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TRAVEL // CULTURE // ADVENTURE **ESCAPE**

# It's all in the best possible taste

## VICTORIA SMITH FALLS FOR THE SLICK STYLE AND FABULOUS FOOD OF THE CHARMING TALBOT IN YORKSHIRE

I've only been at The Talbot for half an hour and I'm already in love with the bathroom. I mean, there are bucolic surroundings and then there's languishing in a roll-top bath while gazing out at grazing horses and bunnies hopping across a meadow just feet from your room.

As I recline into the bubbles, peak rural-retreat mode activated, I wonder if swapping city life for an existence here in the pretty market town of Malton, North Yorkshire, could actually be viable and make a mental note to sound out my boyfriend, who's waiting for me under the wooden-beamed ceiling of The Talbot's bar downstairs.

This 17th-century riverside coaching inn has seen a recent refurbishment at the hands of owner Tom Naylor-Leyland, and Sam and Georgie Pearman of boutique Cotswolds hotel group The Lucky Onion. Weekend retreats don't get much more gorgeous than this: fires roar, antlers hang on inky blue walls, chairs are elegantly mismatched and a mix of antiques and rustic furniture

come together in a stylish display of good taste and good times - despite a chilled atmosphere, there's a fun buzz in the air here.

We settle at the bar with two spot-on Cosmopolitans and watch as the open fire casts a light over a wood-panelled wall from which hang several stuffed game birds in glass cases. It's incredibly atmospheric and encourages us to linger longer, pouring port from a crystal decanter with a label reading 'help yourself'.

Back in our huge room it's all about the four-poster bed, painted a deep turquoise to add a modern colour pop to the otherwise classic decor, and a sumptuous velvet sofa where you can browse your complimentary Vogue with some home-made shortbread or a glass of champagne in hand.

We're charmed by the box of macarons we find on our sideboard and discover they're from a bakery in Talbot Yard opposite the hotel. Once the stables where The Talbot's patrons would leave their coaches and horses,



this little square is now home to local businesses, including a butcher and gin distillery.

**USP:** The food. Malton bills itself as Yorkshire's 'food capital' so it figures that eating and drinking is central to everything here. There's an emphasis on all things locally sourced and the menu in the hotel's pistachio-hued destination restaurant reads like a roll call of the county's finest fare: Yorkshire lamb, Yorkshire beef, Yorkshire cheese... you get the idea. Breakfast is also stellar: home-made crumpets with a small silver jug of maple syrup steal the show.

**Who goes there?** Foodie tourists, dog walkers and local families by day, dressed-up couples and smart 'special occasion' groups at night.

**Venture out:** You're a 20-minute drive away from the cobbled streets of York and to not spend a day exploring its boutiques and bars would seem remiss. Also close by are the North York Moors, while for those seeking sea air, Scarborough and Whitby are both a short drive away and brimming with northern coastal charm by the bucket-and-spade-load.

Rooms at The Talbot start at £110pn, [talbotmalton.co.uk](http://talbotmalton.co.uk)

**BOLT HOLE**