

Et Tu, Bruton?

The U.K.'s artsy elite have conspired to make this Somerset village a hot spot

A little more than two hours west of London by train, Bruton is a quiet farming town of 3,000 in the county of Somerset. Or, at least it *used* to be quiet. Over the last few years, creative

types have discovered the hamlet and begun converting its historic estates into galleries, hotels, and other attractions. Here's a quick guide to a weekend in this trendy country retreat.



The Newt in Somerset, a restored historic country estate



Stay



A restored working country estate just a 10-minute drive from Bruton's center, **The Newt in Somerset**, which opened in the summer of 2019, is sure to remind travelers of its sister hotel, South Africa's beloved Babylonstoren. "The most important thing was making the Georgian manor house and its outbuilding feel like home again," says owner and interior designer Karen Roos, the former editor of *Elle Decoration South Africa*. With a superb spa, two destination restaurants showcasing food from the estate, a cider press, and charming gardens, it feels like quite a fine home, indeed. thenewtinsomerset.com

Shop



Found at the heart of Bruton's High Street, **Caro** is a chic, Scandinavian- and Japanese-influenced lifestyle store that sells carefully curated homewares, stationery, clothing, and beauty products. "The objects we surround ourselves with may be functional, but if we find them beautiful, too, everyday moments can provide deeper contentment," says owner Natalie Jones, a formerly London-based designer who was drawn to Bruton by the area's creative mind-set. To that end, she also offers The Space at Caro, which hosts workshops, exhibitions, photo shoots, dinner parties, and even a garden house for overnight stays. carosomerset.com



The gardens at Hauser & Wirth Somerset

See



In case there's any doubt about Bruton's artsy bona fides, since 2014 there has been a world-class gallery, **Hauser & Wirth Somerset**, on the outskirts of the village. The arts center, located on a reinvented farmstead, showcases leading artists—the exhibit opening February 6 features Los Angeles-based painter and sculptor Henry Taylor, pictured above—and is also home to a spectacular garden designed by Piet Oudolf. The on-site restaurant, Roth Bar & Grill, serves locally sourced produce that befits its location. hauserwirth.com

Eat

In 2015, at just 24 years old, Merlin Labron-Johnson became the youngest British chef to be awarded a Michelin star, at the London restaurant Portland. Now, he has opened a restaurant, **Osip**, and a wine bar, The Old Pharmacy, in the center of Bruton. How closely does Labron-Johnson hew to the farm-to-table ethos? At



Osip, he says, "In the evening, there is no menu. We serve a dinner that celebrates a time and a place in Somerset, using ingredients that have been grown by us or our neighbors." Highlights have included celery root soup with egg yolk and black truffle, and fig leaf ice cream with fig compote and meringue. osiprestaurant.com

Drink



Hidden within Bruton Art Factory's experimental space is **The Secret Bar**, which was inspired by The Colony Room, the dearly departed, debaucherous London gathering place for the who's who of the art world. "I decided to recreate the essence of the bar in the gallery," says Bruton Art Factory owner Suzanne Bisset. During exhibit openings, the bar serves drinks inspired by famous mixologist Dick Bradsell, the inventor of the espresso martini. As the name suggests, the bar isn't widely publicized, but those in the know travel from far and wide to peep the scene here. brutonartfactory.co.uk