

100BoutiqueHotels

100 boutique hotels for under £100 a night

You don't have to spend a fortune to stay somewhere fab. Here are 100 chic but cheap hotels and B&Bs all over the world, starting with Sally Shalam's UK choices

1 Chalk and Cheese, Shouldham Norfolk

The hunt for affordable yet stylish accommodation can be a toughie, especially in Britain, where we don't enjoy the reduced VAT that many EU countries apply to tourism businesses. My hunt for chic stays that don't dent the bank balance too much begins in rural west Norfolk.

Shouldham village green is bathed in sunlight when I arrive, turning through a stone gateway to park between flowerbeds and a couple of smart wooden sheds. Farm Shop, Gallery, and Open, say painted signs. Across the car park is a Victorian schoolhouse, and in front of that is another sign, with an arrow in felt-tip pen, and the word Bar.

This is Chalk and Cheese, creation of Bridget and Andrew Archibald. Here's Andrew, in stripy apron, at the schoolhouse door. Inside, stained glass separates the hall from the kitchen (ooh, a woodfired oven). We cross what was once two classrooms but now resembles a village hall. On the day of an antiques fair.

Vintage lovers, prepare to be dazzled. Minimalists, look away. The bar is at one end, with stairs to a mezzanine and two bedrooms at the other. Between are seating and eating areas and a cornucopia of collectibles. Noting them is like being on the Generation Game. Marble bust. William Morris wallpaper. Victorian fire screen. Rock Hudson picture. Stuffed bird. Tiffany lamp. Stained-glass screen. Indian wallhanging. Carriage clock. Oh, and a cuddly toy.

Upstairs, my room is surprisingly calming, uncluttered and light. The bathroom has a slipper bath and



shower. Communal tea and coffee things are on the landing. Fine, I think, at budget level, but if leaving your room is essential, so is a bathrobe.

Noting Elgood's Golden Newt, Woodford Wherry and Adnams on the bar pumps, I wander outside just as Bridget pulls up in a van. Guess what? It's crammed. For the shop, she explains, and unloads a French horn. No, that's hers - it's practice tonight.

I almost mistake folk drifting across the car park for mums and dads at

parents' evening. In the bar I sip dry white and try not to make a mess shelling monkey nuts. Dismissing anything on the lengthy menu not from the woodfired oven, I order garlic bread and an £8.95 pizza margherita. Mmm, both are light, crisp, hot, delicious, though fresh not dried basil would have been perfection. Ginger sponge with collapsing rhubarb transports me back to school dinners.

Not keen on Tupperware at breakfast next day, in a sun-filled orangery off the main hall. How great, though, that I can buy more of these delicious eggs and sausages at the farm shop. Now I get it. Chalk represents school, cheese the produce. They also stand for great fun, and welcome defiance in a world of boring chains. I know what I'd put on a school report. "Keep up the good work."

01366 348039, bed-and-breakfast-west-norfolk.co.uk. Doubles from £70 B&B

2 The Elmfield Ilfrcombe

You can dress up a hotel with antiques and swaggery, but if everyone's whispering, who's having a good time? At the Elmfield, kids are laughing in the garden or summer house, teenagers are eating popcorn on big sofas, watching a movie... and later on, when the baby-listening devices have been set, grownups are chattering in the bar. Parents can relax at this family-friendly hotel. Of course, it's quieter in term-time, and then you'll stand a good chance of getting a bit of peace for an early morning swim in the indoor pool.

01271 863 377, theelmfield.com. Doubles from £65

3 Base2Stay Liverpool

This hotel does what it says on the tin. Within moments, you can hit Harvey Nichols Beauty Bazaar, or fashion bastion Cricket in the Cavern Quarter, or even (wearing flats, mind)



The Elmfield, Ilfrcombe



base2stay, Liverpool



Russell's, London

7 Cathedral Quarter Derby

With its heart-of-the-city location, in the historic cathedral district, this hotel tends to be busy midweek, with bargains at weekends. The building used to be magistrates' chambers, and one cannot help feeling slightly awestruck at the baroque grandeur of the marble and alabaster lobby. A former cell in the basement has been turned into a spa steam room, there is a cocktail bar on the ground floor, and the first-floor restaurant is in yet more opulent surroundings, with oak panelling and ornate plasterwork.

01332 546080, thefinessecollection.com. Doubles from £65 B&B

8 Bloc Birmingham

I have a fondness for this 73-room hotel (with one step-free accessible room on each floor). Who would have thought a modern, no-frills enterprise in a regenerating (but, blissfully, not completely gentrified) area of Brum would grab such attention when it opened in 2011? It did so because it was unorthodox: inspired by Japanese capsule hotels, the rooms were manufactured off-site then stacked in situ, with the hotel's exterior shell constructed around them. I love the smoked-glass shower rooms, but not the vending machine refreshments.

0121 212 1223, bloc-hotels.com. Doubles from £45

9 Big Sleep Cheltenham

There's always something on here - races, or any number of crowd-pulling festivals - and finding an affordable bed amid Cheltenham's Regency elegance is not easy. The Big Sleep is created from former Inland Revenue offices, and decor is largely monochrome. Still, there are rooms to suit everyone, from groups of twentysomethings to young families, or racegoers requiring disabled access. Continental breakfast is served in the ground-floor cafe.

01242 696999, thebigsleephotel.com. Doubles from £55

10 Yotel Gatwick airport

When Yotel launched at Gatwick in summer 2007, it was the first hotel to open within a UK airport terminal. No shuttle buses, no faffing. Not an obvious choice, perhaps, for inclusion in a boutique hotel selection, but the brand is so cool, it is an experience in its own right. Pod-like rooms have been modelled on first-class aeroplane cabins, with a techno-wall screen from which to order food and create a personalised music playlist. Heathrow, Amsterdam Schiphol and Yotel in midtown Manhattan have subsequently opened.

