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Weekend Retreat

Room at the Inn

With the advent of modern overnight accommodation at The Inn at Grinshill, there's even more reason to sample the mighty fine food and fascinating natural history on offer

AS HONEST NAMES GO, The Inn at Grinshill is up there with the day being long. What you see is what you get... and you're sure to love both. In the shadow of its namesake landmark – a prominent sandstone ridge 630ft above sea level – The Inn is a distinctive building to say the least. Its 18th-Century coach-house origins are clearly visible, but there've been developments in the 19th, 20th and now – with the creation of six bedrooms – the 21st centuries, creating a fascinating destination for a weekend break. So what can you expect?

Step inside and you'll find an interior of straightforward elegance. No fussy ostentation here. A restaurant and family room feature at either end of the ground floor of the building, with a bar and hall sited between them. You'll be offered a choice of where to sit to eat – from the swish, modern Grinshill and Garden Restaurant to the cosy Elephant & Castle Bar with log fire for cosy winter's days. And there's a choice of three menus, depending on your mood and tastes – one bistro style, one à la carte, plus a traditional pub food menu. There's also a special Sunday



Words and photography
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lunch choice. And here, it's back to that word 'honesty' again, as everything is prepared and plated in the nothing-to-hide kitchen that's open to the restaurant – rare for such a building, and a nice touch. And with the ability to mix and match from the ample menu listings, you soon learn that dining at The Inn is as flexible as it is mouth-watering.

While the variety of both food and drink might leave you taking some time to decide, that's not a problem. At The Inn, you'll not be rushed. In fact, book a table and it's yours for the evening, courtesy of the single-sitting stance taken by hosts Kevin and Victoria Brazier.

Not surprisingly, the popularity of Grinshill as a home to fine cuisine continues to grow and grow. But there's more to this place than a pie and a pint, a two-course treat or a three-course culinary triumph. For now, it offers accommodation too.



Dining

The Inn at Grinshill was a bar and restaurant first, and it remains a fine one at that. On busier weekend nights, the bar and hall areas are perfect for pre-dinner relaxation and are dominated by an impressive stone fireplace (quarried locally, no less) and piano, the ivories of which receive a tickling on Thursday and Friday nights from The Inn's very own pianist.

The Grinshill & Garden Restaurant is cleverly segmented and yet open plan. Private parties of various sizes can be indulged alongside other diners, all adding to the vibrant ambience.

Whether it's a wedding party or a birthday gathering, The Inn is synonymous with celebration, and once again the flexibility won't disappoint. There's no 'select from Menu A, B or C' business to wade through, for example. Owners Kevin and Victoria pride themselves on tailor-made food, themes and presentation.

Back to the future

That you can visit, dine, relax and now stay at The Inn is the icing on the cake of this quintessential weekend attraction, and if choosing to stay, you'll find

In warmer months, one whole side of the restaurant opens up to the garden, while the next stage of development of this hive of innovation will see an adjacent terrace, island bar, landscaping and external heating for the creation of an all-new 'outside room'.

Country & Border Life had...
Starter: Potato, leek and roast hazelnut soup
Mains: Shitake mushroom and spinach cakes with a lime mayonnaise and tossed leaf salad; pork loin, red onion and potato glazed in a marinade with too many ingredients to list!
Pudding: Sticky toffee roulade with chocolate sauce; coffee-scented crème caramel

Starters/light options from £4 to £10; main courses from £7 to £19.50; puddings from £4 to £7; wines from around £12. Open seven days a week.



THE INN AT GRINSHILL
High Street, Grinshill, nr Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 3BL
Tel: 01939 220410 • www.theinnatgrinshill.co.uk

Rates, rooms & hire

There's a choice of six rooms, decorated and equipped to the highest standard, all providing wired broadband access. Rates are £50 per person per night, based on two sharing (£75 per night for single occupancy), with a 10 percent discount for multiple nights.

There's a choice of breakfasts from full English and continental at £10

and £6 per person respectively, served at any time to suit after 8am. The Inn can cater for business and social meetings for up to 70 people and provide intimate wedding receptions for up to 60 guests. All special events can be tailored to suit both taste and budget, and customers are encouraged to meet and discuss specific requirements with the chef and management team.

the rooms bright, inviting, spacious and tasteful. What's more, they offer an incredible marriage of quaint tradition with technology. Take the mirror we freshened up in front of, for instance. At the touch of a button, an LCD television will melt into view through the glass... in an 18th Century coach house! And there's free broadband use, to boot, for those who pack their laptops.

