

Make the great escape

Fancy spending Christmas or New Year in a pile with shooting, fishing or surfing on the doorstep? Do a flit to a perfect property chosen by Arabella Youens

Harburn House, West Lothian (nr Glasgow and Edinburgh) Sleeps 16

What The Manor House on the Harburn Estate

Activities Fishing, golf, tennis, clay-pigeon shooting and riding are all on the estate or nearby. Full catering is available at an additional cost.

Availability Christmas, 20 to 27 December

Note More accommodation on the estate (to invite another 24 of your closest friends) is available at extra cost.

Price £10,750 (one week)

Booking 020 7947 3290,
www.blandings.co.uk



Bryn Manor, Llanfyllin, Powys Sleeps 14

What Georgian Manor perched on a small hilltop in the rolling countryside of the Welsh Marches. Good for parties with an aversion to cooking: your host, Lady Linlithgow, has her family cook on hand.

Activities Pheasant-shooting (100- to 200-bird days available at extra cost).

Tennis, fishing, clay-pigeon shooting, archery, hiking, riding, historic house and garden visits.

Small downside The no-pets, no-children rule

Availability New Year

Price £5,000 for three nights including breakfast and dinner (bring your own booze). Closed over Christmas.

Booking 01637 881942,
www.uniquehomestays.co.uk



Tipperary, the Lizard Peninsula, Cornwall Sleeps 8

What A modern house with 180-degree views of the coast. The property, in 22 acres, has a snug “for children to escape the adults”.

A chef can be booked in advance if required, at additional cost. Festive welcome hamper with a half case of wine and locally made pasties awaits. And there’s a Cornish cream tea on arrival.

Activities This is a house for surfers – recommended beaches include Poldhu and Gunwalloe, both 30 minutes away. Nearer, but for hardy swimmers, is Kynance Cove (two miles). The South West Coast Path runs along the end of the property’s garden, and heading west for five miles along the cliff top and rugged headlands you reach the Lizard lighthouse, the most southerly point in England and very bracing in January with gale force south westerlies.

Availability New Year

Price £2,600 (five nights)

Booking 01242 633637, www.thewowhousecompany.com

Alexander House, Thorpeness, Suffolk Sleeps 11

What Secluded, traditional Suffolk farmhouse, probably dating back to the 16th century, now restored to provide spacious and comfortable accommodation. Surrounded by a secluded, lawned garden and acres of fields and heathland, one can enjoy all the pleasures of a seaside holiday as the beach is a two-minute walk away.

Activities Trekking from the stables (about a mile away) across lowland heaths and the beach. Golf course is on the doorstep (about a three-minute walk). Bird watching (the heath is an RSPB site), cycling and walking from the house.

Price £1,700 (price held for next year)

Booking (for next year) 01394 412305,
www.bighouseholidays.co.uk





Wyvis Lodge, Nr Evanton, Easter Ross

Sleeps 10 to 12

What A house for anyone looking for total privacy and remoteness – it is accessed via its own private, five-mile, unmade road.

Activities Hind-stalking £150+VAT per rifle per day; walked-up ptarmigan £500+VAT per day (four to six guns); woodcock and driven shooting can be arranged nearby.

Numerous hill lochs and a waterfall walk within two miles of the house.

Bonus An hour from Inverness Airport

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £4,500 a week on self-catered basis with full-time housekeeper

Booking 0131 476 6500, www.georgegoldsmith.com



Halzephron House, Gunwalloe, Cornwall

Sleeps up to 16 (2 on a sofa bed)

Property Halzephron House

What A cosy, 17th-century castellated property high on the Cornish cliffs, surrounded by open National Trust land, with stunning sea views.

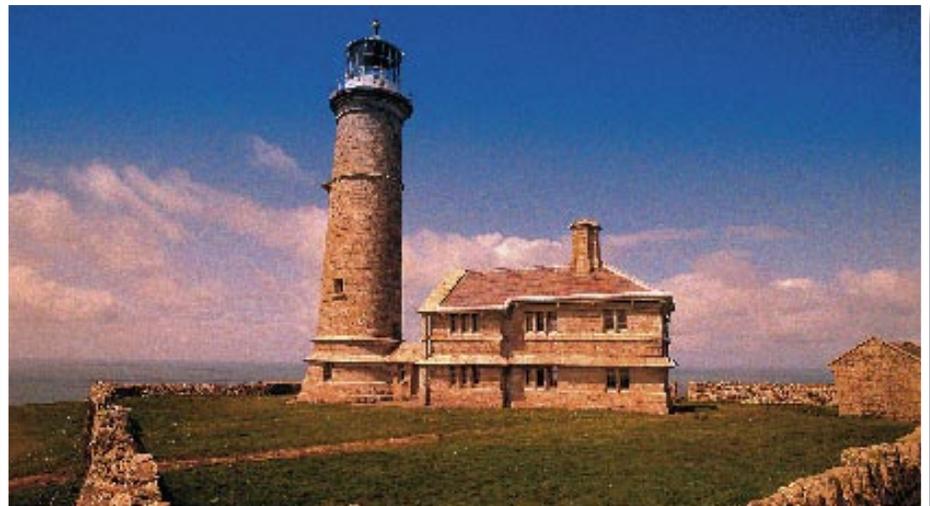
Activities Surfers can head to the beach at Church Cove, a 10-minute walk down the lane, or Poldhu Cove, an additional 10 minutes across the golf course. The Halzephron Inn, a five-minute walk in the opposite direction, was named Cornwall Dining Pub of the Year 2005. If you want to eat in but without hassle, catering can be arranged at extra cost. There is a large, sheltered, walled garden with palm trees and lawns at the front looking across Mount's Bay. The garden boasts a games pitch, inset trampoline and half-pipe skateboard ramp which may be shared with the owner's children. The spot is excellent for twitchers.

