

Enjoy a taste of romance



Our experts from *Which? Holiday* and *The Good Food Guide* suggest great places to dine and stay, whatever the time of year

MONMOUTHSHIRE

THE CROWN AT WHITEBROOK



Whitebrook nr Monmouth
NP25 4TX



01600 860254



www.crownatwhitebrook.co.uk

It would be easy to miss this low-slung 17th-century drover's inn set in a secluded wooded valley between the medieval towns of Chepstow and Monmouth, but that would be a pity.

The Crown is less than five miles from Tintern Abbey and, with the Forest of Dean across the river in England, it's ideally placed for exploring the Wye Valley.

The eight unfussy bedrooms are decorated by the owner's wife, Penny Davis, to illustrate well-known characters associated with Wales. The Dylan Thomas room, for example, has a tiny antique writing



desk, walnut veneer furniture and sleigh-style bed.

There are two narrow dining rooms with large, well-spaced tables. The team of servers in the restaurant are friendly, if formal. The kitchen seeks out ingredients from far and wide. Set lunches cost £25 and set dinners are £45. Wine is from £21 a bottle.

Cost: Standard room £115 B&B.

HAMPSHIRE

JSW



20 Dragon St, Petersfield
GU31 4JJ



01730 262030



www.jswrestaurant.com

This converted 17th-century coaching inn is a minimal yet distinguished restaurant with rooms. It's just off Petersfield town centre on the edge of the South Downs.

The bedrooms have widescreen LCD TVs, modern bathrooms and Wi-Fi capability and overlook a peaceful, tree-lined street. An upmarket, delicious continental breakfast is brought to your door, but the real quality cuisine is to be had later in the day. Lunch and dinner are down-to-earth seasonal dishes that largely use local produce. Fish, for example, is sourced from day boats on the Solent rather than trawlers. Set lunch menus cost £19.50, set dinner, £36.50. House wines start from £18.

Petersfield is surrounded on all sides by farmed country and forested hills, but the



heath is a surprisingly short walk from the centre, offering a hefty expanse of pretty Hampshire countryside, serene woodland and a boating lake. It is also registered as

a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, where you'll find bronze age barrows.

The town itself has a slew of charismatic beer-from-the-barrel pubs and a small weekend market buzzing with pleasant bartering for bric-a-brac.

Once a month, you can buy French fare when stallholders visit from Barentin, Petersfield's French twin town. Nearby is the tiny, tranquil Physic Garden, a re-creation of a 17th-century herb garden (www.hgt.org.uk/projects_petersfield.html).

Cost: Standard room £85 B&B.



To order your copy of the bestselling *The Good Food Guide 2009* at just £9.99 plus £2.97 p&p (extra copies £1 p&p each), call 01992 822800 and quote GFGW0209. Normal price £16.99. Offer closes 21 February 2009.

COUNTY DURHAM

ROSE AND CROWN



Romaldkirk, Barnard Castle
DL12 9EB



01833 650213



www.rose-and-crown.co.uk

This 18th-century English coaching inn is an ideal place from which to explore Teesdale. The old market town of Barnard Castle and its Norman ruins are a short drive from the south of the village, while England's highest waterfall (High Force), Raby Castle and the Bowes Museum are close by. The inn is on the village green, next to the Saxon church and opposite medieval stocks and a water pump.

There are seven bedrooms on the top two floors of the main building, and five more modern courtyard rooms at the back (accessed via the gravel drive). Sit



outside on sunny afternoons, or in winter warm your cockles in the snug bar with the crackling fire and ticking of the grandfather clock.

The owners are friendly, there's a lounge where you have after-dinner coffee or pore over the magazines and books provided. The candlelit dining room (evenings only) has thickly varnished panelling and a four-course menu that offers delicious, locally sourced

produce. Set menu is £30, wine is from £15.50 a bottle.

Cost: Doubles from £140 B&B.



PERTHSHIRE

MONACHYLE MHOR HOTEL



Balquhider, Lochearnhead
FK19 8PQ



01877 384622



www.monachylemhor.com

Monachyle Mhor, on the banks of Loch Voil and with the beautiful Balquhider mountains as a backdrop, is the perfect place to get away from it all. But there's plenty to do. The hotel offers a range of activities such as mushroom foraging and hen keeping.

The hotel is in the Trossachs National Park, just under an hour's walk from where the Scottish hero, Rob Roy, is buried. If you're walking,

you're welcome to take the owners'

dogs, Midnight and Truffle, with you! The 18th-century farmhouse and steadings are a four-mile drive down a single track road, but you shouldn't miss them as they're the pink painted buildings on the hillside to your right. Owned by the Lewis family since 1983, the hotel has 14 individually designed warm and welcoming rooms.

But it's the gem of a restaurant and its award-winning chef, Tom Lewis, that make a stay here all the more memorable. He takes full advantage of the region's native larder, as well as gleaning produce from the hotel's organic plot to produce the menu. The wine list is a personal selection of fascinating bottles arranged by grape variety, plus a cluster of little-known 'oddballs'. Set dinner is £46.

Cost: The Mhor Classic room is £105 B&B. Bed and breakfast stays are usually available from Monday-Thursday nights only.



NORFOLK

STRATTONS



Ash Close, Swaffham
PE37 7NH



01760 723845



www.strattonshotel.com



If you watch Sunday night TV, the Regency town of Swaffham may look familiar. It's where ITV filmed *Kingdom*, starring Stephen Fry. Strattons is close to the centre of town, but also makes the most of being in the Breckland countryside, an area that is steeped in history (there is still a neolithic flint mine there). All 10 rooms are uniquely themed and decorated with antiques, eco-friendly fabrics and works by local artists. Rooms have wireless internet, Bose CD players, TVs, DVD players (films are free to borrow from reception) and a decanter of Madeira. Some larger suites have wood-burning fireplaces.

Sunday night is tapas night. Dinner is four courses on other nights, with ingredients largely from local suppliers and the restaurant's kitchen garden.

Cost: Double room with breakfast from £150 B&B (depends on room style). Two nights' minimum stay at the weekend.

Get 10% off if you arrive by public transport.



OUR RESEARCH

Which? Holiday magazine inspectors have stayed in all the accommodation we recommend. Prices quoted are per room. Food recommendations are from *The Good Food Guide*. All prices are for February 2009 and include VAT.

BEST BUY COMPETITION

Win a weekend stay

You could win two nights B&B for two sharing a twin or double room at a hotel in this feature plus £100 towards dinner from the hotel's a la carte menu.

TO ENTER, JUST ANSWER THIS QUESTION

What date is Valentine's Day?

(a) 14 February (b) 21 January (c) 10 March

To enter our competition, go to www.which.co.uk/BestBuycompetition or send your entry on a postcard to 'Best Buy February 09', Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford, SG14 1SH. Include your name, address and postcode, daytime phone number and Which? membership number (the username on your membership card). Entries received by 19 February 2009 will be entered. Only one entry per household. Usual Which? competition rules apply. See www.which.co.uk/BestBuycompetition for the full rules of our competitions.