



Cool forest stays Cosy cabins and treehouses
Plus The autumn wildlife guide

Weekend

Travel
Starts on
page 27



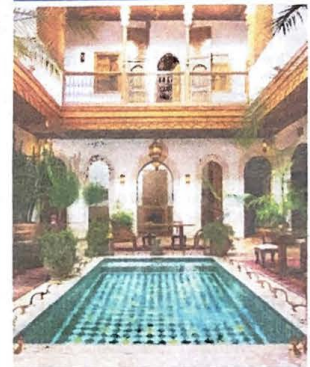
Ouch!

Look, I can do the splits

By fashion director **Anna Murphy**

Plus How to be flexible over 40

20 hip hotels
in Marrakesh



Chic riads in
the medina



Grand hotels away
from the crowds



The best places
to book now

4 Weekend

20 autumn hideaways

Wild nights Where to stay in the woods

Continued from page 3

Tiptree Heath Essex

Heather-covered Tiptree Heath is part of an old common recorded in 1401, when it would have been possible to walk on heathland all the way from Colchester to Maldon. There are several waymarked paths, lined by oak and birch trees.

What to spot Exmoor ponies Look out for the semi-wild Exmoor ponies, which are used as "conservation grazers" to invigorate and maintain the flourishing heather. This is also the time of year when dormice go into hibernation, so keep an eye out in dense thickets for their woven nests, made from grass and other plants.

More information essexwt.org.uk

Blackraig Wood Dumfries and Galloway

At this time of year Blackraig Wood, on the southern flanks of Galloway Forest Park, offers spectacular views over Solway Firth. Walk underneath a red and gold canopy of oak, birch and ash, and listen for the loud, one-note call of buzzards soaring overhead. A path through the reserve starts at the Forestry Commission arboretum at Kirroughtree.

What to spot Red squirrels Look up and you might see squirrels leaping through the trees or sitting poised on branches. Autumn is when red squirrels regain their distinctive ear tufts as part of a bushy winter coat. Look out, too, for pine cones nibbled by squirrels into the shape of apple cores.

More information scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

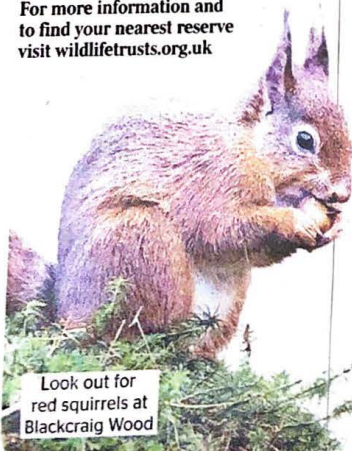
Silent Valley Nature Reserve Gwent

This ancient beech woodland on the steep slopes of the South Wales Valleys is the highest in Britain. At this time of year fungi can be seen emerging from the leaf litter on the woodland floor. Silent Valley supports more than 30 species, including sulphur tuft and the rare olive earthtongue, with its bizarre-looking tongue or finger-like growths.

What to spot Ravens The reserve is home to ravens that roost together during colder nights and can be spotted and heard "cronking" around the valley during the day. If you're not too squeamish keep an eye out on the paths for the UK's largest slug, the ash black, which is found in ancient woodlands such as these and grows up to 25cm long.

More information gwentwildlife.org

Compiled by the Wildlife Trusts
Edited by Emily Sargent
For more information and to find your nearest reserve visit wildlifetrusts.org.uk



Look out for red squirrels at Blackraig Wood

From cool cabins to cosy huts, Richard Mellor picks the UK's best places to wake up among the trees

Woodland Retreat Shepherd's Hut Near Brundish, Suffolk

In peaceful, secluded Alde Valley woodland, this cosy shepherd's hut is a perfect romantic retreat. It comes with dining veranda, slick kitchen, en suite shower room and underfloor heating. The historic market town of Framlingham (home to Ed Sheeran) is near by, and the coast is a 40-minute drive away.

