



The perfect Cotswolds bolthole

Cirencester is the Cotswolds' best-kept secret, and the Kings Head, its crown jewel. It's the ideal base for a weekend of exploring.

THE KINGS HEAD

Cotswolds

Why you'll love it

Cirencester took me completely by surprise: a town with 2,000 years of history, superb independent shops and barely a chain store in sight – and, right at the centre of it all, The Kings Head on the historic Market Place.

Step inside

A coaching inn since the 14th century, The Kings Head has been reimagined as a 64-room hotel with a stylish all-day brasserie, a bar full of cosy nooks and a spa nestled in the vaulted cellars below. Its position on the Market Place is, frankly, unbeatable – the shops,



Pop in for a pudding

restaurants and attractions of Cirencester are all on your doorstep and everything the town has to offer is within easy strolling distance. Our junior suite was enormous: high ceilings, sash windows and a sweeping view over the Market Place towards the magnificent medieval Church of St John the Baptist, with a glorious roll-top bath, luxury Bramley products and a plate of homemade cookies we didn't ignore for long.

Out and about

The Corn Hall Arcade next door leads through to the historic Corn Hall, with regular markets and exhibitions throughout the week. While you're there, do not pass the Corn Hall Deli without going in – the cannoli are, quite simply, the



The bar is all woody and warmly inviting

best I've ever tasted, and the staff are warm and knowledgeable. The Coxwell Street area is full of pretty residential lanes and Georgian architecture, and the Corinium Museum (Cirencester was the second largest Roman city in Britain) is worth an hour or two.

A Roman afternoon

One afternoon, we drove out to the National Trust's Chedworth Roman Villa, set in countryside so lush it could have been lifted from a Peter Jackson film set. The mosaics alone are worth the trip: vivid, intricate and remarkably well-preserved.

Foodie rating

Dinner in The Kings Head Brasserie was a proper highlight. Scallops with pea purée and mango salsa made a beautifully balanced opener; the fish and king prawn pie with lobster bisque and Tenderstem broccoli was delicious; the pear mousse with compote and macerated strawberries a perfectly judged finish. Head chef Mathew Peter's menus draw on the best locally sourced Cotswolds produce, and it shows.

The garden breakfast – poached eggs, rosemary and beetroot hummus, avocado, pea shoots, field mushroom, gremolata-marinated grilled tomato, pickled red onions, crispy potato rösti and sourdough toast – is the kind of plate that makes you feel both virtuous and thoroughly indulged. My husband ordered the full works and my daughter the pancakes. The table

'Menus draw on the best locally sourced produce, and it shows'



Roots + Seeds nearby is worth a visit

Sunday lunch at Roots + Seeds

On Sunday we made the short trip to Roots + Seeds Kitchen Garden, a sustainably minded restaurant and café in the beautiful grounds of Cirencester Park. The Sunday roast more than delivered – Cotswold chicken breast with banana shallot and baby gem, served with creamed leeks, braised red cabbage, a proper Yorkshire pudding, gravy and roast potatoes. Book a table: it's not one to miss. rootsandseedskitchengarden.co.uk



Homegrown, seasonal food at Roots + Seeds

fell quiet for several minutes, which over a meal in our house is the highest possible praise.

Good to know

The Kings Head makes an ideal base for the wider Cotswolds. Bibury, Barnsley, Burford and Painswick are all within easy reach, with Cheltenham and Stroud close by for a change of pace. For those travelling from London, it's an hour and 40 minutes by car, or one hour 15 minutes by train from Paddington to Kemble, the nearest station, with taxis and a regular bus service available.

Book now

Doubles at The Kings Head from £120 per night B&B; 32 dog-friendly rooms are available. For menus, availability and bookings, visit kingsheadcotswold.co.uk.