



CALLED TO THE BAR

What The Olde Bell.

The lowdown First, before we get all beauty on you, this is the pub you've been looking for all your life. It's 40 minutes from London (laughably easy) and is so delightful that you'll want to stay the night, maybe two. The garden, with its roses and runner beans and rolling lawns, backs onto the river. Inside, bedrooms have been given the Ilse Crawford touch – there's a slightly Scandinavian feel, with roll-top baths, Aesop products, greys, creams and taupes. Cool but cosy. You can go on looping five-mile walks, get a massage in your room or, for the ludicrously energetic, there's the Friday-to-Sunday Workout in the Woods. It's all about sucking up the fresh air and getting rosy-cheeked (knackered too). It involves lots of running and cycling, plenty of lunges and squats, as well as skipping and circuits, all frogmarched along by trainer Drew Perrott. Everything is done to a strict timetable, starting at 6.30am with a screamingly healthy breakfast and finishing 11 hours later, when you can make a dash for the bar or – more likely – crash out on your bed.

Verdict Great. You'll never leave a pub feeling this good again.

Details Weekend bootcamp, from £675. At The Olde Bell, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire (theoldebells.co.uk or 01628 825881).

TATTLER TREATMENTS

Give yourself some green and pleasant seclusion...

BREATHE EASY

What Hay Barn Spa at Daylesford.

The lowdown The Daylesford Farm Shop (the mothership of Lady Bamford's colossal empire of good taste and fair trade) is practically a cult. And the Hay Barn Spa is where you can worship. Try a day workshop (including a finger-licking organic lunch), with classes ranging from the art of breathing to meditation or yoga on heated, whitewashed wooden floors, overlooking grassy hills. Or try the Bamford Deep Tissue Massage for the ultimate quid-a-minute pummelling, crazy stretching and curiously calming chanting in the background, all while you lie on blankets that look and feel as though they were made with the fluff from a rabbit's bottom.

Verdict Surprisingly good value and always cool.

Details Massage, from £65 for 60 minutes; workshops from £75. At Daylesford, Gloucestershire (daylesfordorganic.com or 01608 731703).

SALTY TOWERS

What Lucknam Park.

THE LOWDOWN A Jane Austen-y Georgian manor with an ultra-modern spa. Splash around the indoor pool with its flickering-fire backdrop, breathe deeply in the Japanese salt room (designed to cleanse the lungs) or steam out stress in the emotions-balancing amethyst chamber. The therapy rooms are wonderful dark cocoons offering treatments by swanky Parisian brand Anne Semonin. The Black Sand Body Scrub will give you goosebumps of pleasure, as well as baby-soft skin. Miracle Eyes, with its tactical use of ice cubes, eases bags and dark circles. And what could be better than soaking in a hot-tub in the herb garden after a frosty walk through the grounds?

Verdict Results-driven stuff in a glorious setting.

Details Black Sand Body Scrub, from £132 for 90 minutes. At Lucknam Park, Chippenham, Wiltshire (lucknampark.co.uk or 01225 740570).

READY TEDDY GO

What Babington House.

THE LOWDOWN Yes, you can knock back a vodka martini or gorge on the free afternoon teas, rounds of ginger and chocolate brownies and sweetly sharp lemon tarts. Or you can go the route of the perfectly polished spa. Overlooking a lovely Victorian walled garden, it has two zones depending on your mood and energy levels – Cowshed Active for swimming, gymming and steaming and Cowshed Relax for head-down, eyes-closed pampering. If you're feeling sluggish, the new Slender Cow treatment will put a spring in your step. A vigorous bout of body brushing with a cactus-bristle brush – more tingly than prickly – is followed by a brisk exfoliation and a massage with products containing slimming (joy!) seaweed extracts, zesty essential oils and the star ingredient, Dermochlorella, a freshwater micro-algae that tightens up wobbly bits. Skin feels considerably softer and singularly toned, so you can continue lolling around guilt-free.

Verdict More low-key than you might imagine – the teddy-bear bathrobes are brilliantly levelling.

Details Slender Cow treatment, from £105 for 75 minutes. At Babington House, Babington, Somerset (babingtonhouse.co.uk or 01373 812266).

BISCUITS BY THE POOL

What Barnsley House.

The lowdown A beautiful bolthole that's thankfully not big or trendy enough to generate the same attention as Babington or Lime Wood, which means you don't have to book a year in advance. As you might expect from Elizabeth Hurley's old backyard (the farm she purchased in her pig-rearing days is a stone's throw away), all is clever country chic, smart but not scarily so. Tables are gnarled tree stumps, there's funky lighting and contemporary art. Food is seasonal and local – in the evening, march off to the Village Pub for slow-roast belly of pork and a bucket of pinot noir. The Garden Spa, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, drystone walls, plants and herbs, has every Aromatherapy Associates treatment on tap. The Revitalising facial is a magical mishmash of rose and frankincense, kneading and plumping. Take a dip in the outdoor hydrotherapy pool, order a pot of Earl Grey and some homemade biscuits or snooze on a thick-cushioned bed looking out across the fields.

Verdict Cotswolds charm with an outrageously relaxing spa thrown in.

Details Facial, from £90 for 60 minutes. At Barnsley House, near Cirencester, Gloucestershire (barnsleyhouse.com or 01285 740000).

PICK ME!