

Just the two of us

Romance is more than rose petals scattered on a hotel bed – check out how these supreme boltholes for two create the mood in all their different ways

Mountaintop cabins in Italy

✿ The place in a nutshell

Perched more than 2,000 metres high in the Italian Alps, two tiny wood-and-glass cabins let you feel at one with the moonlit mountains.

✿ What makes it romantic?

Thanks to the plate-glass windows and roof around the beds at both of the Starlight Rooms, you can imagine the constellations are your ceiling, and the peaks of the Dolomites the wallpaper. While the Starlight Room Gourmet is essentially a bed in a box, to which you retire after a four-course dinner served down the mountain, the Starlight Room 360° has a mini dining room attached, with hearty soups, cold cuts and wines from Italy's Alpine valleys waiting on arrival (by snowmobile in winter).

✿ How close are your nearest neighbours?

Aside from any occupants of the other cabin – a discreet distance away – it's almost a mile down the slope to the mountain hut and main base of Rifugio Col Gallina.

✿ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

What orientation gives the best view, if you've booked the 360° room – yes, the whole structure can pivot on command.

✿ What to do if you're not hiding away

The rooms can only be booked for one night, so spending more time to explore the area is the sensible choice. The ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo lies down the valley, and all around you'll find every conceivable mountain activity – via ferrata is particularly popular here.

From £340 half-board; rifugiocolgallina.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: GIUSEPPE GHEDINA, CANOPY & STARS

Wooden cabins in southwestern France

✿ The place in a nutshell

A trio of 'spa' cabins for two look out from their hillside perches amid the trees in the rolling landscape of the Quercy region north of Toulouse.

✿ What makes it romantic?

The builders of Pella Roca took a few well-loved Scandinavian concepts – clean-lined wooden design, closeness to the outdoors, sitting naked on a bench in a steamy room – and shifted them to a balmy climate. Not that you'll need to worry about warmth. As well as the sauna attached to each cabin, there are hot tubs and braziers on the decks for cold nights.

✿ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

If you're staying in the Asian-inspired Tropicabana cabin, try not to hog the single-seater outdoor basket swing.

✿ What to do if you're not hiding away

Drive into the hills, riddled with caves (such as Pech Merle with its prehistoric paintings) and carved through by winding valleys. Here you'll find villages such as Saint-Cirq-Lapopie that appear to be torn from a medieval picturebook.

From £186; canopyandstars.co.uk ⇨



A beach hut in Devon

✦ The place in a nutshell

Looking for all the world like a smuggler's lair, the stone-built Beach Hut at Carswell Farm is hidden in a crinkle of the south Devon coast.

✦ What makes it romantic?

The word 'nestled' is overused in descriptions of lodgings, but it's the only fitting one here: the hut is shielded on three sides by the steep coast, opening onto a pocket of beach that will be entirely yours. The front-view deck has a picnic table and hot tub (if the waters of the Channel prove too bracing), while inside there's a wood stove and two hammock seats by the window. If that's still not enough to feel like you've shut out the world, you can pull up the ladder that leads to the bed, on a raised platform under the eaves.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

The lie of the land means you'll be invisible not just to the main complex of Carswell Farm 600 yards away, but also to walkers on the South West Coast Path that runs just behind, up the cliffs.

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

You may debate how much of the wood to chop up to make kindling for the stove.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

Coastal walks and beachcombing aside, you'll find surfing beaches and sailing schools nearby.

From £695 for two nights; carswellcottages.com



A treehouse in the Brecon Beacons

✦ The place in a nutshell

A corner of the woods just inside the border of Brecon Beacons National Park is the setting for a whimsical cottage on stilts.

✦ What makes it romantic?

Approached by stepping stones across the lawn with a love-seat swing suspended from a nearby bough, Trewalter Treehouse is all soft curves and varied wood tones. There is something slightly Tolkienesque about the design – a joint venture of hobbits and elves, perhaps. From the encircling deck, a rope bridge spans a small pond to reach another platform for outside dining, and steps lead down from there into the trees, with a small wood-fired hot tub.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

The main house is 100 yards up the gently sloping hill, with the woods screening off all other directions. Brecon town is five miles to the west.

