

HOTELS CLOSE TO HOME

Who says you need to spend hours on a plane to unwind? Whether you choose a cosy yet contemporary country house or a hip city hangout, these hotels are easy to get to, easy on the eye, but very difficult to leave...

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THE PEACOCK AT ROWSLEY Rowsley, Derbyshire

BEST FOR... A weekend in the country that's less wellies and waxed jackets, more fine wines and *Gosford Park* glamour.

WHY? Because if it's good enough for Keira Knightley (who stayed here while filming *Pride & Prejudice*), then it's good enough for us. This cosy English retreat was built in 1652 as the steward's house for nearby Haddon Hall and is owned by local gent Lord Edward Manners. Outside, it's all sturdy Derbyshire stone and picture-book village; inside *To The Manor Born*-style mixes with modern elegance, thanks to interior designer India Mahdavi. Most agreeable.

WHERE? Set in the rugged Peak District, on the outskirts of Bakewell – the town famed for its rather moreish almond-flavoured tart. Famed country pile Chatsworth is on your doorstep and Sheffield is an undemanding drive away.

STAYING IN Tiled fireplaces and antique furnishings add period drama to the 16 rooms, with many pieces originally from Belvoir Castle, another Manners family pad. Walls painted in greys, purples and greens mirror the moody landscape, while furry white rugs and cushions reflect the sheep outside. Be sure to make a reservation for dinner – the chef is Gordon Ramsay protégé Matthew Rushton, and the dining room has the intimate air of a private member's club. Afterwards, retire to the stone-walled bar for a glass of port.

STYLE STEAL Rich aubergine walls in the dining room create a luxurious, warm backdrop and show off the glam fringed wall lights brilliantly.

GOING OUT You're in prime walking country, so grab your walking boots and take to the hills. If you prefer your fresh air in smaller doses, take a tour round nearby medieval manor house Haddon Hall – a setting for the forthcoming BBC adaptation of *Jane Eyre*. But the famous pull at the Peacock is the angling – it's been selling day tickets since the 1820s and has seven miles of dry-fly fishing along the rivers Derwent and Wye.

MORE INFO Double rooms from £145, with breakfast: from £205 with à la carte dinner. Call 01629 733518 or visit www.thepeacockatrowsley.co.uk.

