

Those elusive 'perfect pubs'

townie's guide to a country weekend

JESSICA FELLOWES



YOU'RE a townie. You don't go to sleep at night counting sheep, but stops on the Northern Line.

Your hands weren't made for digging up spuds, but for hailing taxis. I'm with you.

But occasionally, the urge



RED HOT | The Lamb

to breathe the clean air becomes all-consuming and you dream of green and pleasant lands.

Let's take the most common fantasy: You wake up on a grim and dull London day and the nearest you are to a log fire is the pile of last week's papers by the kitchen bin.

You want rolling hills, roaring hearths, deep glasses of

rich red wine and roast lamb just like your mum made it.

So you turn to your partner and say: "Why don't we find a lovely country pub?"

You imagine driving for an hour or so, through leafy, sun-dappled roads, before chancing a left turn and being greeted by a chocolate-box cottage, with smoke wafting out of the chimney.

Inside, a jolly landlord greets you, a bottle of claret open on the bar and a foaming pint of bitter at his elbow, as he nods towards the armchairs by the glowing fire.

Reality is always different. You find yourself screaming at the sat nav as you miss yet another junction of the M3, and the only pubs you can see have "coaches catered for" signs outside.

You have the choice of a Harvester or a pub overrun by spotty teenagers with New York ghetto rap on a loop. The only food served is a soggy egg sandwich.

But don't despair. Idyllic pubs do exist, just need to



RURAL IDYLL | The Lamb at Hindon is set in a beautiful location, boasts antique paintings, and has that all-important log fire

know where they are. More chefs realise going "gastro" can be as effective in the countryside as in London.

For something that won't murder your wallet, you need to rely on a little planning and recommendations.

Blindly heading for the hills will get you nowhere. Ask around, look in a guide book and check out our fact box.

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WHERE TO FIND A LOG FIRE

The Lamb Inn Hindon, Wiltshire (01747 820573)

Dark red walls, antique paintings and a whisky and cigar bar good enough for Castro

The Griffin Inn Fletching, near Uckfield, East Sussex (01825 722890)

This is a 400-year-old inn situated in picturesque surroundings with pies, lamb shanks and bread and butter pudding on the menu

The Falkland Arms Great Tew, Oxfordshire (01608 683653)

A 16th-century cottage pub with a flagstone floor

The Museum Inn Farnham, near Blandford Forum, Dorset (01267 516261)

Sophisticated food in 17th-century pub surroundings

The Star Inn Harome, near Helmsley, North

Yorkshire (01439 770397)
A trek from London, but worth it. Very traditional, with thatched roof. Won Egon Ronay's Gastro-pub of the Year award this year.
www.thestaratharome.co.uk

