



# Bridge House Hotel & Restaurant

Beaminster, Dorset, England

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7/10

Telegraph expert rating

" Dating from the 13th century, the Bridge House is the oldest building in pretty Beaminster – famed as ‘Emminster’ in Thomas Hardy’s Wessex. Behind thick stone walls you’ll find a combination of old and new, with snug rooms, a cosy lounge bar and a popular restaurant. "

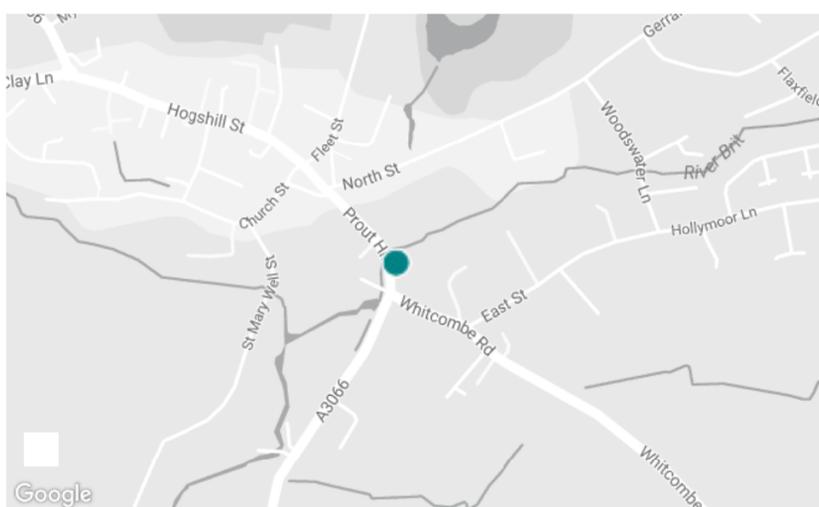
By **Benjamin Parker**,  
TRAVEL WRITER

## Location

7/10

The Bridge House sits at the southern entrance to Beaminster, a town of 3,000 with honeyed homes and shops. Behind the hotel are acres of verdant countryside – this is quintessential Hardy country (scenes for the 2015 movie adaptation of *Far From the Madding Crowd* were filmed nearby).

Brassica restaurant, run by the co-founder of London’s acclaimed Canteen, is a favourite with locals, tourists and critics. Strummer Pink, just off the town square, is good for homeware shopping (“Vivienne Westwood meets tweed”, so they say), while tea and gateau au chocolat truffle at Le Vieux Four pâtisserie is highlight. Six miles (10km) south is buzzing market town Bridport, and West Bay, a seaside parish and closest spot to access the Jurassic Coast.



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## Style & character

8/10

As the oldest building in Beaminster, attempts to keep up with design trends are tempered by the heritage of the rugged stone property. The owners, who styled the place themselves, have balanced history with modernity. The charm of this former clergyman’s home comes from large inglenook hearths in the bar, low ceilings with oak beams jutting out, and mullioned windows. These details are complemented with contemporary touches, such as blue tub chairs with floral cushions and canvas prints on the wall. Outside is a walled garden, complete with an undercover terrace and lawn dotted with dining tables.



## Service & facilities

7/10

Check-in and check-out was pleasantly slow; a dawdling pace feels right in West Dorset but could have some visitors tapping their feet. The rest of the time staff are attentive without being intrusive. While the hotel lacks additional facilities, those looking to discover the area are helped by on-the-button staff. Recommendations range from golf courses to rejuvenating massages, from local woodcarving courses to where you can take aim at clay pigeons.

- ✔ Bar
- ✔ Parking
- ✔ Restaurant
- ✔ Wi-Fi

## Rooms

7/10

The 13 rooms has been styled individually, conscious of the historical character but breathing unexpected life to it. One has a Moroccan vibe, with a tall lattice bedhead, while another boasts a mahogany Lombok bed and allium feature wallpaper. Where dark Georgian furnishings are found in one, another bursts with colour from Nina Campbell paradise bird wallpaper. Daylight streams in whether rooms overlook the road or garden, and at night low lighting adds a moody feel. Comfortable beds are dressed in Frette Italian linen, and two rooms contain four-poster berths.

Outside the main hotel is the Coach House, formerly stables but now home to four county-style places to stay. All have modern bathrooms, with Molton Brown amenities and waffle bathrobes – the Victorian tub in Room 7 will tempt you to swap shower for bath.

## Food & drink

8/10

The hotel’s award-winning restaurant is a bright ground-floor space with crisp white tablecloths and dark rattan chairs. Half the restaurant is much newer – white panelled walls, wooden floor, wide windows open to the garden – but it works well contrasting with the older, stone-walled half. Menus have a European influence, from coconut and kaffir arancini through to chicken and apricot terrine, but are led by what’s available locally (scallops from Lyme Bay, meat from Bridport butchers).

Breakfast is taken in the conservatory, while the chef goes table to table with fresh pastries. If it’s warm out, the room can quickly get hot – make sure your butter isn’t melting. As an alternative to a full English, try fresh Dorset snails served atop fried bread.

## Value for money

7/10

Double rooms from £120. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

## Access for guests with disabilities?

Four rooms have step-free access to the garden and car park.

## Family-friendly?

Yes, with two family-suites as well as Z beds and cots available for the other rooms. Toys and board games can be provided, as can baby monitoring devices, and the restaurant offers a good children’s menu. The enclosed garden is a fun, safe place for young ones.

📍 Bridge House Hotel & Restaurant, 3 Prout Bridge, Beaminster, Dorset, DT8 3AY, United Kingdom.  
01308 862200  
bridge-house.co.uk/