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## Where to stay



Far left, hearthside seats in the reception area. Left, a salad served in the dining room

**The weekend** The Crown Inn, Old Amersham

## An inn that stands out

**WHAT IS IT?** A timber-framed, 16th-century coaching inn, with 19th-century additions, on the pretty High Street in Old Amersham. Originally, it was a full day's horse ride from central London; today, you can hop on the Metropolitan Line at Baker Street, get off at the last stop, then it's less than 10 minutes by cab to the inn. The labyrinth of wonky-beamed rooms, staircases and corridors is complemented by simple, contemporary interior design. On the ground floor, mushroom-coloured, lamp-lit public areas with rush-matting floors are furnished with assorted wooden tables, Windsor chairs from Ercol, tankards full of wild flowers and generously stuffed armchairs upholstered in muted tweeds. The overall effect is guaranteed

to warm the heart of the hardest London-based highwayman.

**BEHIND THE SCENES** The Crown is one of two coaching inns owned by Tej and Sarina Dhillon which have recently been overhauled by Soho House interior designer Ilse Crawford. So, while the best bits of the coaching inn have been retained – the sense of it being the heart of the community, where weary travellers can stop to bask in fireside banter before retiring to their simple lodgings – gone is the joy-sapping chintz.

**EAT** Simple, local, seasonal food by Rosie Sykes (formerly the *Guardian's* Kitchen Doctor), to be enjoyed in the bar or in one of the two dining rooms. All our belt-loosening choices were hits: deliciously fresh potted crab with cornichons and toast; ham with mash and parsley

sauce; flavour-rich smoked duck on toast; hearty venison stew with herb dumplings; and to finish it (and us) off, a runny-chocolate brownie to share.

**SLEEP** There are 37 bedrooms split between the main inn, some outbuildings around a cobbled courtyard and a sympathetic new-build block to the rear. For a real sense of history, book Room 12 in the main house. When peeling back layers of wallpaper, workers discovered a hand-painted wall dating back to 1550, which has been left intact. The bedrooms have dark-stained oak floors, huge beds with hand-woven wool blankets and rocking chairs draped in sheepskin rugs. Fans of the frilly valance take heart: the Queen Elizabeth I Suite, where Andie McDowell and Hugh Grant got better acquainted in the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, has escaped the makeover by popular demand and remains as it was in 1994.

**WHO GOES THERE?** Locals for the bar and restaurant; Londoners looking for an easy escape.

**WHAT'S THERE TO DO?** Hang out by the fire in the bar sipping local Marlow Brewery ale; potter along the High Street peeping into trinket shops and several other cosy pubs; or strike out on one of many possible rambles in the nearby Chiltern Hills.

**WE LIKE** The friendly, unpretentious staff and their genuine desire to keep the place a popular neighbourhood haunt.

**WE DON'T LIKE** While atmospheric, rooms at the front of the main house overlook the High Street and can be a little noisy.

**PRICE** Doubles from £109. Dinner, B&B from £159 for two FRANCESCA SYZ

**THE CROWN INN**, 16 HIGH STREET, OLD AMERSHAM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE (01494 721541; WWW.THECROWNAMERSHAM.CO.UK)

## SUITE TALK

**MIAMI** The Kor Hotel Group opens **Viceroy Miami** this month on a dozen floors of a 50-storey tower, part of a striking new three-tower complex. The 162-room hotel will have a 15th-floor restaurant spilling out onto a two-acre deck with a 50-person hot tub and a vast pool. There will also be a large spa and a screening room. 00 1 866 720 1991; [www.viceroymiami.com](http://www.viceroymiami.com). Doubles from \$565

**CHILE** The 205-room **W Santiago**, W Hotels & Resorts' first South

American property, is due to open this month in the shadow of the Andes. Located in the fashionable El Golf neighbourhood, it will have a Bliss Spa and two restaurants by one of Argentina's best-loved chefs, Jean Paul Bondoux. 00 56 2 770 0000; [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com). Doubles from US\$299

**JORDAN** The new **Evason Ma'in Hot Springs & Six Senses Spa, Jordan**, right, is in a dramatic valley setting within sight of the Dead Sea. Expected to open this



month, the resort incorporates the Ma'in hot spring waterfalls and a 10-treatment-room spa. There's also a formal Arabic restaurant, a herbal tea bar and an olive garden where you can

learn to make your own oil. 00 962 5 324 5500; [www.sixsenses.com](http://www.sixsenses.com). Doubles from £269

**MALDIVES** The latest resort by the new owners of Huvafen Fushi is due to open in the South Malé Atoll this month. The 129-room **Velassaru** will have an over-water Aquum Spa, a seafront sushi bar, an Asian grill and a Mediterranean restaurant with a walk-in cellar. 00 960 333 2200; [www.velassarumaldives.com](http://www.velassarumaldives.com). Beach villas from £363 FS