

The cool hotel guide Grays, Bath

Take the south exit from Bath Spa train station, cross a little footbridge over the River Avon (muddy, swirling and swelling on my visit), walk for ten minutes up a hill past neat rows of Bath-stone houses and you'll arrive at Grays. In a Victorian railway-master's house — which began offering rooms under new owners last October — it is an oasis of subdued, minimalist style, with whitewashed walls mixed with grey, sisal carpets, oriental vases and crystal chandeliers.

In a nutshell

This could be a template for how modern British B&Bs ought to be run. It's well designed (it could be straight out of the pages of an interior design mag), homely and friendly, comfortable (with wide beds and lots of space) and has rates that are more than fair.

What are the rooms like?

They are excellent. There are a dozen in total, half of which have views down the hill and across Bath to its famous Royal Crescent (rooms two, three, five, six, 11



Room 2, with a view of Bath's Royal Crescent

and 12). It's definitely worth trying for one with the view, although all are of a high standard. As well as the big beds, there are decent-sized bathrooms with limestone surfaces and posh REN products. Shelves in the wardrobes have kettles and selections of teas, plus complimentary Kit Kats. "Classic doubles" start at £100 B&B, but it's a good idea to pay a little extra for a "standard king" (from £130 B&B). Of these, room five stands out.

Which is the best room?

Room number six is on the first floor and has a four-poster and large bay windows overlooking the city (from £175 B&B). Or try room two or room four — the pick of the rest. For a hideaway with a super-king sized-bed in the attic, go for room 12 (from £140 B&B).

So what's the food like?

There are no evening meals, but the breakfasts are first-rate — many five-star



Grays (01225 403020, graysbath.co.uk), 9 Upper Oldfield Park, Bath BA2 3JX; B&B doubles from £100; single guests get a £20 discount; no wheelchair-access rooms.

hotels could learn a thing or two from Grays. As well as full English breakfasts, you can opt for eggs benedict, florentine or royale, eggs on toast (any way you like them), smoked salmon and scrambled eggs, or the vegetarian option: a choice of eggs with halloumi, tomatoes, spinach, mushrooms and a potato scone. The orange juice is fresh, as is the coffee; served by Anel, wife of the manager Jamie, who is the nephew of the owners Michael and Sarah Jones (who also run Brindleys, a bijoux six-room B&B on the other side of Bath). After fresh fruit and muesli, my eggs royale was perfect.

Who goes there?

Canny weekend breakers.

What else is there to do?

For an evening meal, it's a five-minute stroll up the hill to the popular Menu Gordon Jones restaurant (menugordonjones.co.uk), which has an avant-garde menu from a chef who trained at a Michelin-starred restaurant; £50 for six courses, but you must book ahead. The next-door pub-like The Bear (bearbath.co.uk) has burgers, £11.

The highs, the lows, the verdict

Nine and a half out of ten
We highly recommend this B&B. The only gripe was a noisy, prolonged extractor fan in the bathroom.

Tom Chesshyre

Do you agree?

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