The philosophy of the owners is that a hotel's decor can change whenever and however. And it certainly does that. But, of course, the four fundamental rules have to be in place first – namely floor insulation to mask the sound of activities downstairs, use of the highest quality beds and bed linen, individual or

modular heating controls and true power showers! And we're happy to report they're all in place at The Inn at Grinshill, which has grown from these very foundations.

Naturally, it's safe to say you'll receive a true warm welcome – be you a walker, a family, young or old. The service is comparable to the excellent cuisine, such that you won't want to go home. But when you must, affordable luxury will be the message you'll take with you. ➤



Activities



Rock of ages

Grinshill doesn't have attractions, it is an attraction! And one of special interest at that...

HEADING NORTH FROM

Shrewsbury on the A49 seems to be another of our themes for this issue. While the Dearnford Trout Fishery near Whitchurch (see page 61) may offer one cause for pointing the car in that direction, Grinshill is certainly another, if for no other reason than it's south face is by far its good side!

From the north, it has to be said, Grinshill doesn't look much. Shropshire may be thought of as a flat county by many, but sudden outcrops of countryside litter the area, from the Wrekin in the west, to the Stiperstones and the Long Mynd further south and the Llanymynech Rocks on the Border near Oswestry more north. But while the site of such a hill doesn't immediately arouse interest from those heading south, it positively transfixes passers by approaching from the Shrewsbury side.

Standing some 630ft above sea level, replete with a red-lit cherry of a beacon on top, it offers a magnificent take on natural history from the road, not to mention the train line running parallel to it a couple of miles to the west. From there, one can only imagine the vantage point it offers from its summit, and it's this asset which is largely responsible for the historic

connections Grinshill proudly boasts.

Views from here eons ago would've offered hunter-gatherers a great opportunity of tracking and locating would-be food, so it's perhaps not surprising – if doubtless thrilling – that Grinshill has played host to many a microlith haul, giving rise to proof of rare mesolithic and neolithic settlement in Shropshire.

Since the 1980s, dozens of flint microliths and flakes that would've been used for tools have been discovered here. Given there's precious little flint to be found anywhere else in the county, it can only point to human activity between 7,000 and 2,500BC which would've been responsible for bringing in tools and resources from other areas.

Roman reward

Perhaps the hill's greatest asset, however, is its very substance – sandstone. Such is its quality, the place has been quarried for centuries.

Nobody knows for sure who first realised the true worth of the stone, but we can be certain the Romans quarried here for the raw materials that were used in the construction of Viriconium



View from above: The Inn at Grinshill, as seen from the hill's woods



Quaint and quirky: The quiet High Street (above) comes complete with a strangely painted phonebox, while neighboring Clive has a spired church that's taller than you might expect for a tiny, quaint village



Left: A bridal path 'trough', very popular judging by the number of horseshoe prints!

Right: Village boundary markers of local sandstone were placed here in the year 2000 as denoted by the Roman numerals MM

Cornovium (Wroxeter), Shropshire's largest Roman site, 10 miles due south, just past Shrewsbury, and once the country's fourth-largest city.

The unique properties of the sandstone, which stem from exposure to the extreme heat caused by underground volcanic activity – clearly make it a desirable material for use in buildings. But aside from its buff colour – contrasting with the usual red sandstone of the area – Grinshill stone is also extremely durable and gives a sharp, straight side whichever way it's cut.

It's not just the Romans who favoured it however. When Tony Blair returned to No 10 Downing Street for his historic third term last month, he did so via a door surround made of Grinshill sandstone. The lintels of Number 10 are also made of Grinshill's finest, while the PM's private residence at Chequers and Aberystwyth University can also claim Grinshill sandstone in their construction. Aboard sailing ships, the sandstone was even exported to America and used in the construction of churches there.

These days, Grinshill Quarry is a geological Site of Special Scientific

Interest – thanks to the discovery of the likes of rhynchosaur fossils (an early amphibian). Some of the quarry workings are visible and penetrate breathtaking sheer depths into the hillside, while others are overgrown. But the hill is a popular spot with those looking for a gentle uphill walk on a sunny afternoon, with those rewarding views awaiting at the top. In fact Grinshill is a walker's paradise, with the northerly extension of The Shropshire Way passing through here. So take your dog!

The narrow lane that runs the length of Grinshill, meanwhile, is lined with quaint houses, while the village revels in a manicured, well-cared for air that betrays the prosperity of the little place. Overlooking the cricket field is the Jacobean Stone Grange, built in 1617 as a retreat for teachers and pupils from nearby Shrewsbury School and used widely whenever the plague struck town. And of course, amid the whole delight, is the oasis that is The Inn at Grinshill, where you can drink to our Stone Age ancestors, to the Romans and, if you've booked a room, to your heart's content! 🍷

