



MYSTERY GUEST WE SEND A WRITER UNDER THE COVERS...
THIS WEEK: PEACOCK HOTEL, ROWSLEY, DERBYSHIRE

A BISCUIT. That's what was on offer when we requested something with tea in the lounge, having worked up an appetite with a walk in the lovely Derbyshire countryside. Scones? Sandwiches? Nope. Although the delectable Chatsworth Farm Shop is only three miles down the road, a dry biscuit (one each) was all we could have.

Fortunately, the meals in this small, 16-room country house hotel, in a building dating from 1652, compensated. Boiled and poached eggs at breakfast were done to perfection, and an attentive waiter ensured that we never ran out of butter or toast. (Ending breakfast at 9.30am on a Sunday is a little mean, however.) A ploughman's lunch with local Hartington stilton in the cosy bar was delicious, and the evening meal in the smart dining room was a triumph.

Friends joined us for supper and we sampled many of the dishes on the good-value menu (£25 for three courses). Toasted brioche with parma ham, poached egg and asparagus; scampi in lemonade batter; and an excellent roast beef with all the trimmings were highlights. Service, after a slow start during drinks in the lounge, was prompt.



The Peacock serves excellent food at modest prices

When we had booked, requesting a twin room, we were impressed with the way staff called us back to discuss the rooms available. And when we arrived, the manager apologised for the scaffolding outside our bedroom window, although the building work didn't trouble us.

Room 8 was a good size, with comfortable beds, lovely old wooden furniture, a good music system and proper hair-

dryer. The windowless bathroom, however, was tiny, with not enough room for our sponge bags, which irritatingly had to be left on the floor, and insufficient clothes hooks.

The hotel is popular with anglers, who come for the trout in the River Wye: fishing prints on the walls take up the theme. But the hotel is far from fusty. A revamp has brought the addition of funky green velvet-covered chairs in the lounge

and striking mauve walls in the dining room, though the decor here is a little potty: a huge, monochrome photograph of the Havana waterfront is, bafflingly, framed by two sets of antlers.

Cath Urquhart

Bottom line: Cath Urquhart paid £246 for dinner, B&B for two people, including full English breakfast and wine with dinner.

Sampling the fare: Excellent food at modest prices.

What we think: A well-run retreat for a country weekend.

Best thing: The food.

Worst thing: The biscuit.

Access all areas: No. Wheelchair users can reach the dining room, but not the bedrooms.

Need to know: The Peacock, Rowsley, Derbyshire (01629 733518, www.thepeacockatrowsley.com).

Room: 6 out of 10.

Food: 8 out of 10.

Service: 7 out of 10.

Have you stayed at the Peacock Hotel? Do you agree or disagree with our review? Go to www.timesonline.co.uk/aplacetostay and **Post a Comment**.