

### 3 great dishes to try...

1. Leafy salad with avocado

2. Tarta de santiago

3. Sangria

### Value for money:

Tapas are £2.65 each, the chicken ranges from £5 to £16

Newly-expanded restaurant Alley Olé brings a taste of Spain to Norfolk, says **Lauren Cope**



#### Food

It's probably fair that I start this review with a disclaimer: My mum's better half is a Spanish chef and I've eaten my way around a decent chunk of Spain (whether that makes me the best or worst reviewer for this restaurant, I don't know).

For the indecisive, Alley Olé is a dream - its menu is simple, and largely split into two: Chicken (quarter, half or whole) and pintxos (tapas).

With a day of work behind us and an early shift looming on the horizon, we barely sat down before we made a beeline for the bar, where its pintxos sit under a heat lamp.

At lunch time there's a pintxos platter, but at dinner it's more of a pick and mix affair - a good strategy, as we greedily grabbed far more than we'd have ordered off a menu.

The meatballs in tomato sauce and calamari were fine, but the stand-out dishes were the chicken croquettes (up there with some of the best I've tried in Spain) and the Spanish tortilla, which, despite a few minutes under the heat lamp, was light, creamy and hugely moreish.

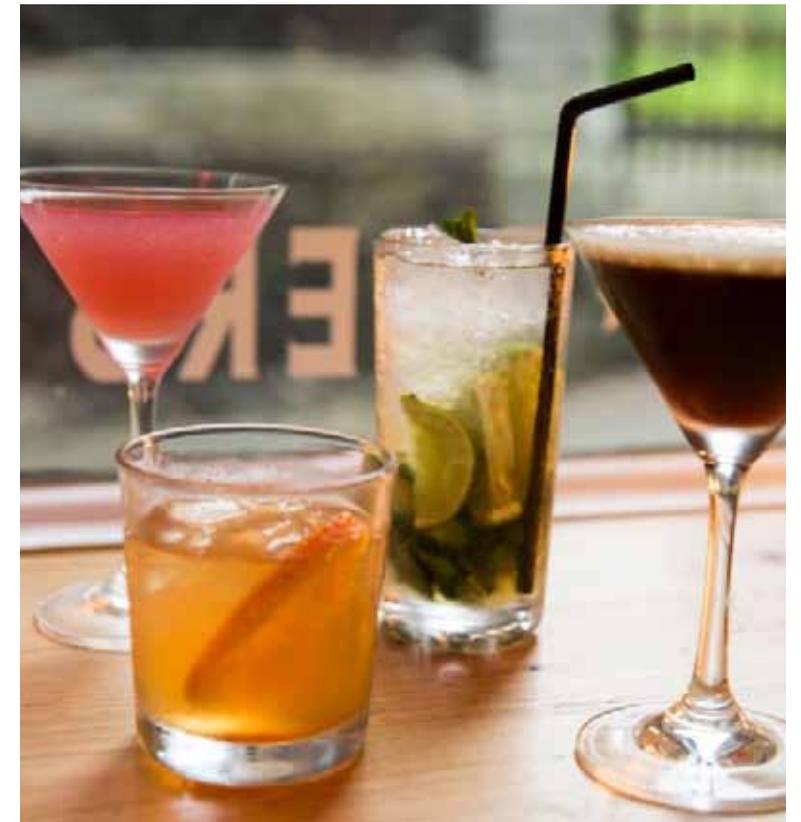
A small pintxos of bread topped with serrano ham and a fried egg received a rave review across the table, while the aioli, though thicker in texture than the norm, was lovely, with a good, garlicky kick. Already on our way to full, we shared a half chicken, which was juicy, flavoursome and plenty for two, and couldn't pass on the patatas bravas, which were crispy and covered with an excellent spicy, tomato sauce.

We were up for trying the crema Catalana - a Spanish crème brûlée of sorts - and tarta de Santiago - an almond cake - but a problem with the fridge/freezer meant they were off the menu. Would be intrigued to hear your thoughts.

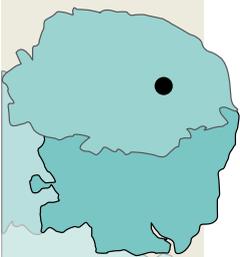


## Food review

Alley Olé,  
Bridewell Alley, Norwich



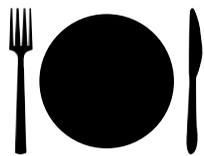
thealleycafe.co.uk



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## How does it measure up?

### Drinks

There's a menu of traditional cocktails, wines, beers and soft drinks.

I had a fruity glass of Tempranillo and my date chose a Cruzcampo, one of a handful of Spanish beers on offer.

### Ambience

With students sharing pintxos at the bar and friends relishing a lazy dinner, Alley Olé certainly feels relaxed.

The décor is modern and clean, table set-up is simple and the restaurant has three unofficial zones - one for drinks and a bite to eat, another for a sit-down meal and a third for take aways.

Drinks, desserts and rotisserie chickens are ordered at the table, but for its pintxos - tapas - it's time to head to the bar and take your pick.

It's casual and easy-going - and would sit comfortably alongside a Madrid taberna.

### Service

Friendly and helpful. Our waitress was enduring the utter misery of her first shift and had some problems with the till, but was apologetic and sweet. If you're reading this - it does get better...

### Parking

Tucked down Bridewell Alley, you'll

struggle to find free parking - St Andrews multi-storey, Duke Street or Castle Mall are in walking distance.

### Price

Reasonable - (much cheaper for take away) and sides - patatas bravas and salads - sit between £4 and £6.

Its weekday deal will give you a quarter chicken with patatas bravas or salad for £6 and there's two-for-one cocktails and wine between 5pm to 7pm.

### Highlight

The atmosphere - it's fun, laid back and friendly.

