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## A tiny piece of old England with a big appeal: Exploring the quaint cobbled streets, hidden lanes and tile hung buildings of Petworth

- Petworth is a quintessentially English market town nestling in the heart of the South Downs National Park
- It is home to Ryde House, a Grade II-listed three-bedroom Georgian Villa that has recently been refurbished
- The holiday rental is close to the Angel Inn, which serves hearty breakfasts as well as lunch and dinner

Unlocking a discreet door in a wall was quite a cool way to enter our home from home on a weekend in Petworth, a quintessentially English market town nestling in the heart of the South Downs National Park.

We were blessed with good weather, which admittedly always puts a sunny glow on proceedings, but Ryde House, - a generously proportioned Grade II newly refurbished three-bed Georgian Villa - is the sort of upmarket residence that during cold spells would be equally pleasant, as it lends itself to cosy fires in the drawing room and lavish cook-ins courtesy of the vast cream enamel gas-fired range in the well-appointed kitchen.

All mod-cons such as large flat-screen TV's, Wi-Fi, coffee machines and tumble-driers are complemented by high ceilings, sumptuous heavy full-length window-drapes in golden silks, antique rugs and linen upholstered sofas that make it almost disappointing not to light the inviting log-burner.



The quintessentially English market town of Petworth, with its narrow lanes and cobble streets, nestles in the heart of the South Downs National Park

There is even a comfy looking dog bed in the equally well-appointed boot room. We brought our two student sons instead - a dog may have been easier and definitely cheaper to feed!

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Fortunately for those who don't fancy dirtying the pristine cooker or dishwasher the Angel Inn is a minute's walk outside our pretty walled courtyard and serves a fabulous breakfast with portions that satisfied even our off-spring. Lunch and dinner are pretty good, too. The inn, with six beautifully renovated rooms, has medieval origins, reflected in original beams, fireplaces and quirky passageways.

Charming, attentive manager Marc Gray presides over an establishment where pub classics are beautifully done and locally sourced streak and beer-battered haddock along with triple cooked chips, are supplemented by dishes with a modern twist such as the delicious pulled pork hash and richly satisfying chocolate crème brulee.

Difficult though it was to tear ourselves from the Angel, Petworth is a foodie paradise. Cooked breakfasts and sour-dough pizzas at the delightful Hungry Guest Café left even our two boys totally satiated, while the wonderful Hungry Guest gourmet food shop was great for coffee on-the-go, divine pastries and checking out the bakery, cheese room and shelves heaving with everything in between, from organic gins to marinated olives.



One of the rooms at Ryde House - a generously proportioned Grade II newly refurbished three bed Georgian Villa in Petworth

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All mod-cons can be found in Ryde House, such as large flat-screen TV's, Wi-Fi, coffee machines and tumble-driers

An hour's drive from London, the heart of Petworth, with its narrow cobbled streets, hidden lanes and tile hung buildings could be ambled around in half an hour, were it not for its enticing hub of independent businesses including marvellous tea shops, the Artful Tease, which makes its own artisan toiletries, and a myriad of antique, gift and curio shops, all of which make it easy to spend hours browsing or indulging in some serious retail therapy.

Then there is the sumptuous Augustus Brandt interiors and antiques showroom and gallery, occupying a large Georgian villa and coach house with a sister homewares and gift shop in the main square.

Determined to work up an appetite for dinner we took the scenic route to view the jewel in the crown of this lovely little town – Petworth House and Park, a vast 17th-century National Trust stately home.

Grabbing an Ordnance Survey map from the bookshelf at Ryde House, we made our way to a public footpath a few yards on from the Angel Inn and the view stopped us in our tracks.

The path opened out into the wide, luxuriant bowl of the stunning Shimmings Valley. We traversed the patchwork of green, all blissfully downhill, through kissing gates and over a few stiles, until we reached the road leading to Petworth Park.

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The jewel in the crown of Petworth is Petworth House and Park, pictured, a vast 17th-century National Trust stately home

We missed the last admission into the House, but were allowed into the beautiful 700-acre park, with hills, woods and a serpentine lake that appear to have been formed naturally, but were actually created by famed landscape designer Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1750's.

The sun was low in the sky lending a golden glow to the palatial house and we had the whole park to ourselves. It was a wrench to leave, but dinner was calling. Exiting via a discreet little tunnel cut into the grounds we made our way back to town. There was just time for a relaxing bath and a Nespresso back at Ryde House before dinner at The New Street Bar and Grill.

Opened in April this year the décor is warm and inviting, with dark wood floors, velvet upholstery and leather curved banquettes. The focus is on pure ingredients cooked simply to a high standard using locally sourced meat and game, as well as seafood and fish. The Goodwood steak – traditionally raised beef fed on seaweed during the winter – went down a storm, complemented perfectly by triple-cooked chips and creamed spinach.

Desserts including a very posh baked Alaska were equally well done and the modern bar offers a fantastic selections of spirits and wines by the glass or bottle as well as cocktails and a selection of small plates ideal for sharing informally.

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**The Nyetimber estate, the South Downs home of award-winning English sparkling wines, which has won a string of top awards**

There are rooms upstairs that can be hired for private events but on a recent visit the singer Adele and her friend, Hollywood actress Cameron Diaz, preferred to 'slum it', enjoying lunch in the main restaurant. Apparently no one gawked at them and the pair, 'were lovely, very low-key and normal', according to the discreet and efficient staff.

The weekend flew by, but the blow of leaving was softened by a visit to the nearby acclaimed Nyetimber estate, the South Downs home of award-winning English sparkling wines. Since 2006 owner Eric Heerema has focused his uncompromising attention to detail on the 'pursuit of perfection'.

Using only estate-grown grapes and their own state-of-the-art pressing centre allows complete control over the wine-making process from vine to bottle resulting in Global acclaim for Nyetimber, a string of awards and an appearance on the 'Champagne' list of every top eaterie in the country.

We raised a glass of the finest English fizz to our weekend at Petworth, a small piece of old England with a big appeal.

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