furniture.

Drama instead is provided by looking out the magnificent floor-to-ceiling windows at the white stags outside roaming the gardens. Aynho Park has Europe's largest collection of White Hart deer. And they're a delight.



The Wine Lounge with glasses to go. *Photographer: Courtesy of RH England*

Shoppers can take drinks from the Wine Lounge around with them as they pat pillows—a possibly sticky situation for clumsy guests who have been drinking £22 (\$28) glasses of Merlot from Santa Ynez Valley near £6,000 sofas (RH’s famous cloud couches are celebrity favorites).

There’s an architecture and design library (with a first edition of *The Ten Books on Architecture* in Italian printed in 1521) , and an exhibition about Sir John Soane, the noted architect that renovated Aynho(e) in the 19th century. Nearly the entirety of the property is open for exploring; visitors get maps upon their arrival to wander around the glorious maze of Aynho, which has 60 rooms.

It recalled an upscale show home; tasteful and luxurious but it could be anywhere. The 400-year-old mansion came alive to me in the restaurants.

There’s hopes to make RH England a dining destination in the already competitive Cotswolds-adjacent countryside market—and they’re likely to succeed the way they have in New York with the the busy and buzzy Meatpacking District RH Rooftop.



The menu at the light-filled Orangery restaurant tilts toward the extravagant. Starters include a wood-grilled avocado with 15 grams of Petrossian Imperial Kaluga caviar for £55, homemade chips and dip with caviar for £95. A whole branzino is available for a main course (£38); the Australian Waygu ribeye goes for £95. The wine list includes plenty of local English options, as bestows the surroundings, like Preamble No. 3 from Hundred Hills in Oxford and sparkling rosé from Herbert Hall in Kent.

The food might be expensive but it's also delicious—the Devon white rotisserie chicken sandwich (£25, no crisps) served at lunchtime is tender, the charred ciabatta it's served on crisp and buttery. The truffle fries [£16] are liberally dusted with Parmigiano Reggiano and expertly fried.



The £16 truffle fries at The Orangery. Source: Sarah Rappaport/Bloomberg

The price points did feel like a tax for being inside such a grand house, which I was happy to pay for the scenery, even if I had no desire to have a caviar-based lunch. The crowd was a mix of well-dressed locals, a few visiting Americans who were driving through the countryside, and of course, hungry furniture shoppers.

I enquired about the chair I was sitting on in The Orangery; a design associate was swiftly dispatched over to me with a tablet to show me the custom Aurelie chairs ready to ship to my own flat in London for £1,175 a piece in materials like Italian merino wool velvet.

The other full-service restaurant currently open is The Loggia, in the west wing of the property that was formerly the servants quarters. It's an open-air restaurant with a more relaxed vibe, serving wood-fired pizzas in classic flavors like margherita starting at £15, with nicely charred crusts. Of course, there is a truffle option for £24. The sole dessert option is a refreshing, tart grapefruit granita. On a hot Thursday afternoon, the Loggia was packed with guests dining in the shade of the grand house, glasses of wine in hand. When the weather cools down, the tables have individual firepits for keeping warm. The effect was a kind of cozy country glamor.

The Conservatory, an American bistro, is set to open in autumn.

If my early visit is any indication, I suspect RH England will soon join the likes of Soho Farmhouse (9 miles away) and the Daylesford Farm complex with its restaurants, shops and members club as one of the must-visit spots for a day-trip down from London. I'd happily make the 90-minute drive from the capital for a pizza and a glass of sparkling English rosé with a brilliant view, or another lunch inside one of the most beautiful buildings in England. The shopping? Well, I'll leave those chairs alone.

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