The serve-yourself pintxos concept is a novel addition to Norwich's restaurant scene, and one which - judging by the full tables on a Wednesday night - is catching the eye of students and city workers in particular.

### Summary

The food might not be straight off the streets of San Sebastian, but this is a fun, casual eatery with a great atmosphere and some stand-out dishes.

Though it was lively come 7pm, I'd recommend an afternoon visit, when the lunch-break crowd make the trip from their desks. Grab a few pintxos, share some chicken, order a round of cocktails and unwind over a leisurely meal.

## If you like that, try these

### The Pigs, Holt.

Offering a seasonal menu with fortnightly changes, The Pigs says it serves, 'real food without the pomp' and call's Norfolk's answer to tapas 'Iffits'.

Get sharing ham hock scotch eggs with pub-made piccalilli, deep fried 'popcorn' cockles with chilli vinegar and pan fried chicken livers with apple, spring onion and toast. For the veggies there's crispy chickpea fritters with red onion, chilli, yoghurt and cucumber and poached hens egg with Norfolk asparagus soldiers. They even offer a Pooch's menu - let your pet enjoy a bag of venison



sticks or liver and bacon bones. Iffits are £3.80 each.

[thepigs.org.uk](http://thepigs.org.uk)

### The Bicycle Shop, Norwich.

The quirky plant-laden interior has chalk boards adorning the walls with the day's dishes, a tasty selection of tapas amongst them. Changing regularly, past favourites include patatas bravas, pan fried garlic mushrooms and chorizo in spiced tomato beans as well as pork and chorizo balls, halloumi with sweet chilli and fried BBQ cauliflower with salsa verde. Prices vary from £2 a dish to over £5.

[thebicycleshopcafe.com](http://thebicycleshopcafe.com)

### The Green Man, Rackheath.

Family owned, The Green Man, finds its home in a refurbished 17th-century coaching inn with a large beer garden. Their choice of Norfolk tapas includes honey and sesame seed pork belly, mushrooms in garlic and thyme cream, battered fish goujons with tartare sauce and barbeque chicken wings. If you fancy something more substantial the oven roasted chicken ballantine filled with chorizo and mozzarella and wrapped in bacon, sun-blushed tomato risotto and crispy chicken skin.

Tapas range from £2.50 to £4 and it's £15 for the chicken.

[greenman-rackheath.co.uk](http://greenman-rackheath.co.uk)

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**River Fly-Cruise on board Olympia**

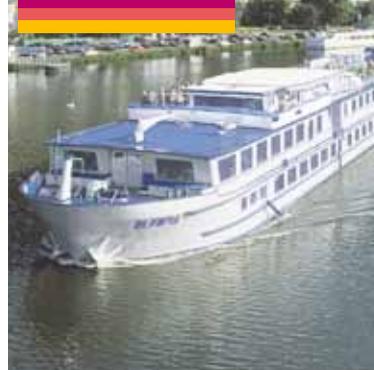
9 days from £1455 Flying direct from London Stansted, June to August 2017

Experience the best of the mighty Rhine river.

### Tour highlights

- ✓ Eight nights' full board accommodation on board hugely popular *Olympia*
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- ✓ Guided tour of Speyer
- ✓ Calls at Strasbourg, Mannheim, Mainz & overnight in Basel
- ✓ On-board entertainment and English commentary
- ✓ Escorted by a friendly, experienced cruise manager
- ✓ Return flights and transfers

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## The Rhine & Moselle

**River Fly-Cruise on board Olympia**

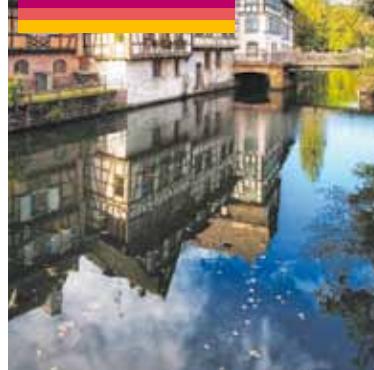
7 days from £1129 Flying direct from London Heathrow, 9, 23 & 29 July 2017

A picture-postcard-perfect river cruise holiday.

### Tour highlights

- ✓ Six nights' full board accommodation on board comfortable *Olympia*
- ✓ Embark in Andernach and disembark in Cologne
- ✓ Scenic cruise along the Moselle and a visit to Trier
- ✓ Calls at Traben-Trarbach, Bernkastel-Kues and Koblenz
- ✓ Included walking tours of Bernkastel and Koblenz
- ✓ On-board entertainment and English commentary
- ✓ Escorted by a friendly, experienced cruise manager
- ✓ Return flights and transfers

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## Rhine, Strasbourg & Heidelberg Cruise

**River Fly-Cruise on board Sound of Music**

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Join *Sound of Music* on this delightful, classic cruise.

### Tour highlights

- ✓ Seven nights' full board accommodation on board *Sound of Music*
- ✓ Embark in Basel and stay overnight close to Strasbourg
- ✓ Calls at Speyer, Mainz, Rudesheim, Boppard and Koblenz
- ✓ Visits to Heidelberg and Cologne's cobbled Altstadt
- ✓ Scenic cruise along the UNESCO-listed Middle Rhine
- ✓ On-board entertainment and English commentary
- ✓ Escorted by a friendly, experienced cruise manager
- ✓ Return flights and transfers

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## The Danube, Romantic Road & Rhine River Cruise

**River Fly-Cruise on board Sound of Music**

12 days from £1869, 17 August 2017

A wonderful 'three rivers' cruise.

### Highlights & inclusions

- 11 nights' full board accommodation on *Sound of Music*
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- Disembark in Swiss gem Basel
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- Escorted by a friendly, experienced cruise manager
- Return flights and transfers

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