

Weekend

Home

The George, East Sussex

Sally Shalam

The brochure smacks of stylish promise – a shiny black initial “g” entwined with a flower and “the George in Rye” in small lettering above it. Cream leaves within reveal a little background on the new owners of the hotel – a hotel management consultant and a set decorator, surely a no-fail combination? Neat black and white photos of the rooms, a sample dinner menu (head chef is ex-Moro in London) and, in more curly lettering, it says: “a hotel for the raffish, languid and marvellous”.

I’m not sure I possess any of these qualities, so I take my French friend, M, to expand the gene pool. She’s looking forward to this as much as I, and she hasn’t even seen the brochure.

The night-time streets of Rye are glistening with rain as we make a short dash from the station to the high street. There’s no missing The George on the narrow street. A former coaching inn, it’s handsome, a series of white Georgian buildings with grand windows and a small porticoed entrance. Up the steps and into a lobby – sitting room to the left, reception desk to the right. Straight ahead is the bar, but we’re taken upstairs along a warren of passages to our rooms, mine overlooking a side street and



M’s on to the hotel’s courtyard.

Our rooms are totally different but equally delicious, with enough details and flourishes. Mine is small (which I like), and a pleasing combination of muted mustard and cream with witty faded yellow umbrella-print paper on one wall, heavy cream curtains and an ochre velvet button-backed chair. The sparkling white bathroom has a vinyl floor the colour of Colman’s and I can hardly wait to get into the antique

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wooden bed. Come to think of it, there is a certain raffishness.

Ooh la la, M’s has a huge bed, roll top bath in a sexy alcove, and daybeds covered in soft cord on which to practise her languid air.

Beverages, kettle and cafetiere are in the wardrobes, housed in small wooden chests. The organic Numi tea selection is so good – gunpowder, green and something called Morning Rise – it’s the first time I’ve ever been

tempted to nick a tea bag instead of the toiletries (which are Aveda). Everything is thoughtfully chosen, from slender white crockery to black ribbon tied around the bath mats. I’d like a blind at the window, though.

We head to the dining room which is an elegant dark grey. “Very sober, low-key, I like it,” says M before scanning the menu: “There’s something for everyone here.”

The tables are very close together and we’d certainly feel like we’d been joined for dinner if anyone were sitting at the next one. As it is, we can hear every word from a party nearby, along with faint strains of Abba and Robbie Williams. Is chef a fan? M goes to investigate. “It’s coming from the bar not the kitchen,” she says.

By the time we’ve negotiated pear salad with endive and stilton dressed with walnut and mustard, seared scallops with chorizo, roast rack of Romney Marsh lamb and celeriac gratin, and roasted skate wing with capers and butter beans, dinner is in danger of turning into a re-enactment of that scene from *When Harry Met Sally*. This is before M declares her *tarte au citron* better than any she’s eaten in France. The best way to describe how we’re feeling is marvellous.

● *High Street, Rye* (01797 222114, thegeorgeinrye.com). Doubles from £125 B&B. Dinner around £25 for three courses excluding drinks. sally.shalam@guardian.co.uk

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