

Hotel Hit Squad: The Pig Shed Motel, Norfolk – "More middle-class barn conversion than Breaking Bad filming location"



- [HATTIE GARLICK](#)

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All funky aspects of the American motel have been excised in The Pig Shed – a very British interpretation which is tastefully decorated, eco-friendly and easy on the wallet

Since having children, I've become a serial loser of things. School socks, flu jab forms, biscuits (but not, mysteriously, their empty packets, which are always in the cupboard, exactly where I left them).

Two things I particularly miss. First, my unruffled relationship with planet earth's future. "I'll be dead before the ecological apocalypse," I'd think, buying another plastic bottle of mineral water. Now, I imagine two small children wobbling atop a melting ice cap and thrust my hand into friends' bins to redistribute their recycling.

The second? Money. There just never seems to be any, any more. So I was particularly interested to hear about the [Pig Shed Motel](#), a brand new, eco-friendly and genuinely affordable place in Norfolk.

I've always loved the gloriously trashy spirit of the American motel. But it is immediately obvious, as we pull into the Pig Shed car park, that all shades of tawdry have been excised in this very British interpretation. Yes, it's perched right on a main road, just like its Yankee forebears (in this case, the A1065 artery into north [Norfolk's](#) seaside attractions). But the 10

rooms that frame its car park are tastefully timber-clad and tiled, more middle-class barn conversion than *Breaking Bad* filming location.



The motel sits on the fringes of the charming village of Castle Acre, which is famed for its castle and ruined priory

Inside, the theme continues. Thick double-glazing eradicates all sound of the road. Our family room has soft grey walls, and a vintage armchair reupholstered in Ian Mankin fabric. A huge charcoal pig by local artist Lucy Boydell is framed on the wall and the beds have pure wool blankets and cushions from Melin Tregwynt. I know these don't come cheap, because I once bought a pair of slippers from this very same Welsh wool mill for more than £50. Yep, pre-kids...

All the extra paraphernalia is high-end too. There's a Nespresso machine and a hairdryer, infinite TV channels, free and speedy Wi-Fi, decent toiletries and a power shower. Yet a family room costs only £85 (plus £5 for each child). I check, and the only nearby hotel offering comparable prices is the Premier Inn King's Lynn. A room there will save a family of four about £10 a night but cost you all your aesthetic principles.

How do they make the numbers add up? Owner Lena Parker tells me she hopes the motel's low running costs will help recoup their outlay. Indeed, you are unlikely to meet any staff at all here. Book a room online and you will be prompted to download an app that acts as a digital room key. You arrive, touch your phone to your door and, like magic, it opens.

This might be alienating, were it not for the pub. Lena and her husband Phil also own the George and Dragon which, having been given a thorough facelift, is now run by the people behind the super successful Wells Deli (a half-hour drive away on the coast).

Though a separate business, it is on the same plot and has a symbiotic relationship with the motel. Fail to make friends with your hi-tech room key, and the pub will provide a conventional key card instead. You can have supper and breakfast here, too. Really, it is much like staying in a pub with rooms in its grounds.



There are four doubles, four twins and two family rooms, all with soft-grey walls, a retro-styled desk and a vintage armchair re-upholstered in Ian Mankin fabric

And it's a very decent pub too, with a well thought through dinner menu encompassing excellent local steak (£18) and trendy gluten-free "super noodle" broths (£9) and a pleasing selection of local beers from Adnams, the Norfolk Brewhouse and Barsham Brewery.

Plus, the place is done up in chalky paints, with book-lined walls and an open fire. It would be heaving with Jack Wills hoodies and spotless Hunter wellies if it were 30 minutes away in Burnham Market.

Instead, the motel makes a good base from which to explore some of north Norfolk's coastal attractions, without burning a gaping hole in your pocket. We visit Holkham beach then explore Castle Acre. Five minutes from the motel, its awesome ruined priory is one of the largest and best-preserved monastic sites in England, while the kids are gleeful over the village's Norman motte-and-bailey castle.

There is only one downside. Family rooms are equipped with only one super king-size bed and one small single. The seven-year-old takes the latter, leaving my husband and I sharing with the four-year-old. She immediately adopts a horizontal position, like a human compass needle magnetically drawn towards due parental discomfort.

The bed is so big, though, that all three of us get a decent night's sleep. Besides, the loo flushes with recycled rain water. On sunny days, solar panels on the roof power the room's lights as well as the underfloor heating system beneath its smart concrete tiles. All of which is tremendously soothing both to my cold toes and my parental neurosis.

A one-night stay for a family of four costs from £95, excluding breakfast