Bonus Dogs are welcome

Availability 29 December to 5 January

Price £3,500

Booking 01326 240028, www.thebigdomain.com



Old Light, Lundy Island, North Devon

Sleeps 4 and 5

What Something rather different: two lighthouse keepers' cottages in the Old Light on Lundy Island. Basic, potentially blustery, potentially very romantic.

Activities Quite a DIY set-up: walking

around the island, bird watching and seal watching.

Availability 23 December for seven nights

Price £599 and £725. Travel to the island by helicopter costs £85 for adults and £45 for children.

Booking 01628 825925, www.landmarktrust.org.uk

The Old Rectory, Bratoff, nr Skegness, Lincs

Sleeps 11



What Elegant, late 18th-century Regency rectory built from local redbrick, set in a large garden with open views and lying close to the tiny church of Bratoff village.

Activities Sited at the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds, an area of outstanding beauty, this is a house for groups partial to house snooping. It provides an excellent base from which to visit National Trust properties Gunby Hall, Tattershall Castle and Belton House, as well as picture-postcard villages and the market towns of Spilsby, Tattershall and Coningsby.

Price £1,629 a week

Booking (for next year) 0870 4584422, www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk



Knock House, Benmore estate, Isle of Mull Sleeps up to 22

What Estate extends to 17,000 acres and Knock House is a very comfortable family home situated at the head of Loch Na Keal.

Activities Benmore is a famous deer forest with some of the finest stalking grounds in Argyll. Informal walked-up shooting can be arranged over Christmas. The estate has three sea boats, including a Rib speed-boat, an Orkney fishing boat and a 32ft motor cruiser – brilliant for trips to the islands and picnics. Also available: tennis, crabbing, riding, whale watching and clay-pigeon shooting. The island is a great place to see eagles and other birds of prey, such as the peregrine falcon and the hen harrier. And you may spot a short-eared owl if you're lucky.

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £11,750 a week plus VAT (includes house staff)

Booking 0131 476 6500, www.georgegoldsmith.com



Carreglwyd, Nr Holyhead Anglesey North Wales Sleeps 12 plus additional cottage for 2 by arrangement

Activities A place that caters for all tastes. Excellent walking from the doorstep as the estate joins the Anglesey Coastal Path, which goes round almost all the island. There is a commercial shoot on the estate for duck and partridges, and clays can be arranged. Coarse-fishing for carp and perch is possible on the lake in front of the house. Riding can be arranged on the estate and bicycles hired locally. The beach is 15 minutes on foot through the estate, and there is a surfing beach about 20 minutes' drive away. Good twitching as a number of seabirds overwinter in Anglesey. Nearby are the castles of Caernarfon and Harlech.

Availability Christmas and New Year
Price £3,875 per week
Booking 020 7947 3290,
www.blandings.co.uk



Cotswolds Medieval Manor, Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire Sleeps up to 10

What Early 17th-century manor house in two acres
Activities Hawking days locally for two people to hunt rabbits, beagling, clay-pigeon shooting, archery, 4x4 off-road driving, quad biking, gliding and riding.

Availability Christmas, 22 to 26 December;
New Year, 30 December to 2 January

Price £2,700 for a four-night package (Christmas),
£2,250 for a three-night package (New Year);
extra nights can be booked at the rate of £550
per night.

Booking 01637 881942,
www.uniquehomestays.co.uk

Glenmuick, Nr Ballater, Royal Deeside Sleeps 20

What A Rolls Royce option with wonderful views over Deeside and the surrounding areas.

Activities The estate has red- and roe-deerstalking and walked-up or driven grouse-shooting. Nearby there is golf, pony-trekking, clay-pigeon shooting, archery and quad biking. Ballater is within walking distance – good for pubs and restaurants and a hotel spa.

