

MAY 2013

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MAGAZINE

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The secret of lasting friendships

Can you laugh at yourself?

'My mother saved me from her past'

SURVIVAL GUIDE

How students (and parents) can thrive at exam time

**MAXINE
PEAKE**

"Being quiet never got me anywhere"

20-PAGE SPECIAL

Trust yourself

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How being single feeds your soul

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WE DISCOVER A COUNTRY BOLTHOLE, PLUS THE FAR EAST'S UNSPOILT SPIRITUAL RETREATS AND INSPIRING TRAVEL BOOKS



GREAT ESCAPES

The Crown, Old Amersham, Buckinghamshire

Anyone who knows anything about hotel design will know the name Ilse Crawford – the woman behind the sumptuous but effortlessly cool interiors of the likes of Soho House. Her latest revamp may be in the entirely more salubrious Old Amersham (at the end of the Metropolitan line), but The Crown is pure Crawford. Our room was stylish and comfortable with a huge bed, warm grey walls and handmade blankets, with a retro Roberts radio providing a bright spot of colour. Upstairs was a spacious bathroom with rainforest shower and a freestanding rolltop bath – the perfect environment for washing away a hectic London life. Elsewhere, you get a sense of the inn's history from its oak beams, irregular floors and higgledy piggledy corridors. I could almost see the coach and horses drawing up in the cobbled courtyard.

Dinner in the excellent Chop House at the heart of the building was presented on pewter plates and wooden boards (charming, rather than naff). A drink in the bar beside the roaring open fire completed our cosy, relaxed evening. The next morning, our full English breakfast, comprised mostly of locally sourced ingredients, set us up for the trip home. The Crown is a great destination for weary Londoners – an elegant escape that will leave you revived, but handily, still inside the M25. *Rooms cost from £95 per night; visit thecrownamersham.com; 01494 721541*

MAIN REVIEW: VANESSA GRZYWACZ

MY SECRET ADDRESS BOOK

James Jayasundera, founder of Ampersand Travel (ampersandtravel.com) shares his favourite places for spiritual renewal

1 Ahilya Fort, Maheshwar, India. This palace hotel is a non-commercial gem steeped in character, perched high above the River Narmada. It has been perfectly restored, with pale old stone floors, ancient shuttered doors, carved arches and unusual bathrooms. An extremely romantic and unique place to spend a few nights.

2 Kahanda Kanda, Galle, Sri Lanka. This is one of Sri Lanka's most sophisticated boutique hotels, with just eight pavilion suites, the Living Pavilion bar and a great restaurant. Awake to views of rainforest, marshlands, and tea fields – and it's just 15 minutes by tuk-tuk to the beach.

3 Surya Shanti, Bali. Surya Shanti (right) is an hour from Ubud if shopping is your thing, but surrounded by rice terraces, volcano views from every angle and dramatic valley views down to the sea.



IN OUR SUITCASE

◀ Whether you're braving the British weather this year or planning an escape to the sun, this Celia Lindsell canvas bag, with sturdy handles and zipped internal pockets, is just the thing for lounging around on the beach, £39.95 (notmassproduced.com).



AND FINALLY

When we want to escape from it all, we really want to escape from it all. That's why we're packing a copy of Siobhan Wall's new book *Quiet Paris* (Frances Lincoln, £12.99), for our next hop across the channel. As with the other books in the series, *Quiet London* and *Quiet Amsterdam*, it's full of little-known havens to make your break even more relaxing.