Details Three nights for two costs from £258 (01386 897927, ruralretreats.co.uk)

The Lodge Edenhall, Cumbria

This timber-clad cottage occupies an undisturbed spot on the wooded River Eamont, where guests can cast for trout or salmon, watch passing deer or just lounge around the log-burner. The three bedrooms include one in the eaves, accessed by a spiral staircase. Stargazing is recommended, ideally from the garden hot tub because the surrounding Edenhall Estate has no light pollution. You're less than ten miles from the Lake District and closer still to the Pennines.

Details A week for six costs from £1,820 (0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk)

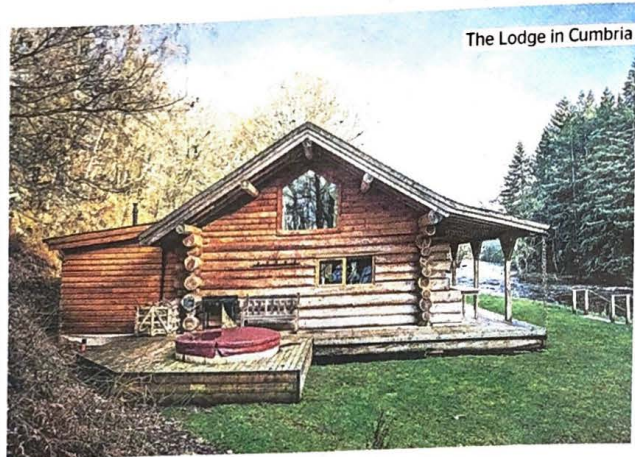
Wood Shack Near Bettws, Monmouthshire

Tucked away in a wooded valley, the shack was originally a writer's cabin. Much of the furniture is carved from a single ash tree by the owner. There's a log-burner with a plentiful supply of fuel and board games also provided. For keen hikers, just to the west is the 1,955ft Sugar Loaf, one of the southernmost Black Mountains, marking the range's border with the Brecon Beacons.

Details Three nights for two costs from £354 (01237 459888, holidaycottages.co.uk)

Damselty Near St Neot, Cornwall

This two-person luxury cabin has a deck that extends over Warleggan River. It comes with a large free-standing tub, a waterfall shower and natural wood interiors. Days can be spent watching for otters or kingfishers, angling for sea trout — you'll need a licence — and hiking in the Glynn Valley or on the nearby Bodmin Moor.



The Lodge in Cumbria

Details A week for two costs from £850 (01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com)

Hex Cottage Sibton, Suffolk

Off-grid Hex is a former foresters' cottage. It's a safe bet that those foresters didn't enjoy a double Hypnos bed or freestanding roll-top bath — although the thatched, one-bedroom home's reliance on candles and wood-burners does recall more rustic times. The cottage is in a beautiful spot facing a lavender meadow on the edge of woodland. Pashley bicycles are supplied, putting the estate's tennis courts and lake within reach.

Details Three nights for two costs from £739 (020 7484 5700, wildernessreserve.com)

Cleave Treehouse Near Tedburn St Mary, Devon

Made from larch, birch ply and steel, the treehouse has reclaimed boat windows and contains a bathroom that is posher than many of those in hotels. There's only one bedroom, although kids can use a sofa bed. If it's chilly, light the log-burner; on milder days, wallow in the deck's double-sized bathtub. Although Cleave is part of the organic Windout Farm, it is hidden away inside a knotty copse. Milk, bacon and eggs can be delivered for breakfast.

Details Two nights for two costs from £260 (0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk)

The Danish Cabin at Kudhva

Penpethy, Cornwall
Kudhva is an abandoned slate quarry where a willow forest features a waterfall, wooded cliffs — and deer. Now an off-grid estate, its varied accommodation ranges from hanging tents to futuristic treehouses. Most secluded is the stilted Danish Cabin, a six-person wooden retreat, the lower walls of which cleverly slide up to create

a terrace. You also get a fire pit and beer-stocked bar — although not showers, which are by the main building and kitchen. DJs play on Sundays and a vintage pick-up ferries guests to nearby surf beaches either side of Tintagel.

