

# Enjoy a quirky retreat

**T**HE Olde Bell seems like a world away from anywhere, despite being close to the M4 and M40. The hotel, with its Victorian beams, quirky nooks and crannies and crooked floorboards (some parts of the inn date back to 1135), cozes warmth and the building's special charm is striking. You can see why the tranquil retreat, in Hurley, is a

hotspot for celebs looking to whisk themselves away from the London spotlight for a weekend.

Our spacious room with an enormous bed, claw foot bath and stylish wooden floorboards was fantastic but it was the added unique, quirky extras that differentiate the Olde Bell from a regular hotel. From the cosy, shaggy

rug adorning a rocking chair to the 1950s-esque radio on top of our bedside table; the attention to every detail makes a heart-warming impression. It is one of the many reasons why the inn is rated as 5\* by the AA Hotel Guide.

The larger room is expensive – £245 the cheapest price – and paying this sort of price is probably only a special indulgence for an anniversary or birthday for most people. But the exquisite hotel is worth it. It has several different lodgings with 48 bedrooms – all with their own character – and you can find rooms for £110 off-peak.

The Olde Bell has been awarded two AA Rosettes from the AA Restaurant Guide and the food lives up to the lofty expectations.

A set three course meal is £30 per head and the menu is flooded with food from local suppliers with lots of choice.

Our starters of Channel Island crab tortellini, with apple, cucumber and chilli salsa and iberico ham, rosemary honeycomb and poached pear were as easy on the eye as fine dining dishes but in much heartier portions.

The mains followed suit and the rolled belly of pork, sage polenta and flageolet beans in a chorizo broth were superb, with the stone bass just as tasty. The menu has good options for vegetarians and the excellent waiters and chefs were more than happy to fulfil any special dietary requirements.

As much as we tried, despite the appetising sound of hot chocolate fondant and passion fruit trifle, we couldn't find any space for pudding. The service was fantastic and two full English breakfasts brought to our room the morning after was a fitting end to a perfect stay.

**JOHN DICKENS**

**FINE DINING, HEARTY PORTIONS:** Stone bass, top, and iberico ham, rosemary honeycomb and poached pear, right, are served at the Olde Bell Inn, left.



## The Olde Bell Inn

**Where:** The Olde Bell, High Street, Hurley, SL5 5LX

**Website:** [www.theoldbell.co.uk](http://www.theoldbell.co.uk)

**Contact:** 01628 825851 or email [oldebelleception@coachinginn.co.uk](mailto:oldebelleception@coachinginn.co.uk)

**Prices:** Lunch menu: two courses £12, three courses £16.50; a la carte starter, main and dessert £29.50 per person.

