



**The oldest hotel in England, located in Malmesbury, the country's first capital**



*The entrance to The Old Bell Hotel; a guest room*

The Old Bell Hotel, a picturesque wisteria-clad Grade I listed building with mullioned windows that dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, sits in the heart of the historic town of Malmesbury, which provides the perfect base to explore the lesser-known south Cotswolds and the beautiful city of Bath.

Believed to be England's oldest hotel, having opened its doors in 1220, The Old Bell Hotel has since expanded and now has stylish interiors thanks to a complete refurbishment in 2021. Interior designer Charlotte Smiley helped owner Kim Hanks realise her vision for the hotel, which features luxurious, locally created elements throughout (such as wallpapers from acclaimed British designers Lewis & Wood in Stroud and Rapture & Wright in Moreton-in-Marsh) and rooms decorated in a fun and unstuffy way, using an eclectic mix of colours, with finishing touches provided by the travel finds and antique furniture sourced by the hotel's owners.

The property has 34 bedrooms, ranging from Singles to Masters, with views of either Malmesbury Abbey, cute Cotswold stone houses or the rolling Wiltshire countryside. Each room has cosy bathrobes, Dyson hairdryers (Dyson is the largest employer in Malmesbury) and toiletries from Bramley (also Wiltshire-based). There are plenty of personal touches too, including a welcome plate of melt in your mouth shortbread baked in-house and a useful list of 20 things to do within 20 miles of the hotel. Dog-friendly rooms are also available on request.

Additionally, there are four cosy, stylish townhouse suites within a few minutes' walk of The Old Bell Hotel. All have been recently renovated to a high standard and offer the flexibility of self-catering facilities with access to all the amenities of the hotel. Each of the suites accommodates between two and five guests, and all welcome dogs.

Executive chef Daniel Kerr oversees the restaurant Abbey Row, casual indoor-outdoor space The Tyger Bar, and the lounge areas where traditional afternoon tea is served daily. Abbey Row, with its 2 AA

Rosettes and an AA Breakfast Award, serves the finest British modern cuisine, with both a Chef's menu and a la carte options. Wherever possible, Daniel uses seasonal ingredients sourced from the gardens of sister property Abbey House Manor, and the Southwest of England.



*The Tyger Bar; one of the lounges*

The Tyger Bar, an airy uplifting space with glass walls that are removed in summer, is the perfect spot to enjoy small plates, sharing boards and classic British dishes, alongside expertly mixed cocktails. Like so much of The Old Bell Hotel, The Tyger Bar nods to the history of Malmesbury, being named after the travelling circus tiger that is said to have killed barmaid Hannah Twynnoy in 1703.

The lounges, with their open log fires and outdoor seating areas with views of Malmesbury Abbey, are an extremely popular spot to enjoy a quintessentially English afternoon tea. The menu changes with the seasons, in addition to which themed teas reflect major events throughout the year, such as Valentine's and Wimbledon. However, for the ultimate afternoon tea experience, guests can book the folly known as The Belvedere in the hotel's gardens, to enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding area.

There is also a small cosy room off the lounges, known as the 1220 bar (because it is home to a hooded stone fireplace dating to 1220). This is the ideal place to sip on an aperitif or enjoy a digestif before and after dining in Abbey Row.

For meetings and events, The Garden Room, a light-filled space, created with Cotswolds stone and with views over the gardens, accommodates 120 guests for a cocktail reception and up to 100 seated (theatre style). The Library, a much more intimate room, seats up to 16 people boardroom style and up to 18 guests for a private dinner.

For those planning a celebration, it is possible to hire The Old Bell Hotel on an exclusive usage package.

The gardens of sister property Abbey Manor House are open to The Old Bell Hotel guests for private tours.

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### **Fast Facts**

- ◆ 34 bedrooms & 4 townhouse suites with self-catering options
- ◆ 4 dining & drinking experiences
- ◆ 2 flexible event spaces accommodating from 4 to 120 people



- ◆ Rates start from £140 per night, for two sharing a double room on a B&B basis
- ◆ Book online at <https://www.ldbells.co.uk/>

### History of The Old Bell Hotel

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|-------------|---|
| 800BC       | Massive fort constructed on the site where The Old Bell Hotel is now located  |
| Circa 650AD | Irish missionary founded a monastery on the site of the fort  |
| 924AD       | Athelstan became the first King of England, named Malmesbury his capital and loved the town so much, he chose to be buried in the Abbey   |
| 1140AD      | A castle replaced the fort where The Old Bell Hotel stands today; a few of the former castle remains in the form of extremely thick walls and a Norman arch                         |
| 1216AD      | The monks bought the castle, demolished it, and erected an Abbey guest house – hospitality has been offered here ever since, making it, it is believed, the oldest hotel in England |
| 1649AD      | Sir John Danvers, MP for Malmesbury, who signed the Death Warrant of King Charles I, briefly owned The Old Bell Hotel in the 1640s  |
| 1798AD      | Originally known as 'The Castle House', the building was officially named The Old Bell Hotel  |
| 2021AD      | The Old Bell Hotel was bought by Whim Hospitality   |

### The Owners

Whim Hospitality operates The Old Bell Hotel and sister property Camp Lucy in Texas, USA.