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

Any existing domestic telly tiffs – the treehouse comes with a Smart TV, unlike most of the choices in this list.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

It's nine miles as the crow flies to the summit of Pen y Fan, highest of the Brecon Beacons, and walks of greater or lesser ambition are the surest way to appreciate the sparing beauty of the landscape.

From £209; qualityunearthed.co.uk



PHOTOGRAPHS: CARSWELL COTTAGES; EDWARD FELTON; DAVID CURRAN/UNIQUEHOMESTAYS

A lakeside boathouse in the Midlands

✦ The place in a nutshell

The Dragonwood Boathouse is like having your own country estate in miniature, on the Rutland-Leicestershire border.

✦ What makes it romantic?

Set on 60-acre grounds beside two small lakes, with woods behind, the stone-built boathouse looks traditional from the outside, but comes furnished and decorated with colourful contemporary Italian design. A log fire and underfloor heating will see you through winter, while summer is the time for breakfast on the terrace and dangling feet off the jetty.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

The estate's main farm building is 200 yards away, and the village of Knossington just under a mile down country lanes.

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

What's the correct paddling technique when taking the kayaks provided out onto the lake.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

Really get to know Rutland (all 137 square miles of it) with its historic county town of Oakham and surprisingly expansive Rutland Water, popular for sailing and windsurfing.

Three or four nights from £725; uniquehomestays.com →





A cave house in Turkey

✦ The place in a nutshell

The Koza Cave Hotel is a natural fit for Cappadocia, a region that – with its hot air balloon rides and ancient rock-carved dwellings – somehow combines the lofty and the earthly.

✦ What makes it romantic?

All the rooms at this sustainably minded small hotel have their rough stone dimensions softened by traditional patterned rugs and cushions. It's built into and around a hill in the honey-coloured town of Göreme, with superb views over a surreal and dreamlike landscape of eroded rock pinnacles. Rooms are a warren of steps and arches, blocky stone walls and hewn-out hollows, in a mix of manmade and organic. Where better to lose track of time than somewhere that feels so timeless?

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

The shared topmost terrace is deservedly popular: you might have competition with other guests for the lounge cushion with the choicest view.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

If you want to float in a hot air balloon and not merely watch the dawn flocks of them, the hotel can help to arrange a ride. The region's painted rock-cut churches and underground cities are ripe for exploring.

From £150; airbnb.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHS: AIRBNB, MEGAN GIELOW

A treehouse in the USA

✦ The place in a nutshell

The Majestic Treehouse at Bolt Farm is an eccentrically beautiful hideaway in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and one of South Carolina's most in-demand listings on Airbnb.

✦ What makes it romantic?

The space was built specifically for the owners' honeymoon, so all the magic ingredients have been here since the start. What looks from one side like a simple, stilt-perched cabin reveals endless surprises. Light from an antique window wall fills a room built of reclaimed wood, with an ornate bed and chandelier adding Baroque touches. A rope bridge festooned with fairy lights leads to an outdoor deck with loungers and a hammock, while a trapdoor on the porch leads down to a rope swing bed suspended beneath.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

About 100 yards of tall woods separate the treehouse from the main farmhouse, and a further line of trees screens the entrance from the public road.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

Though board games stand ready if things get competitive, you'll also find trails leading through 40 acres of woods around the farm, and possibilities for rafting, horse-riding and cycling in surrounding Oconee County.

From £1,028 for two nights; boltfarmtreehouse.com ➔





An Airstream in Scotland

✦ The place in a nutshell

A 1955-vintage caravan on the site of an old sawmill is the most intimate of the accommodation options on a Highlands estate south of Aberdeen.

✦ What makes it romantic?

The Sawmill at Glen Dye has all the chrome appeal of mid-century America but in a wild and woolly Scottish setting. The trailer-bedroom is just one part of the ensemble, with a kitchen and living room in a comfy wooden cabin a few yards away, and an outdoor shower and hot tub where the original sawmill stood. You can also prove your cooking skills to your other half on a Big Green Egg barbecue.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

Besides the Sawmill, there are three larger guest cottages on the Glen Dye estate, which at 30,000 acres feels pretty roomy.

