

REVIEW – PICCOLO ESPRESSO BAR, WORKSOP

Hong Kong, despite almost knowing it from television and books, is full of surprises when you get there. Yes, it has enormous blocks of housing, expensive skyscrapers built on the back of banking dollars, an endless, 24-hour busy-ness in one of the most densely populated places in the world and one of the most incredible night-time views to the island from Kowloon. The street markets are fascinating and the underground railway system has to be one of the best in the world. But did you know this: on almost every street there exists a bakery, just like the ones you find in England, selling sandwiches and confectioneries that would not be out of place in the UK?

However there's no need to travel quite as far as southern China to be further surprised. Hidden away, almost camouflaged in its position at the top of Bridge Street in Worksop, is a new coffee and cake establishment, the Piccolo Espresso Bar.

It's small, of that there is no doubt, but good things come in little packages and this bijou bar is no exception. With an interior laid out by an ergonomics maestro who has managed to fit in the maximum amount of seating without compromising comfort, a view across to the new cinema and, most importantly, a counter displaying the wares, the Piccolo Espresso bar is the perfect refreshment spot.

I've been lucky enough to travel around the world, having set foot on every continent, and I can say, without doubt, that the coffee served here is the best I have ever tasted, and that includes the coffee that I can drink by the gallon for breakfast in Germany. Every cup is perfectly produced; the coffee is measured with care, the milk is hot but never burnt, the crockery and cutlery gleam. I'm a sucker for lattes and these, served in cups with the brown-ness of the coffee rimming the milky top, are absolutely superb. My wife praises the cappuccinos to the hilt and I'm sure that the other drinks on offer, including a wide variety of weird and wonderful teas (yes, I'm an English Breakfast man) will be served with equally as much care and attention.

For me, a mid-morning or afternoon coffee is never complete without cake. Not a gateau or Törtchen, but a proper sponge sandwich. Look at the counter and drool. Yes, they're all home-made! Lemon, chocolate, carrot and other cakes are on offer. I've never got past the lemon or chocolate sponge. The latter's butter icing has more chocolate than Bourneville village and the lemon cake's citrus variety positively sparkles on the tongue. The sponge is how it should be: light, moist and decidedly delicious. Ah, heaven!

Can I find fault with the Piccolo Espresso Bar? Perhaps only one. It's certainly not the quality of the food or drink; all are five-star offerings. The service? No. The staff are attentive and caring and are rightly proud of what they do. Cleanliness? Don't be silly – you could perform open heart surgery in there. No, the only fault I could possibly find would be if I went in and couldn't find a seat!

Food and drink: 5star Service: 5star

Visit their website at www.piccoloespresso.co.uk and see photographs of the interior taken by top local photographer Rob Ferrol.

