

hungry traveller.

ESCAPE, EAT, WALK...

Fancy a couple of nights in the country with a frosty ramble, all hefty overcoats, woolly scarves and rosy cheeks, followed by a log fire and top-drawer dinner?
The *delicious.* team round up four favourites

O'ER THE HILL
AND O'ER THE VALE
Nothing restores
the body and mind
- and builds a
healthy appetite -
like a brisk walk
in the countryside



FESTIVE SPIRIT The Queens Arms gets you in the mood with cosy rooms, proper pub grub and crackling fires



THE QUEENS ARMS

Corton Denham, Sherborne, Somerset (thequeensarms.com)
BY KAREN BARNES, EDITOR

WHY IT'S GREAT NOW The pub nestles at the foot of a hill in some of the prettiest countryside England has to offer... Think soft, folded and rolling – the type that looks even better tinged with frost. The views are stunning, while inside a fire roars, dogs loll around, a dazzling array of gins and whiskies beckons, and a tottering pile of homemade pork pies on the bar winks at you as you order a drink. And yes, this is still a proper drinking pub as well as having first-rate food. Hurrah!

THE FOODIE BIT It's all local, it's all seasonal, it's tempting and it's great. As well as pub classics like fish 'n' chips and burgers, there are more adventurous dishes too – perhaps braised ox cheek with tongue pastrami and carrot molasses, or brill with cider-braised cuttlefish and cockles. Puddings are vote-winners: pannacotta with ginger cake; chocolate fondant with salted caramel

ice cream. Breakfast is all about the sausages, the Gloucester Old Spot bacon and the eggs.

THE ROOMS There are eight of them, all quite different, and they're country-cosy with big beds, smart bathrooms and good sheets.

THE WALK Four routes have been mapped out for guests. Ask behind the bar and they'll give a step-by-step guide (literally) to take with you. If you want to walk off (or work up an appetite for) all the food you're bound to eat, there's a 5½ mile circular route through fields, a churchyard and the village of Sandford Orcas, with its perfect Tudor manor house.

THE COST From £110 for a double B&B. Three-course dinner about £30. Wines from £18.

SPECIAL OFFER Get a 10% discount on a two-night stay for two people, with a free bottle of prosecco.*
Quote delicious. when booking and bring this page with you.



THE PORCH HOUSE

Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire (porch-house.co.uk)
BY LESLIE DUNN, MANAGING EDITOR

WHY IT'S GREAT NOW The magnificent fireplaces of England's oldest inn will restore a tingle to your toes after a Cotswolds walk. Add in ancient beams, flagstone floors, a £1 million rustic-chic renovation and unfussily on-trend menu and you have England's deserved 2015 AA Pub of The Year.

THE FOODIE BIT After a Brakspear ale in the bar, head into the candlelit dining room. Satisfying starters may include twice-baked cheddar soufflé or treacle-cured salmon, while local lamb, beef and venison star in the mains. Puddings are of the comforting variety: brownie, cheesecake, crumble...

Breakfast, served in the airy conservatory, is a delight, with goodies such as crumpets and trendy speculoos spread, or eggs Hemingway (with smoked salmon).

THE ROOMS There are 13 of them, all with large comfy beds, sisal herringbone carpets, vintage radiators, handmade local toiletries and a Nespresso machine. Some have roll-top baths and exposed beams. Get a complimentary newspaper and pre-breakfast tea and toast delivered to your room.

THE WALK Ask at the bar for the Stow Walks booklet, produced by the local civic society. The easy 3 mile route via the pretty golden-stone villages of Maugersbury and Lower Swell leads through the Abbotswood estate, rumoured to have been bought by the Beckhams. Once across the River Dikler you get splendid views of frosty hills.

COST Doubles from £99 B&B. Dinner about £30pp for three courses. Wines from £16.