Details Two nights for six costs from £530 (0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk)

Bubble Domes Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh

The two-person bubble domes at Finn Lough have 180-degree transparent walls, clearly designed with bed-based stargazing in mind. They also enable daytime forest-gazing, with the domes scattered across 50 acres of woodland. Each dome contains a modern four-poster bed, coffee machine, posh toiletries and an en suite bathroom, with breakfast brought over from the resort's kitchens.

Details A night's B&B for two costs from £245 (028 6838 0360, finnlough.com)

Katas at Comrie Croft Near Crieff, Perthshire

Katas are cone-shaped Nordic teepees. Half a dozen dot the birch woodland of Comrie Croft, a 200-year-old farmstead estate about 60 miles north of Edinburgh — No 3 is possibly the most secluded. Warmed by the wood-burner, you can spot deer or listen for owls. Although the katas nominally sleep six, there's only one alpine-style bed — under wool blankets — so they are best suited to couples or very close friends. Hot showers are a few minutes' walk away.

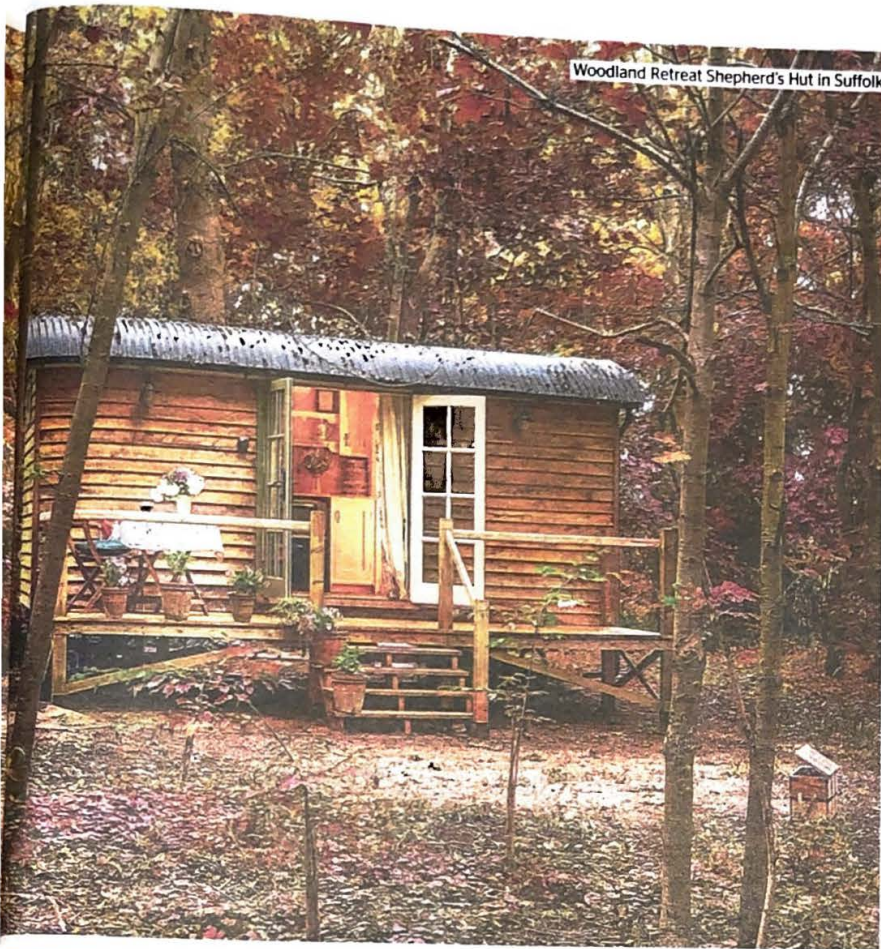
Details A night for two to six costs from £99 (01764 670140, comriecroft.com)

