

Pie in the sky: the 150ft-high Restaurant¹

after Lucy McDonald

A scream pierces the afternoon air. I prise my sweaty hands away from my eyes to find all of my dinner companions staring at me in shock. It's then that I realise the noise is coming from me.

"Are you OK?" asks the young man to my left. "That was some scream." Paralysed by fear, I am physically unable to reply. Instead, I emit a long, low moan. The reason for my distress is simple: I have foolishly accepted the worst dinner party invitation of my life. But it's not the other guests that are so unbearable, it's the location.

Instead of a sitting round a cosy kitchen table, we are dangling from a crane 150ft in the sky, complete with dining chairs, table, crockery and even a slick-suited waiter who pours us a glass of wine as we swing gently in the breeze.



Dinner In The Sky is for people who expect more from their restaurants than four concrete walls and a solid floor. Instead, diners perch around a massive table, which is suspended from a crane high up in the air. It sounds completely insane, but as the most unusual way of getting high over dinner, it is the new must-do experience for the super-rich and adventure-hungry who seek for something a little more extreme at mealtimes.

Although based in Belgium, the "restaurant" can be driven to any destination in the world. There have already been dining events in Paris and Brussels, while New York and Niagara Falls are on the agenda. What's more, for a mere £10,000, they'll drive it over to Britain for you to host your own sky-high dinner party. David Ghysels, the jolly Belgian organiser, says: "It's a little surreal, but we realised people were getting bored with just going to the same old restaurants. They wanted to try something different. So we decided to push the boundaries. The sky's the limit!"

Forbes - the U.S. magazine - ranks Dinner In The Sky among the world's top ten most unusual restaurants, alongside Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck in England serving snail porridge and Ninja in New York, where waiters perform magic while serving sushi.

Today, I am one of a select group invited to a special preview dinner at Zonhoven, a town on the Belgium/Holland border, where the concept is being promoted at a trade fair.

¹ There are 3.2 feet in 1 metre

The whole contraption is attached by a steel cable to a giant crane arm that towers somewhere far above us. This is controlled by an operator who sits in his control cabin ready to press the button.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dinner is served. As we "take off" I let out a small nervous giggle which, by the time we are ten metres off the ground, has turned into a low roar. Even though our lift remarkably smooth, I am terrified. Up, up, up we go, leaving roofs, lamp posts and treetops behind until finally, when it feels like my head may bump the ceiling of the sky, we stop. "Next stop, Heaven," jokes the man opposite me. Then, with a flourish, the food is produced by the waiters in the centre: Parma ham salad and sautéed prawns (cooked in a tiny oven in the centre of the table). It all looks delicious, but I have never felt less like eating in my whole life, so I opt for an entirely liquid meal - two bowl-sized glasses of wine. As the alcohol courses round my body, I feel the blood slowly returning to my cheeks. I even take courage to look at the ground below: I can make out sheep, houses and people. Luckily I am sitting next to Kris Ulbulghs, 33, a charming software manager from Brussels. He says: "I've been up in a hot air balloon before, but this is amazing. The views are terrific I thought we'd be blown about by the wind, but it's really calm and relaxing."

An hour later, safely back on terra firma, I hop off, legs still shaking, cheeks still red, admiring my unexpected bravery. Now I just need to find a comfortable place to have something to eat.

VOCABULARY

a scream – крик

to pierce – протыкать, прорываться

a noise – шум

a low moan – тихий стон

unbearable – непереносимый (to bear – выносить, переносить, выдерживать)

cosy – уютный

to dangle – свивать

crockery – посуда

slick-suited – прекрасно одетый

to perch – садиться на насест

to be suspended – быть подвешенным

insane – безрассудный

destination – место назначения

jolly – веселый, восхитительный, общительный

to bore – надоест, наскучить (I'm bored – мне скучно; this film is boring – этот фильм скучный)

snail – улитки, моллюски

preview – предварительное знакомство с идеей, рекламный показ

alongside – наряду, рядом, вдоль

to promote – продвигать, способствовать, содействовать, поддерживать

contraption – хитроумное приспособление

a giggle – смешок

a roar – громкий хохот; рев

with a flourish – с эффектной демонстрацией; росчерком пера

prawns – креветки

delicious – вкусный

to opt for smth – выбирать (option -выбор)

amazing – поразительный, изумительный (to amaze – поражать, изумлять)

calm – спокойный

to admire – восхищаться (admirable – восхитительный, замечательный)

unexpected bravery – неожиданная смелость

