

10 country pubs Great food and walks

41 Beckford Arms Fonthill Gifford, Wiltshire

With eight stylish little rooms above a popular gourmet pub, the Beckford ticks a lot of boxes for a winter weekend. It's on the edge of a country estate, with plenty of nearby walks, and fires blaze in the lounge and the main bar awaiting those returning weary from a hike. The restaurant serves top-notch burgers for £12.50, plus mains such as Cornish plaice, roast trout and 42-day aged steak. Guy Ritchie, Geri Halliwell and Sting have visited. Rooms are well-priced.

Details B&B doubles are from £95 a night (01747 870385, beckfordarms.com)

42 The Rose and Crown Snettisham, Norfolk

Run by Anthony Goodrich, an ex-City banker, and his wife, Jeannette, this is a former *Good Pub Guide* pub of the year. It's in the quiet village of Snettisham, a short drive from the coast. Fires crackle in the bars, where locals and guests keep up a convivial hum of conversation. The 14th-century inn has gnarly old beams, low doorways and a pleasant dining room (try the excellent clam chowder). Rooms are decent-sized.

Details B&B doubles are from £120 a night (01485 541382, roseandcrownsnettisham.co.uk)

43 The Dalesman Sedbergh, Cumbria

This pub is in the charming village of Sedbergh, with its antiques shops and second-hand bookshops, by the Howgill Fells. The Dalesman is on the main street and is much favoured by walkers on the Dales Way from West Yorkshire (dalesway.org). The main bar has exposed stone walls, fireplaces and a natty tartan carpet. The chicken, ham and leek pie is popular (£13.95) or go for fish and chips (£14.95). Pints of Timothy Taylor bitter are available. Rooms are comfortable, with wide beds.

Details Doubles are from about £85 a night (01539 621183, thedalesman.co.uk)

44 The Wellington Arms Baughurst, Hampshire

Book early to grab one of the four much sought-after comfortable rooms at the Wellington, which is run by Simon Page (a former music teacher) and Jason King (a chef from Melbourne), in the village of Baughurst. The restaurant offers traditional English country food, such as roast partridge, roe deer braised with red wine, rack of lamb and game terrine of pheasant. There are good walks near by.

Details B&B doubles are from £100 (0118 982 0110, thewellingtonarms.com)



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45 Brown's Hotel Laugharne, Carmarthenshire

Round the corner from the Boathouse in Laugharne, where Dylan Thomas lived, this was the poet's favourite boozier. The Boathouse is now a museum and the dozen bright, contemporary rooms at Brown's, given a revamp a few years ago, make a perfect base for a visit. The bar at the "hotel", which is really more like a pub with rooms, has not changed much since Thomas's time; although black and white pictures of Thomas with his wife, Caitlin, now adorn the walls.

Details B&B doubles are from about £95 a night (01994 427688, browns-hotel.co.uk)

46 The Crab & Boar Chieveley, Berkshire

Some of the rooms here have hot tubs in private courtyard gardens — perfect for winter evenings. The rooms at the ancient inn have been done up with a ski-lodge feel: sheepskin and cowhide rugs, retro suede Seventies chairs and exposed wood floors. Seafood features heavily on the menu (fresh deliveries are brought daily), with dishes including oysters, lobster bisque, tandoori monkfish and lemon sole, as well as steaks. Oliver Cromwell is said to have stayed here.

Details B&B doubles are from about £110 (01635 247550, crabandboar.com)

47 Inn at John o' Groats Wick, Caithness

The Inn at John o' Groats is really more like a café/bar at John o' Groats, but its isolated, northerly location makes it an exciting place to visit in the winter, with ales on offer from Orkney and a decent selection of wine and malt whisky. Food consists of pizzas and soups. Rooms are modern, warm and comfortable. For those who prefer an old-style Scottish bar, it's a five-minute stroll to the jolly, down-to-earth Seaview Hotel.

Details Room-only doubles are from £92 a night (naturalretreats.com)

48 The Gurnard's Head Zennor, Cornwall

On Cornwall's Atlantic coast, the Gurnard's Head has a renowned restaurant serving dishes such as gurnard (naturally), accompanied by orange, squid and samphire, as well as rump of beef with cabbage, and crab



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with macaroni. It regularly wins foodie awards, and the cosy, atmospheric bar offers St Austell ales, and a wide choice of wines. Rooms are colourful and smart.

Details B&B doubles are from £115 (01736 796928, gurnardshead.co.uk)

49 Howard Arms Ilmington, Warwickshire

Perfect as a base for a winter walking weekend, or simply for flopping by the open fire in the lounge with a pint of Stratford Gold bitter, the Howard Arms in the quiet village of Ilmington has undergone a recent revamp. There are eight stylish and well-priced rooms. The main building dates from the late-16th century. Tasty burgers, haddock and chips, and steaks are offered.

Details B&B doubles are from £110 a night (01608 682226, howdarms.com)

50 Punch Bowl Inn & Restaurant Crosthwaite, Cumbria

Much loved by walkers, this inn is tucked away in Lyth Valley. The nine rooms are smart, with exposed beams and floral fabrics. The comfy bar, serving a good choice of ales, has sofas and a fireplace. Hearty dishes such as roast duck with cabbage, and Scottish cod with cider and leeks are offered.

Details B&B doubles are from about £105 a night (01539 568237, the-punchbowl.co.uk)

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