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £20,000 for seven nights

Booking 0131 476 6500,
www.georgegoldsmith.com





Hall Farm Cottage, Otley, Suffolk
Sleeps 12

What Hall Farm Cottage is a traditional thatched farmhouse set on the edge Otley, a rural village west of Woodbridge and within easy reach of the coast. Overlooking fields and countryside, the property is within a few minutes' walk of a local pub, which serves good food, and the village shop.

Activities Shooting in Otley, riding and golf within two miles. A day out with the Easton Harriers can also be organised.

Small downside Large, unfenced pond

Price £1,600 (for property rental, bed linen, heating); price held for next year.

Booking (for next year) 01394 412305, www.bighouseholidays.co.uk



The Fishing Lodge, Tiverton, Devon
Sleeps 10

What Large private home with log fire and underfloor heating, set in 20 acres in the Exe valley.

Activities Private half-mile beat on the Exe, complete with fishing hut and seven named pools. Grayling up to 15in long can be caught over the Christmas period. Other activities

include bird watching in the copses and on the water meadows, game- or rough-shooting, foxhunting with the Lamerton or staghunting with the Tiverton.

Availability Christmas, 22 to 29 December; New Year, 29 December to 5 January

Price £1,995 per week

Booking 01637 881942, www.uniquehomestays.co.uk



Eaton Manor, Eaton-under-Heywood, Church Stretton, Shropshire
Sleeps up to 36

What It consists of Eaton Manor (sleeping 12) plus two adjacent houses: Pendennis (14) and Curlew Cottage (eight plus two on sofa bed). All three can be hired individually or together in any combination. Eaton Manor and Curlew Cottage are 45 metres apart and work well together. Pendennis is a five-minute walk away. Up to 36 can eat together, with a chef available to cook if preferred. The houses will be decorated for Christmas; home-made mince pies and wine will await arrivals.

Activities This is very popular walking and riding country. Livery is available at the property and hacking out on the nearby Longmynd is popular.

Upside Warren-like house; great for children of an exploratory nature

Availability Christmas and New Year (Manor House); New Year (all three)

Price £2,950 Eaton Manor; £2,950 Pendennis; £1,650 Curlew Cottage

Booking 01694 724814, www.thebigdomain.com

Hoscote House, near Hawick, Roxburghshire
Sleeps 12 to 17

What A country house set in 600 acres of the peaceful Borthwick valley, bordering the Borthwick water. The towns of Jedburgh, Melrose and Hawick are within easy reach of the house.

Activities Walked-up or driven shooting and duck flighting can be arranged. There are two stables and a paddock for those bringing their own horses. The house has a hot tub, sauna and a gym.

Availability New Year, 27 December to 3 January

Price £4,500

Booking 0131 476 6500, www.georgegoldsmith.com





Kingswear Castle, Nr Dartmouth, Devon

Sleeps 6

What A castle built to help defend Dartmouth Harbour, completed in 1502. The tower stands almost at the water's edge and its rooms are filled with shifting reflected light. One guest has written in the logbook: "I would like to spend all night out on the battlements watching the stars." Perhaps not ideal in December, but what a good spot from which to view any New Year fireworks.

Activities Kayaking from the private rocks below the castle or walking (15 minutes) to Kingswear for sailing

Availability Christmas (22 to 29 December), New Year (29 December to 5 January)

Price Christmas £1,752; New Year £1,711

Booking 01628 825925

www.landmarktrust.org.uk

Dallas Lodge, Morayshire

Sleeps 12

What A family home situated on a 9,000-acre estate on the Speyside Malt Whisky Distillery Trail

Activities Shooting (grouse, pheasants, roe deer) and some rough-shooting can be arranged on nearby estates. Beyond the estate walls there's the chance to spot dolphins, play golf, ski or visit Cawdor Castle and Gardens. On seriously rainy days, you can play tennis and football in the indoor sports hall.

Caution No more than five children aged under five years allowed per party.

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £3,495 for seven nights

Booking 0131 476 6500, www.georgegoldsmith.com



The Coach House, Okehampton, Devon

Sleeps 6

What Set on an organic estate near Dartmoor. The Devon Longhouse next door can accommodate 16.

Activities Rough-shooting on the estate. Guided farm walks and bird watching are also available. Riding and walking on Dartmoor. Roadford Reservoir is nearby for

windsurfing and Bude is 40 minutes away. Then there's rock climbing, golf and the possibility of a day out with one of the local packs.

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £1,200 for five nights on a self-catering basis

Booking 01637 881942, www.uniquehomestays.co.uk



Island House, Tiree, the Inner Hebrides

Sleeps up to 14

What The largest residential property on Tiree, suitable for those who want to venture farther afield.

Where Most outer of the Inner Hebrides

Activities Expanses of sandy beach to walk, golf is available on the island and shooting can be arranged. Expect sunny but short days.

Caution Dogs are not allowed in the main house but well-equipped kennels are provided.

Downside Involves flying from Glasgow

Availability Christmas and New Year

Price £3,300

Booking 0131 476 6500, www.georgegoldsmith.com