SPECIAL OFFER Mention delicious. when you book by phone (or add in the 'special requests' section when you book online) to receive a pre-dinner glass of sparkling wine.*

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: ISTOCK



HISTORIC COSINESS Revisit the past in comfort and style at The Porch House in the Cotswolds



WILDERNESS LODGE Food goes from field to plate at the artfully furnished Gunton Arms



THE GUNTON ARMS

Thorpe Market, Norfolk (theguntonarms.co.uk)
BY SUSAN LOW, DEPUTY EDITOR

WHY IT'S GREAT NOW This 18th-century pub with rooms sits next to a 1,000-acre deer park in the heart of the Norfolk countryside. Peer outside on a frosty morning and you're likely to see red and fallow deer emerging from the mist. The Gunton Arms is owned by an art dealer, and the artworks of top artists hang, rather unexpectedly, on the pub's panelled walls (and in the loos). This is as close to dining in an art museum as you're ever likely to get.

THE FOODIE BIT Meals are served in the Elk Room, dominated by the magnificent 10,000-year-old petrified skull and antlers of a (now extinct) giant Irish elk. It hangs over a huge open fire, upon which chef Simon Tattersall (a Mark Hix protégé) grills steaks, pork chops and, of course, venison. The food is unashamedly carnivorous (we loved the lamb's sweetbreads and venison pastrami), but there's

local seafood aplenty too. At breakfast go for kippers from Cley-next-the-Sea or beautiful drop scones with bacon and honey.

THE ROOMS Staying here is like staying in the home of a well-to-do relative. There's no TV, no minibar and no coffee/tea-making things in the rooms. Instead guests are encouraged to mingle by the fireplace in the library/sitting room. Bedrooms are comfortable and rustic-chic, with great attention to detail and enormous beds.

THE WALK A dogleg-shaped route leads through a wood planted with sweet chestnut, apple and oak trees, leading to a secluded pond. It's just long enough to work up a healthy appetite, but for longer rambles head for Bacton Woods, Sheringham Park and Pretty Corner Woods – ask for maps at reception.

COST Doubles from £130 B&B. Dinner about £35pp for three courses. Wines from £20.

*ALL OFFERS CLOSE 29 FEBRUARY 2016. ARE SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY AND ARE NOT TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. THE QUEENS ARMS OFFER IS CONDITIONAL ON GUESTS TAKING AT LEAST ONE DINNER AT THE PUB DURING THEIR STAY



SHIBDEN MILL INN

Halifax, Yorkshire (shibdenmillinn.com)
BY HUGH THOMPSON, DEPUTY CHIEF SUB EDITOR

WHY IT'S GREAT NOW In a tiny hidden valley just outside Halifax, Shibden Mill Inn is a handsome, sprawling set of buildings within striking distance of the Yorkshire Dales. Its bar serves local ales and good wines by the glass – it's the kind of place that makes you feel instantly at home. I'm not surprised it won Yorkshire Pub of the Year 2015 – the young staff are excellent.

THE FOODIE BIT Head chef Darren Parkinson serves up British fare in Yorkshire-size portions – by that I mean big. Upstairs is the Grill Room where you get huge steaks, smoky from the charcoal oven. There are fish, chicken or veg options, but grass-fed beef with dripping chips is the way to go.

In the restaurant downstairs the cooking is more delicate and ambitious – juicy scallops with avocado purée, sea herbs, radishes and watermelon tea. They're proud of their wines and the menu suggests glasses to suit each dish – all were very good. And do try the Yorkshire artisanal cheeses. Breakfast brings homemade jams and mueslis, the local butcher's bacon and sausages, and more.

THE ROOMS The 11 bedrooms vary in size from cosy to palatial, but they're tastefully decorated and comfy – a happy mix of old and new styles with retro radios and cheery colours.

THE WALK There are circular walks from the inn varying from 3 to 8 miles. Stroll to Shibden Hall (thought to have been the inspiration for Thrushcross Grange in *Wuthering Heights*) or set off on a more challenging clamber up sheep-dotted dales past farms and old wool mills. There are maps in reception.

COST Doubles from £125 B&B. Dinner costs £30-35pp for three courses. Wine from £18.

SPECIAL OFFER Get a 20% discount when staying two nights with dinner, bed and breakfast. Quote delicious. when booking.*



NORTHERN HOSPITALITY The Shibden Mill Inn offers a warm welcome and big steaks in the Grill Room (above)