Co-founder and Chief Creative Officer of Whim Hospitality, Kim Hanks, has grown her business from a small rental company in Dripping Springs, Texas to one of the largest and fastest growing female-led businesses in the US. The diverse and ever-growing range of services has put the business on the Austin Business Journal's Fast 50 and the Inc. 5000 list for four-consecutive years. Under Kim's leadership, Whim Hospitality has won local and national awards for its quality of service. In addition to being named one of the top women business leaders in Central Texas by the Austin Business Journal, Kim was honoured with one of their Best CEO Awards in 2017 and titled as an Austin Change Maker in 2024.

Kim's husband Whit Hanks founded a successful antiques business, specialising in architectural and international antiques in the mid-1980s while also working as real estate developer in the Central Texas region. He began acquiring property in the Dripping Springs area in 1985 and started developing Camp Lucy in 2008; he co-founded Whim Hospitality with Kim in 2012. Whit's sharp eye for beautiful heritage pieces has helped create the unique setting of the Camp Lucy resort and established Whim Hospitality as one of the premier event services providers in the US. In addition to his responsibilities

at Whim and Camp Lucy, Whit has served on both the Historic Preservation Commission and Economic Development Committee for the City of Dripping Springs.

Before purchasing The Old Bell Hotel, Kim and Whit were regular visitors to the town which is the Hanks family ancestral home. Pioneering Malmesbury industrialist Walter Hanks operated a mill on the River Avon below The Old Bell Hotel in the late 1100s. After Kim and Whit purchased The Old Bell Hotel, historic title deeds revealed that distant relatives of Whit's had owned part of the hotel more than 150 years earlier. Kim and Whit also own the Abbey House Manor, just a five-minute walk from the hotel. Exclusive tours of these world-famous gardens are available upon request.

Interestingly, Malmesbury has some strong American connections. William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, and the mother of the 16<sup>th</sup> US President, Abraham Lincoln, both came from the town.

## **CONTACTS**

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Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/oldbell\\_hotel/](https://www.instagram.com/oldbell_hotel/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheOldBellHotel/>

## **LOCATION**

Malmesbury is just 10 minutes from the M4 (J17), making it a two-hour drive from central London, and less than 40 minutes from both Bristol and Bath. The nearest rail station, just a 20-minute drive away, is Chippenham, from where there are direct trains to London Paddington taking just over an hour.

## **MALMESBURY**

Malmesbury is a vibrant and attractive market town, built on a rocky outcrop, with great vantage points over the surrounding countryside.

Right next door to the hotel, the stunning 12th Century Abbey (which once had the highest spire in Europe before it collapsed around 1500) is a must in order to see the tomb of King Athelstan, the first King of England and the Patron King of Malmesbury, which lies inside and also King Henry VII's coat of arms. The Athelstan Museum is worth a visit too, as it houses a JMW Turner watercolour of Malmesbury Abbey.

The charming High Street has many unique, independent shops (selling clothes, books, toys, gifts, and art supplies to name a few) to browse and there are lovely walks along the two beautiful River Avons that merge at Malmesbury (map provided at hotel reception). There are also plenty of pubs, restaurants, and cafes to drop in for a coffee, drink, or bite to eat.

Throughout the year, Malmesbury is home to many music, history and arts event & festivals listed on [www.discovermalmesbury.life](http://www.discovermalmesbury.life) or in the Tourist Information Centre. No wonder Malmesbury was recently voted the best place to live in Wiltshire.

## **SURROUNDING AREA**

Malmesbury lies in the lesser-known South Cotswolds, where there is plenty to explore.

*To the West (all within 15 minutes)*

Westonbirt, The National Arboretum – perfect for dog walks, as well as a Treetop Walk 13 metres above ground

Highgrove Gardens – the gardens of King Charles III's private country home are open to the public, entry tickets must be purchased in advance

Tetbury – a pretty market town close to Highbury with great shopping opportunities especially for antique hunters

*To the North (both within 40 minutes)*

Cirencester – the Capital of the Cotswolds was founded by the Romans and has one of the largest collections of Romano-British antiquities, several stunning mosaics, and the best-preserved Roman amphitheatre in Britain

Bibury – home to one of the most photographed streets in the Cotswolds, Bibury Row

*To the East (both within 25 minutes)*

Cotswold Water Park – the place to go for lake swimming and SUP

Cotswold Sculpture Park – displays the work of 170 pieces of work by local and international artists

*To the South (both within 45 minutes)*

Lacock – this National Trust property is perfect for a bit of set-jetting; its picturesque streets and historic cottages, untouched by modern alterations, have been the backdrop to Harry Potter, Downtown Abbey, Pride & Prejudice and many other period series

Bath – widely known for its hot springs and rich history as well as being a fashionable, elegant spa town with stunning Georgian architecture