Rockhouse Retreat Low Habberley, Worcestershire

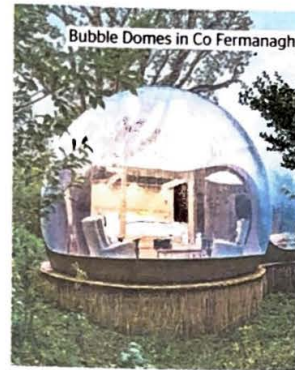
About 800 years ago someone took a pickaxe to a stream-side sandstone escarpment in the forest close to Kidderminster. The subsequent hollow served as a dwelling until 1962 before standing vacant until 2015. Profiled on *Grand Designs*, its nine-month



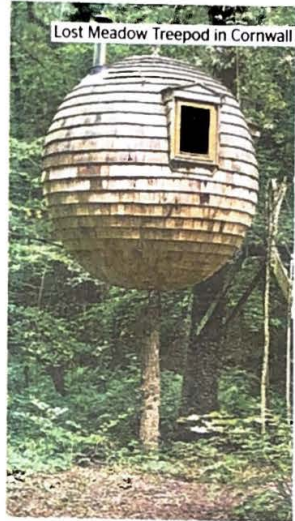
T Autumn walks guide
20 beautiful routes by Christopher Somerville
thetimes.co.uk/autumnwalks



Woodland Retreat Shepherd's Hut in Suffolk



Bubble Domes in Co Fermanagh



Lost Meadow Treepod in Cornwall

river gorges and moorland, plus the Victorian tea room in Watersmeet. **Details** Two nights for four costs from £536 (0344 800 2070, nationaltrust.org.uk).

Little Eden Near Rowardennan, Stirlingshire

Loch Lomond's eastern flank is mostly covered by conifers, but surrounding this remote Highland cottage are a cluster of Japanese maples, the red leaves of which gradually turn crimson as winter looms. Throw in views of the loch and towering Ben Lomond and you've got a glorious Scottish scene that is entirely yours. Things are similarly sumptuous inside, with an open-plan kitchen and wood-burner lounge below two comfortable bedrooms and a claw-foot tub. Whisky distilleries and Glasgow are within an hour's drive. **Details** A week for four costs from £1,750 (01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com)

Blackwood Forest Near Popham, Hampshire

Amid the 270-hectare Blackwood Forest there are 60 cabins with picture-frame windows and private woodland-facing verandas, so you can watch whatever local wildlife takes your fancy, from buzzards to butterflies. Most also come with outdoor hot tubs. Optional, enterprising activities for people of all ages are laid on, including geocaching trails, survival-skill workshops, archery and insect-finding competitions, and ranger-led nocturnal walks using night-vision glasses. There's a restaurant that serves pizza, and spa treatments can be ordered. **Details** Three nights for four costs from £605 (03330 110495, forestholidays.co.uk)

Undercastle Cottage Near Godshill, New Forest

The New Forest's name is misleading, with much of it grassy heathland, but there are clumps of wooded areas, and one — Godshill Wood and its oak trees — hugs this thatched, rose-covered property beside the River Avon. There's 1,000 yards of angling from the herbaceous gardens, plus a fishing lodge. Inside are three bedrooms under vaulted ceilings and a double-height living room with an open fire. Spend your days hiking the forest — Blackwater's Tall Trees Trail is great at this time of year — or watching for pigs, whose annual autumn access to gorge on fallen acorns is known as "the pannage". **Details** A week for six costs from £1,507 (01872 553491, boutique-retreats.co.uk)

Forest Garden Near Ashurstwood, West Sussex

Not only is Hundred Acre Wood — in reality Five Hundred Acre Wood, an area inside Ashdown Forest — home to AA Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh, it also provides glorious autumnal colour. Golden birch and beech trees are set off against a backdrop of resolutely green pines, making games of Poohsticks along the Wealdway footpath especially pleasurable. Stay near by at Forest Garden, six acres of open woodland containing two yurts pairing colourful textiles with fairy lights. Breakfast can be provided, and there are often courses in activities such as beekeeping and bowl-carving. **Details** A night for two in a yurt costs from £97 (hostonusual.com)

while pot plants and rippled-wood finishes help you to feel at home. **Details** Two nights for two costs from £310 (coolstays.com)