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

Music preferences, when giving some of the vinyl collection a spin on the record player.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

There's ample hiking, cycling and fishing on the estate. If you only go for one excursion, make it to the coastal town of Stonehaven, with the epically set ruins of Dunnottar Castle.

Two nights from £450; glendyecabinsandcottages.com



A lighthouse in Norway

✦ The place in a nutshell

Littleisland Lighthouse (or Litløy Fyr in Norwegian) is a tiny white and red beacon on a remote offshore island, Litløya, with a nearby cottage serving as B&B and self-catering guesthouse.

✦ What makes it romantic?

This refuge of simple comfort set on rocky bluffs at the borders of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans is the ultimate test of 'hygge' – or rather its more common Norwegian equivalent 'koselig'. That specially Scandinavian style of cosiness comes from knowing that whatever the weather is doing, inside you'll find a small library with a fireplace, and Hästens beds and blankets made of natural materials. You're above the Arctic Circle here, so depending on the month, you can take in horizon-filling seascapes under the midnight sun, or make a wish on seeing the northern lights.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

There are three double rooms inside the lighthouse keeper's residence on the island. Otherwise it's a four-mile boat trip (15 minutes in good weather) to the harbour of Bø, closer to the mainland.

✦ Is there anything likely to cause a disagreement?

Forgetting to bring enough lunch and dinner supplies – though you might be able to ask for some fresh-caught fish to see you through. Also, who carries what up the 200 steps to reach the lighthouse.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

You can walk around Litløya in an hour or so, past the remains of a village that once existed here, and with luck get a sighting of a white-tailed eagle. Snowshoes are kept to hand for winter hikes. There are also a couple of sea kayaks for those sure enough to paddle around the island or over to neighbouring uninhabited Gaukværøya.

From £300; littleislandlighthouse.com

A castle in Poland

✦ The place in a nutshell

Deep in the countryside of western Poland, a fanciful late 19th-century castle has been restored to a life of quiet elegance.

✦ What makes it romantic?

A medieval-inspired lookout tower rises above Pałac Osowa Sień, but any would-be Rapunzels can find a cosy lounge under the steeply pitched roof. This old aristocratic home was the birthplace of the noted German author Leonie Ossowski, and titles from her novels have given their names to the rooms here. Stern Ohne Himmel ('Stars Without Sky') is a loft room in pale tones, while Blumen für Magritte ('Flowers for Magritte') has antique wooden furniture and a covered private balcony. Though the hotel doesn't have its own restaurant, by special request it can arrange dinners for two in aristocratic style.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

The castle stands in park grounds in the village of Osowa Sień. The hotel's rambling historic layout means that the eight suites (some of them split-level) can feel quite separate.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

The hotel can organise horse-drawn carriage rides through nearby woods, and there are also occasional yoga retreats. Wschowa is one of a number of towns nearby worth a wander for their largely intact historic centres, not on the tourist trail.

From £80; palacosowasien.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOM CRONK, GABRIELE REICHERT, STEFANO SCATA

Glamping tents in Bali

✦ The place in a nutshell

Nights under drapery have rarely looked finer than at the hamlet-like enclave of Sandat Glamping Tents, away from the beach resorts of the Indonesian island, near the traditional inland town of Ubud.

✦ What makes it romantic?

Traditional Balinese design provides an already high threshold for tropical fantasies, and here the owners have added some Italian touches too, with Baroque mirrors and wardrobes. Of the accommodation choices here, the more locally specific are in the style of 'lumbung' (rice storehouses with thatched roofs) but the hotel's namesake is its tents. Glamping here comes with the emphasis very much on the first syllable: rattan pool loungers under tasselled parasols, pearl chandeliers and hibiscus flowers on pillows.

✦ How close are your nearest neighbours?

The three lumbung are set close together, sharing a pool, while the five tents are more widely spaced, with individual mini pools. The centre of Ubud is two miles away, and this place is off a back road, among paddy fields and palm groves.

✦ What to do if you're not hiding away

Ubud is widely considered Bali's cultural capital, and has a magnetic appeal. The hotel can organise yoga sessions, cooking classes, easy bike tours and even river rafting.

From £135; glampingsandat.com

