

Home > Travel > Destinations > Europe > United Kingdom > England > Articles

Hip Home Counties: 20 chic places to stay for some Green Belt glamour



Rhapsody is an extraordinary rental property hidden away in the outskirts of Haslemere

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17 OCTOBER 2020 • 8:00AM

Kent, Hertfordshire, Sussex, Surrey, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Essex make up the Home Counties; the girdle that rings London, nipped in by the M25. Increasingly, there are some serious bits of Green Belt glamour tucked into the oft-stereotyped commuter-land, including the brand new Birch in Hertfordshire with its rescue chickens and gong baths. On the other side of London is Beaverbrook in Leatherhead. It's lavishly, diametrically opposed to Birch in every stylistic way, but just as interesting and enjoyable, with its swimming pool tiled in a diamond pattern and 1920s decor with a touch of sashimi chic.

Even before Covid, London chefs were heading out to the coast to open smaller places with cheaper rents that allow them to experiment along with access to the freshest of ingredients; many, such as The Rose in Deal, also have hotel rooms. Margate has seen Pete Doherty and Carl Barat of The Libertines open a new hotel and further along the coast, Folkestone is seeing an influx of galleries and new restaurants with rooms.

Woven throughout the Home Counties are also a collection of entirely different rental homes, including one designed by Grayson Perry near Harwich and Cabü, a smaller, design-orientated holiday camp in St Mary's Bay in Kent. Dungeness's stark environment now houses some extraordinary holiday lets including former coastguard lookouts and fog signal buildings. Elsewhere, in the middle of the countryside, glass and steel buildings dot the landscape.

And there's still serious countryside too in the Home Counties. Farm stays come with all the glamping experiences this involves. While you'll get deep countryside, there's also ease of access. Even non-drivers, with the help of the occasional taxi, will be able to reach all of these properties by public transport.

Cadence, Sussex

Both Tarkovsky's 1970s sci-fi film *Stalker* and ancient Roman ruins inspired this four bedroom house near Petworth, in the middle of the South Downs National Park. Surrounded by meadows and farmland, the interior uses recycled concrete in a series of rooms and staircases filled with both antique and modern art plus a large kitchen and sitting room. Built by architect Adam Richards, this house is only rented out for limited periods each year and demand is high.

Seven nights from £4,995. (01637 355778; uniquehomestays.com)



Cadence is a striking house in the middle of the South Downs National Park

Rhapsody, Surrey

Otherwise famous for having Britain's only hexagonal postbox, Haslemere also has this extraordinary rental property hidden away in its outskirts. Rhapsody mixes English vernacular beams with a light-filled glass and steel extension as well as 20 acres filled with contemporary art, a yoga studio and meditative swimming pool. Sleeping up to 12 people, it's a house with significant rock history too: Queen once played in the garden, while Led Zeppelin strummed through the lead-paned windows, all just an hour from Waterloo by train.

Four night breaks from £10,250. (rhapsody.uniquehomestays.com)



Rhapsody mixes the modern with the traditional; the pool is a particular highlight