

# The of Information

THE INDEPENDENT

The essential guide to going out and staying in 01.10.2011

THE 50 BEST

## Weekend retreats



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Daniel Kitson's human stories

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Val McDermid in Lichfield

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**THE 50 BEST**

# Weekend retreats

Whether it's fine dining at a luxury London hotel or a romantic break in Snowdonia, **Holly Williams** gets you away from it all

## ROMANTIC HIDEAWAYS

### 1. Lainston House Hotel

For a very English weekend away and a classy approach to the romantic break, David Else recommends Lainston House Hotel, which he calls "a quintessential country house hotel, complete with manicured gardens, croquet lawn and fly-fishing on the chalky streams of the nearby rivers Itchen and Test."

**Where** Lainston House Hotel, Sparsholt, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 2LT (01962 776088; [www.lainstonhouse.com](http://www.lainstonhouse.com))

**How much** From £245 room only

### 2. Bowood Hotel

Sarah Miller recommends this spacious hotel and spa for a convenient couples' retreat: "A great romantic bolt-hole, deep in the Wiltshire countryside, but only a stone's throw from the M4. Stroll around the lake and gardens followed by some relaxation in their luxury spa."

**Where** Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort, Derry Hill, Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 9PQ (0845 2600 409; [www.bowood-hotel.co.uk](http://www.bowood-hotel.co.uk))

**How much** From £94 room only

### 3. The Olde Bell

Sophie Lam is full of praise for this centuries-old coaching inn in the pretty village of Hurley, which she explains has been thoughtfully modernised by design doyenne Ilse Crawford. "Crooked beams, crackling fires, roll-top baths and hearty food make for a perfect weekend à deux."

**Where** The Olde Bell Inn, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire, SL6 5LX (01628 703 504; [www.theoldebells.co.uk](http://www.theoldebells.co.uk))

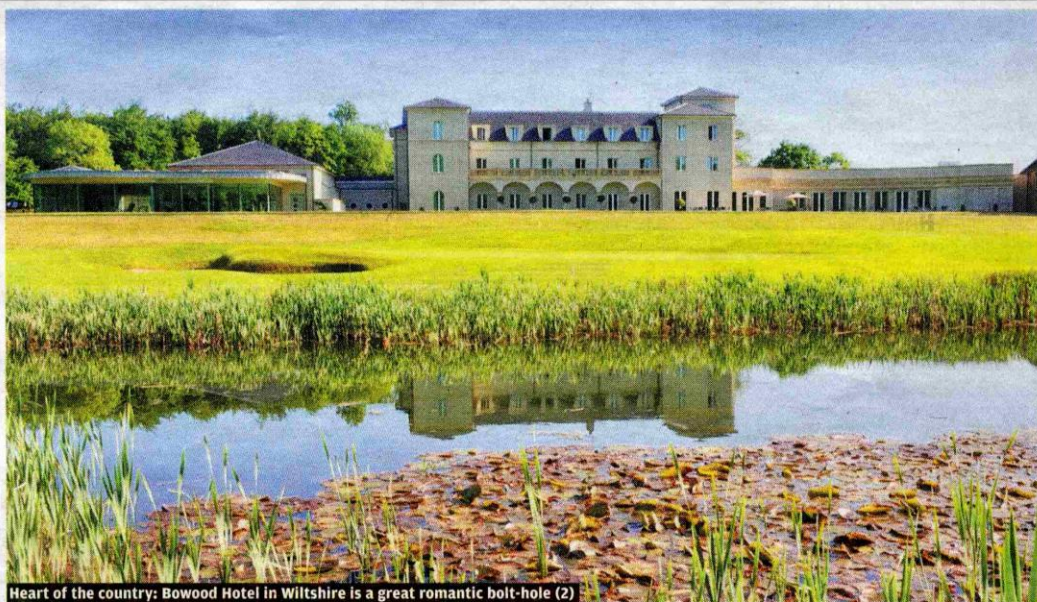
**How much** From £125



Sofa so good: the Archangel in Frome (6)

### 4. Alt Na Craig House

Although it is listed as a B&B, David insists that in reality this is "an excellent-value boutique hotel, in a Victorian country house with its own grounds and



Heart of the country: Bowood Hotel in Wiltshire is a great romantic bolt-hole (2)

fantastic views across to the Isle of Mull and other islands of the Hebrides."

**Where** Alt Na Craig House, Glenmore Road, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4PG (01631 564 524; [www.guesthouseinoban.com](http://www.guesthouseinoban.com))

**How much** From £120 with breakfast

### 5. The Inn at Whitewell

"The inn itself may not be a secret hide-away but it's a delightful place to stay, and the nearby Trough of Bowland is a genuine undiscovered gem," says David. The pretty inn itself dates all the way back to the 1300s, and is sure to prompt hand-holding and contented sighs.

**Where** The Inn at Whitewell, Near Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 3AT (01200 448222; [www.innatwhitewell.com](http://www.innatwhitewell.com))

**How much** Doubles from £120 with breakfast

### 6. The Archangel

"This old coaching inn has been beautifully renovated into a stylish restaurant with rooms in the centre of Frome, an old

Somerset market town – the food is a treat too," says Sarah, and James Lohan also recommends it for a romantic bolthole.

"This six-room, budget-boutique stay may date back to Domesday, but its architectural overhaul is decidedly modern."

**Where** The Archangel, 1 King Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1BH (01373 456111; [www.archangelfrome.com](http://www.archangelfrome.com))

**How much** Double room from £120 with breakfast

### 7. The Royal Crescent Hotel

Set right in the middle of Bath's famous crescent, this Grade I listed building is an elegant retreat that parades its rich heritage in sumptuous style. The hotel makes a characterful base from which to explore this historic town, or if you stroll through their pretty gardens – also a recommended setting for afternoon tea – the steamy Bath House Spa awaits.

**Where** The Royal Crescent Hotel, 16 Royal Crescent, Bath, BA1 2LS (01225 823333; [www.royalcrescent.co.uk](http://www.royalcrescent.co.uk))

**How much** Double rooms from £345 with breakfast

### 8. Byfords

"Defining itself as a 'higgledy-piggledy world of pleasure' this place combines a luxurious B&B, fantastic bistro, and wonderful deli full of local produce and home-made cakes, at the heart of a beautiful Georgian north Norfolk market town," says David. Get ready to get cosy.

**Where** Byfords, 1-3 Shirehall Plain, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6BG (01263 711400; [www.byfords.org.uk](http://www.byfords.org.uk))

**How much** From £150 with breakfast

### 9. Fynnon

This small and intimate boutique B&B in the foothills of Snowdonia promises a proper romantic escape. The decor is ornate Victoriana with funky modern touches, but remains elegant at all times. A perfect place for long windswept walks – enjoy champagne and strawberries in the outdoor hot tub on your return.

**Where** Fynnon, Love Lane, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, LL40 IRR (01341 421 774; [www.fynnontownhouse.com](http://www.fynnontownhouse.com))

**How much** Doubles from £135 with breakfast and afternoon tea on arrival

## This week's panel

David Else is the author of the 'Lonely Planet Guide to Great Britain'; Sophie Lam is deputy travel editor of 'The Independent'; James Lohan is founder of the website Mr & Mrs Smith ([www.mrandmrsmith.com](http://www.mrandmrsmith.com)); Sarah Miller is editor of 'Condé Nast Traveller' magazine