Shank Wood Log Cabin Near Kirkclinton, Cumbria

This is the perfect off-grid riverbank retreat. Built from local timber and cloaked by trees, the cabin uses solar panels for electricity and wood for its stove and its trump card, an outdoor hot tub overlooking the water. There's a mezzanine floor with two beds and an open-plan kitchen and living area below. Days can be spent watching for kingfishers and otters, cycling the Reivers Route, which hugs the Scottish border, or walking in the Lake District, 50 minutes' drive away. **Details** Two nights for four costs from £420 (oneoffplaces.co.uk)

The Cabin at Devon Dens Near Germansweek, Devon

This off-grid forest retreat's owners champion sustainable living, so you'll find Aga wood-burners, solar power and compost toilets. However, that doesn't mean that you won't be comfortable. A hamper of local produce is laid on, plus there's a fire pit, private decking and a wood-fired sauna shared with a smaller property. Two extendable sofas accompany the lone double bed and there is a dining table that accommodates six. **Details** Two nights for six costs from £270 (coolstays.com)

Lost Meadow Treepod Near Mount, Cornwall

You certainly know you are getting away from it all when you find yourself

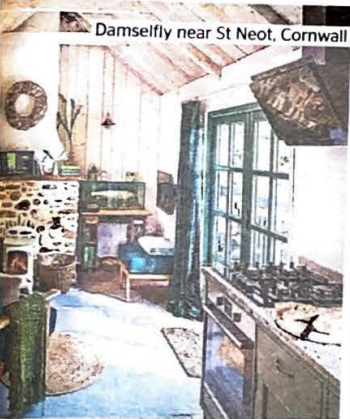
suspended 3m above ground and surrounded by private woodland. Clad in rippled timber, this lightweight pod hangs from two trees, rocking slightly, and is accessed via sturdy stairs. Inside is a wood-burning stove, sink and bed with sleeping bags, plus double-glazed windows facing a small river. Below is a kitchen hut and barbecue pit, and there is a shower and toilet close by. **Details** Two nights for two costs from £200 (0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk)

Living-room Bryn Meurig, Powys

Forest stays don't come more fairytale than this. Accessed by wobbly bridges and spiral staircases as twisty as the surrounding oaks, Living-room's six off-grid treehouses lie in a mountain valley beside Snowdonia, with red kites and rabbits as neighbours. Illuminated by lanterns, lamps and tealights, the treehouses are built from local timber and have unexpectedly luxurious open-plan interiors. Each contains a decent kitchen, compost toilet, double bed and fold-up bunks for two children, with en suite showers heated by stoves. **Details** Two nights for four (starting on Sundays, Wednesdays or Fridays) costs from £379 (01650 511900, living-room.co)

Combe Park Lodge Hillsford Bridge, Devon

This is the perfect base for ramblers who want leafy seclusion, but don't want to compromise on comfort. The private garden of this handsome Edwardian house backs on to a swathe of ancient woodland. Its position inside the Lyn Valley part of Exmoor National Park (immortalised in *Lorna Doone*) also puts you in walking distance of



Damselly near St Neot, Cornwall

restoration has resulted in a luxurious "21st-century cave house" complete with underfloor heating in the bathroom, a rain shower, a king-size bed, an electric kitchen, an espresso machine and a barbecue. Three acres of private woodland remain, enfolding the home, and the riverside town of Bewdley is within walking distance. **Details** A night for two costs from £195 (07789 160356, therockhouseretreat.co.uk)

Brook House Tree Cabins Near Bromyard, Herefordshire

These two wooden retreats offer forest stays with a dash of Deliveroo. Swathed by ash and oak trees, the peaceful pair have large wraparound verandas with a roll-top bath and barbecue area facing the Frome Valley. Inside there's a seating area, bathroom and double bed, plus a small kitchen. Breakfast hampers or ready-made dinners can be ordered from a local caterer. A log-burning stove means that you'll stay warm at night,



Combe Park Lodge in Devon