

traveller

THE INDEPENDENT

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A warm welcome

Winter boltholes with style

PLUS

Spanish Escapes
16-page pull-out
Secret swiss skiing
easyJet turns 15
48 hours in New Orleans

6 INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER

SATURDAY

Cover story



Great indoors:
clockwise
from top left:
Elkstone in
the Cotswolds;
The Olde Bell,
Berkshire;
Knightfield,
Brecon
Beacons;
Woodlands
Sleep, North
Yorkshire;
Natural
Retreats, Llyn
Peninsula



The Olde Bell Berkshire

This is a posh pub with rooms, with modern British food and Ilse Crawford-designed interiors. It's one of two contemporary "coaching inns" owned by the Dhillon Group; the other is the Crown at Amersham. Tej Dhillon, the group's chairman, says "They were business investments but also emotional investments. We wanted to create a brand that would combine character and charm with contemporary, stylish and comfortable design elements. With Ilse we found a shared vision of this desire to create a unique brand."

"We stripped the building back to its original form but, rather than creating a quaint image of its past we re-wrote the building's

DNA – using English furniture suppliers, tweeds, English oak, pewter jugs but with additional modern design pieces like updated Ercol Windsor Chairs. The coaching inns are perfect for winter holidays, with roaring log fires, a great wine list and hearty and robust British cooking." A new head chef, Warren Geraghty, was appointed last month. He plans to cook simple, British food using seasonal ingredients from local suppliers – and from a newly planted kitchen garden. The Olde Bell, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire SL6 5LX (01628 825881; theoldebells.co.uk). Doubles start at £119, room only.

Natural Retreats Llyn Peninsula

The "Natural Retreats" concept involves high-spec self-catering properties set in areas of outstanding natural beauty – with hotel-style concierge services thrown in. A "Retreat Manager" helps provide an in-depth knowledge of the surrounding attractions. The brand started with a site in the

"It's lovely to be warm and cosy, watching the wildness outside the windows"