

PINK GIN AND OYSTERS: JULIE HOWARD

We're on one of those luxurious wilderness walks. You know the ones I mean. Through the day you crawl over rocks, wade through mud, brave slippery stones to cross a raging river and climb hills only to find there is another bigger one in front. Then as the sun sets you swan into a five-star hotel ready for a shower and a pink gin and tonic.

That was us. For the last two kilometres of our twenty kilometre walk I had been dreaming of oysters au naturel. They had been on the menu the night before and were so delicious, I was looking forward to ordering them again.

Imagine my disappointment, when the waiter informs me, they're not on the group menu that night. However, my mood lightens when he tells me I can order them, but I'll have to pay for them separately.

Yeehah! 'I'll have half a dozen', I say in the adrenalin rush following a long walk.

'Room?' he asks pen poised. 'One', I respond eagerly.

'Hang on a minute', says Richard as the waiter walks away. 'What room did you say?'

'Room One.'

'But we're staying in Room Two', he says. Everyone cracks up laughing!

'Oh dear', I say as I chase after the waiter. 'I've already charged two pink gin and tonics to Room One.' This sends everyone into a second spasm of laughter.

When I go to apologise to the occupant of Room One, who, incidentally had the same name as mine, she shakes her head. 'Not me', she says 'I'm in Room 10.' So, I have to go to reception once more to try to find out who has Room One. They, of course can't tell me. Finally, as the story circulates through the hotel, I find out the name of the true owner of the room and all is sorted.

The next morning, I do notice, however, there is a lot of laughter and scrutinising of bills, as everyone checks out. For a moment I have a sneaking suspicion that a few extra pink gin and tonics have been added to my bill.