

CONSUMER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

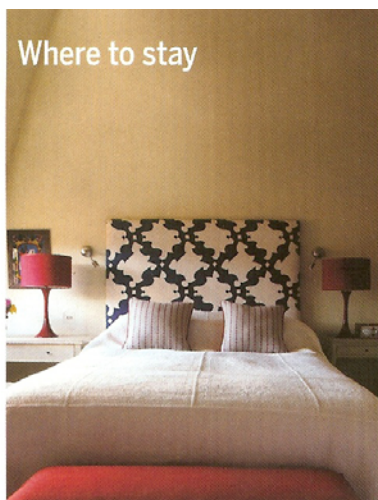
# Condé Nast Traveller



TRUTH IN TRAVEL®

AUGUST 2007 £3.60

WIN  
A FIVE-STAR HOLIDAY  
IN THE CANARY ISLANDS



Where to stay



Left, Room 17 at The George, and the restaurant, which looks onto Rye's high street

**The weekender** The George in Rye

## Eye-catcher in Rye

**WHAT IS IT?** A classic coaching inn on Rye's high street, straight out of the pages of Trollope.

**BEHIND THE SCENES** Past guests include three royal Georges, but The George had become a hotel of the 'stained bath and frayed carpet' variety by the time Alex and Katie Clarke bought it in 2004. He has a background in hotel consultancy, she worked as a film props buyer; both have boundless enthusiasm for what has become the best new small hotel on the south coast. Paintings were cleaned, wooden beams sandblasted, Farrow & Ball charts consulted... and The George in Rye opened in late 2006, with 24 bedrooms, a restaurant and bar. Katie was in charge of the decor, mixing restored period pieces and locally hand-crafted furniture with 1950s Danish chairs, Neisha Crosland wallpaper, Richard Avedon's solarised Beatles portraits and a scattering of

vintage Penguin books. Everything is reassuringly to hand, be it the Tivoli radio by the bed or a pint of Gribble Bridge cider in the George Tap bar.

**EAT** Brazilian chef Rod Grossman, formerly of London's Moro restaurant, has taken to Rye with gusto, featuring Rye Bay plaice and impeccably tender Romney Marsh lamb for dinner, and English Channel potted shrimps and razor-clam *empanadilla* among the lunch offerings. A raclette and gruyere fondue starter was a gooey novelty best shared, and saffron ice cream with gingerbread deliciously tangy. Good to see several English wines, too, including a cordial-light Pinot Noir red from Sandhurst.

**SLEEP** Each room was individually 'set designed' by Katie and there's not a bad one to be had, although 19 is a little small. The best are: spacious blue-and-silver Room 1, which has its own entrance off the courtyard garden; the

attic-room 14, with its roll-top bath and views over Rye; and Room 8, which has windows either side and quirky, beach-scene toile wallpaper. Several bedrooms can be interconnected for families.

**WHO GOES THERE?** Visitors from across La Manche, Londoners in search of antiques and cream teas – and locals, who appreciate the fact the bar still feels like a pub.

**WHAT'S THERE TO DO?** For a bird's-eye view of Rye's cobbled streets climb to the top of St Mary's church tower. Nearby vineyards include Chapeldown and Sedlescombe; for more floral bouquets head to the gardens at Sissinghurst or Great Dixter. Classic-car hire can be arranged, and even a flying lesson at Lydd Aero Club.

**WE LIKE** The 'can do' ethos, rather than the 'do not' attitude of some traditional pub-hotels; you can have fresh milk brought to your room; they can do most wines by the glass; and you can get a drink in the bar anytime you like. The Georgian Ballroom, with its beautiful panels of handpainted silk wallpaper, will make you want to pop the question and get married here.

**WE DON'T LIKE** Low ceilings may catch out unwary sixfooters; stairs may trip up grandpa. The six contemporary rooms lack the character of the older ones.

**PRICE** Doubles from £125 B&B (with a £50 Saturday supplement for a single-night stay)

RICK JORDAN

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