020-7100 1100, yotel.com. Doubles from £80



Berkeley Square Hotel, Bristol

11 Blue Lion Inn East Witton, North Yorkshire

This North Yorkshire institution has 15 contemporary bedrooms, some in converted stables. While most cheap-and-chic hotels are busy omitting creature comforts to keep costs down, the Blue Lion delivers a comfortable stay with frills - a cracking breakfast, for one. Whether or not you can eat it is another matter: the restaurant is a destination in its own right, and you won't have been able to stint at dinner.

01969 624273, thebluelion.co.uk. Petite double £94, other rooms from £109

12 Mor Lodge Newquay

Surf lodges are coming of age and going boutique - and here is proof that one no longer has to bed down with 15 snoring mates to squeeze in one last surf break. This modern offering has plenty of en suite double and twin rooms (there are bunks, too). Design is bright and modern, and the bar serves stone-baked pizzas all day. It also has a games room and surf school.

01637 877776, morlodge.com. Doubles from £44, room-only

13 Quidhampton Mill Wilton, Wiltshire

This five-AA-star B&B looks out over water meadows and the river Wylve. It has three beautiful rooms, free of the usual B&B standards - no curtain tie-backs or floral valances; instead, the walls are painted in Farrow & Ball, there are iPod docks and a "Just in case" tin, full of the little essentials you might have forgotten to pack.

01722 741171, quidhamptonmill.co.uk. The Cabin £90, other rooms from £100

14 Cityroomz Edinburgh

If your budget doesn't stretch to £200 for five-star luxury at the Balmoral, compensate cleverly. Back in May, this 72-room, no-frills hotel opened on the site of a former Travelodge on Shandwick Place, and you couldn't be better placed to discover Edinburgh. The city handsomely rewards walkers, whether strolling along the Water of Leith to the Botanic Gardens, the bars and cafes of Stockbridge, exploring the ordered elegance of the New Town, or heading up to the castle and the historic Grassmarket. Breakfast costs extra, but you can eat takeaways in the dining room.

0131 229 6871, cityroomz.com. Doubles from £55 room-only.

15 Malmaison Dundee

In late November, the company that practically invented the Brit boutique concept (when it launched in Edinburgh 19 years ago) is bringing it back home, with hotel number 13,



B+B Weymouth

opening in Dundee. The new Mal is in an iconic former temperance hotel built of sandstone (see picture), overlooking the river Tay. It was opened by the Mather family in 1900 and will have 91 rooms, plus signature Malbar and brasserie with Jospier grill.

01382 339316, malmaison.com. From £99 room-only

16 Mhor 84 Motel Balquhiddier, Perthshire

Urban locations always attract budget chains, but Mhor 84 Motel is proof that you can find a cool contemporary room off the beaten track, too. There are just seven rooms-with-a-view on offer here, including a family room. The modern motel has been created in a former trad hotel beside the A84 north of Callander, the largest town in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park. The family behind the motel created the Mhor shops there - Mhor Bread and Mhor Fish - and the pricier Monachyle Mhor hotel, on the banks of Loch Voil. Let's have Mhor, I say.

01877 384646, mhor.net/mhor-84. Doubles from £60 room-only

17 Brown's Laugarne, Carmarthenshire

Cool, contemporary rooms above the tavern in which Dylan Thomas once imbibed are perfect for a short break. This 18th-century townhouse may have a Grade II-listed bar but it is as relaxed and unpretentious as you like. The smart Reading Room across the hall is packed with Thomas-related books, and when you want to eat, stone-baked pizzas are on the menu over the road at The Three Mariners, which is under the same management.

01994 427688, browns-hotel.co.uk. Doubles from £85 a night

18 The Bear Hay-on-Wye

A quiet, three-room B&B in a former 16th-century coaching inn, the Bear offers modern Welsh style - wrought iron beds with colourful Welsh blankets, antique and midcentury furniture and hip ceramics. Breakfast of homemade beans on toast and sweet sharp rhubarb compote with yoghurt should start the day off nicely, served in the lounge with woodburner and smart grey sofas.

01497 821 302, thebearhay.com. Doubles from £70 B&B

19 Castle Hotel Aberaeron, Ceredigion

If you have never been to Aberaeron, it should really go on your bucket - as well as budget - list. There is so much to love about this small, former shipbuilding town in the west of Wales, with its characteristic pastel houses and dainty harbour. And this month, the Castle Hotel, which has six simple rooms (a mix of doubles and twins), relaunches its restaurant with new menus that put Cardigan Bay produce at their heart. You've just missed the annual seafood festival, but there's still plenty of dressed crab to be had.

01545 570205, castle-hotel-aberaeron.co.uk. Doubles from £90

20 Ten Square Belfast

Belfast's first boutique hotel opened in 2000, in Grade I-listed Yorkshire House, a former linen warehouse built in 1862. Ten Square has 22 rooms and is right behind City Hall, overlooking Donegall Square and Linenhall Street. The Grill Room restaurant and bar buzz with city residents chilling over strawberry daquiris and bang bang chicken. Unsurprisingly, the best deals are on Sunday nights.

028 9024 1001, tensquare.co.uk. Doubles from £85 room-only



Cathedral Quarter, Derby



Bloc, Birmingham



Big Sleep, Cheltenham



Blue Lion Inn, North Yorkshire



Yotel, Gatwick airport



Mor Lodge, Newquay



Quidhampton Mill, Wiltshire



Cityroomz, Edinburgh



Malmaison, Dundee



Mhor 84 Motel, Perthshire



Brown's, Carmarthenshire



Castle Hotel, Ceredigion



Ten Square, Belfast