

This is the in-the-know alternative to the Hamptons

Quaint Litchfield, a two-hour drive from New York, offers a rural escape with great restaurants and now a trendy new hotel

Megan Agnew | Tuesday September 02 2025, 12.00pm BST, The Times



Belden House & Mews hotel was built in 1888

SCOTT PARKER

Belden House, a 19th-century home, is now a stylish hotel near the centre of Litchfield

On what is considered the loveliest street in Litchfield is Belden House & Mews hotel, a colonial revival home built in 1888. After falling into disrepair, it has been



artfully and sensitively restored by the owner, Anthony Champalimaud (whose first hotel, Troutbeck, in nearby Amenia, Upstate New York, is a storming success), its interior designed by his mother, Alexandra, and her company Champalimaud Design (the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman; the Beverly Hills Hotel; Hotel Bel-Air). Discerning locals have been watching closely for the finished results, unveiled this spring. They must be pleased.

The 31 bedrooms are split between the main house, where they have more historic texture, with working fireplaces and enormous bay windows, and the mews, a modernist extension behind. Built in 1959 and not quite as grand, this overlooks the swimming pool.

We stayed in the 2,100 sq ft three-bedroom penthouse in the eaves of the main house, which has to be booked out as a whole. The bedrooms have a hip mid-century style that isn't trying too hard to be trendy. It has the feel of a fashionable English country house hotel (Champalimaud went to boarding school in Somerset and grew up between Montreal, Portugal and New York City).

We had a large private balcony at the back looking out over the bucolic woods of the surrounding county, though the tarmac surrounding the mews and car park immediately below was a bit of a spoiler. Still, I fell asleep there as soon as I arrived, among the birdsong and summer breeze and beautiful evening light, all the adrenaline of New York left behind. It was heaven.

The undeniable star of the hotel is the bar, its original mouldings painted electric green, with Victorian conservatory windows on three sides. We took our time before dinner to sit on the high stools and ordered a zingy rhubarb negroni. The one-sip martini was also pleasing, a sort of high-end, ice-cold, briny shot.

The kitchen is overseen by the chef Tyler Heckman, alumnus of New York City's El Quijote and Ferris. The menu is seasonal and locally sourced, and much more experimental and punchy than you might expect (starters from £15, mains from £24). The sourdough focaccia was a must, as was the grilled short rib and tuna with plum and peppercorn. Other dishes — the duck, as well as the pistachio agnolotti — were a

little too rich for my tastes. Breakfast was also a winner. We ordered the Belden, a fancified full English with sausages homemade in the kitchen, as is all the bread, butter, cheese and pasta.



Guests can cool down in the outdoor pool at Belden House & Mews

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The next morning was spent loafing around at the hotel. At the back of the three-acre plot is an outdoor swimming pool, which we sloped into during the summer heat, with a croquet lawn beyond, to continue the hotel's ode to the European sensibility. I also had a sauna, steam and cold plunge in the tiled bathhouse, which was dark as a cave, followed by a great facial.

Northwest Connecticut is everything a weekend countryside retreat should be: bucolic, quiet, gentle and delicious. It is, as I suspect the locals would say, rather lovely. Go before that changes.

Megan Agnew was a guest of Belden House, which has room-only doubles from £371 (beldenhouse.com). Fly to New York

