



2011-05-27

THE OLDE BELL (GOURMET CHICK IN BERKSHIRE)

My meal and stay at The Olde Bell is really going to cost me. I was invited to review the gastro pub so the immediate cost was minimal but I was so enamoured with the place that it is going to cost me dearly in return visits and what is bound to be an unsuccessful attempt to make my flat look exactly like my room at The Olde Bell.



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The setting is idyllic in the small village of Hurley which is in Berkshire and conveniently located if you want somewhere to stay after a meal at [The Fat Duck](#) in nearby Bray. The Olde Bell was originally a 12th century coaching inn and it has retained the atmosphere and charm of that history while being stylishly updated. The front bar of the pub is still clad in dark panelled wood with low ceilings, a cosy fire and lots of space for people to bring their dogs in while they sit and sip a pint.



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ARTICLE TO CHECK OUT



Our room at The Olde Bell (room number six)

That sense of homeliness and Britishness is not lost in the glamorous rooms for overnight guests. The best one is above the pub itself with vast kingsize beds and a roll top bath in the middle of the bedroom. Rooms in the buildings across from the pub are not so atmospheric however in every room there are touches like chirpy red Roberts radios, rocking chairs, sheepskin throws, an actual teapot along with the kettle (so rare in a hotel or pub), some Penguin classics and a generous supply of Aesop toiletries.



Top ten bars in Rio, The Guardian

TWITTER

@eatlikeagirl oh no that's a shame but am sure extra time in Argentina will be a bonus about 9 hours ago

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GOURMET CHICK HIGHLIGHTS (BY PICTURE)



Amazing bath in our room

My friend Claire and I started our meal with a glass of prosecco in the bar and then went through to the dining room which was cosy at night time thanks to flickering candles and travel rugs slung across the back of high backed booths. Our immediate concern was what not to order as the menu was the sort of menu you read and want everything on it. It was classic, seasonal and simple while using ingredients which are a step above what you usually find in a pub.



Asparagus with soft boiled egg

For example, the bread was so fresh and soft that Claire and I had to physically restrain ourselves from cancelling our dinner orders and just eating bread and butter instead. Luckily we didn't as the starter of asparagus with soft boiled egg (£7) was the perfect dish for this time of year. The asparagus was drizzled with a chive butter sauce. I loved how the chef's light touch let the quality of the ingredients shine through.



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Channel island crab

Fresh Channel island crab (£7.40) was paired with vibrant green samphire and shredded cucumber. The crab was sweetly nutty and the greenery gave a great fresh contrast in taste and texture. The pork cutlet (£17.20) was an absolute monster and about the size of my head. Burnished to a golden colour it was dense and tender inside and was served with a salad of puy lentils. Chiltern lamb neck (£17.80) was marinated and then cooked to a delicate state of pinkness before being served in thick slices alongside delicate spears of sprouting broccoli laced with anchovy dressing.

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The brilliant beer garden at The Olde Bell - it would be amazing in summer

Decadent desserts also delighted, in particular the smooth and silky lemon posset (£6.50). Service was excellent and our waitress helpfully pointed out her favourites wines on the list to us and her choices were spot on. The house white wine was grassy and fruity while a bottle of 2008 Fleurie Domaine De La Madone France (£33) was a delicate red with some lovely floral notes.



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Inside the front bar

The next morning breakfast included a buffet of cereals, fruit and pastries along with a choice of hot breakfasts ranging from traditional kippers to the Full English. Boiled eggs had a rich, creamy yellow yolk which was perfect for dipping toast soldiers in. Poached eggs on toast were also spot on.



Boiled eggs for breakfast

The Olde Bell is really the perfect British pub. In an ideal world I would move in there permanently and spend my days soaking in the bath and reading paperback novels before heading downstairs for a drink and some dinner. At the moment I am having to content myself with plotting a return visit and doing furious internet research to find out where all the furniture is from.

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