

Gloriously off-grid: the UK's most remote cottages

Escape to a Welsh farmhouse or a woodsman's digs in Suffolk. By **James Stewart**



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Deanich Lodge Sutherland

To book what's arguably the remotest stay in Britain — mountains behind, a river snaking across the glen in front, 4G available only up a nearby hill — is not just to go off-grid. It's not even to enjoy time unspooling in a former hunting lodge, now a beautifully understated modern-rustic five-bed with a wood-burner in the lounge (the kitchen is a tad rudimentary, mind). No, it's also because it puts you in the 23,000 acres of a huge rewilding programme. See it as a Scottish safari. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £2,750 (alladale.com)

Libertine Cornwall

You're staying in a pigsty. Not the kind you might fear, but a genuine, 19th-century piggery that housed actual pigs — until a fashion buyer transformed it into a dream getaway beneath a wooded hill near the north Cornish coast. Decor is romantic and glamorous, with velvet sofas, painted furniture and *Vogue* prints on the wall lending colour to a restrained palette. Through French doors is a garden with a hot tub and views out to soft hills. It feels deeply rural — although Perranporth beach is just three miles away. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for two from £850 (uniquehomestays.com)

Mrs Higgs Lodge Herefordshire

Mrs Higgs lived here until about 60 years ago. Lucky her. Reclaimed from forest on a 3,000-acre estate that's still off-grid, this former hunting lodge nine miles from Hereford has been buffed into rough-luxe cabin-porn: brick walls, raw plaster, wood-burners in the lounge and two bedrooms with panelled ceilings, and spring water from a well. Don't worry, there's also solar electricity, a gas stove, hot showers and a flushing loo. More fun still, there's a hot tub for genuine forest bathing. Mrs Higgs would approve. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for four from £1,530 (qualityunearthed.co.uk)



Hillside Cottage, Wiltshire

Shepherd's Cottage Inner Hebrides

Eilean Shona, the island that inspired JM Barrie's *Neverland*, is private, car-free and gloriously secluded by anyone's standards. Shepherd's Cottage, recently refurbished after a long private let, makes your daydreams of a simple, stylish life off-grid real: arty rooms made cosy with panelling, a pretty kitchen and romantic bedroom, plus a roll-top bath. Knuckles of mountain wrap round behind and the sea gleams ahead in the glen.

There are 1,300 acres of beach, forest, moor and wildlife — but we bet you barely leave the cottage. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for two from £1,100 (eileanshona.com)

Little Eden Loch Lomond

The trick to romantic seclusion in Scotland's premier outdoor playground is this bolt hole on a bosky inlet. In a woodland clearing (it's magic in late spring and autumn), the stone former grain mill has scrubbed up very nicely, thanks, to provide crisp rustic-luxe: reindeer pelts on armchairs by the log-burner in the open-plan kitchen/living room; and a symphony of dove greys and taupes in the bedrooms in the eaves. Outside is a fire pit, birdsong and

Tanat Valley Farmhouse Powys

We're in deep Wales in this 17th-century farmhouse between Snowdonia National Park and the Berwyn mountains. Ahead are sheep in fields (this is a working farm) and shapely mountains. Inside is a traditional farmhouse that has received a sensitive makeover. Kilim rugs skim a



Deanich Lodge, Sutherland



Little Eden, Loch Lomond

stellar kayaking from a private beach. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for four from £2,295 (uniquehomestays.com)

High Halgarth Cumbria

Only the National Trust could offer a stay as traditional as this Lake District cottage. Yes, the bath is a tin job you fill with a kettle. Sure, the loo is an earth closet outside. Don't even ask about washing machines, TVs or wi-fi. Yet if all you're after is conversation and books by the fire in a sweet, low-beamed sitting room, to eat slow meals in a flagstone-floored kitchen and wake to views of Little Langdale in four simple bedrooms, you'll fit right in.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for seven from £590 (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Hillside Cottage Wiltshire

Think of this super-luxe, six-bedroom retreat in Edington village as a blow-the-budget private hotel. It gazes out across

endless fields. Mountain bike trails pretty much start at the door. Yet within is quality bed linen, steam-shower bathrooms and a superb cook's kitchen (a farm shop and brewery are next door). A private chef is available and farm-fresh breakfasts are provided daily. There's also a plunge pool, hot tub and sauna, plus a games room, a fire pit and a croquet lawn.

Details Seven nights' B&B for 12 from £10,500 (elevenexperience.com)

Top of Lane Cottage Powys

Turn off the A438 onto twisting lanes, then a farm track through 580 acres of National Trust land, and where road access peters out you'll find this two-bedroom 16th-century cottage. In the lee of a hillside, Top of Lane is a haven of granny decor (in a good way), with stone walls, crocheted cushions on old leather chairs and pretty floral wallpaper. The garden sits above a sea of fields.

Walk up the Begwn hills near by and the Brecon Beacons are laid out beneath you. And you're not so remote at all — Hay-on-Wye is only five miles away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £656 (holidaycottages.co.uk)

Cowside Yorkshire

There's a splendid, no-nonsense feel to this outpost in a hidden valley in Wharfedale (still the best dale, for my money). The Landmark Trust people who restored it a decade ago will tell you that's because it's a rare 17th-century farmstead that has survived unaltered, complete with wall paintings in the parlour. We say it's also down to the restrained decor — rough plaster walls, antique oak beds and chests, a nicely scuffed farmhouse kitchen table. And the scenery of the Yorkshire Dales National Park outside hasn't changed in centuries, either.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for five from £770 (landmarktrust.org.uk)

Chafford Isles of Scilly

Welcome to an escapist family stay on this most escapist of archipelagos. How come? Well, it's pleasingly unfussy in style: just a simple pine kitchen, wraparound windows in the lounge and bunk beds for the kids. It's also that the sea glitters beyond the palm trees in your private half-acre garden and that a secluded beach is a flip-flop's throw away. Most of all, though, escapism comes from Bryher, the smallest, wildest, most exhilarating of Scilly's inhabited ▶



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► islands, with a resident population of just 80.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £1,200 (chaffordonsilly.co.uk)

Laggan Lochaber

Come to Laggan on the Ardnish peninsula and step off the edge of the world. There's no electricity; lighting is by paraffin lamps, the fridge and cooker are Calor gas and two wood-burning stoves keep things toasty and heat the water. The nearest road is a three-hour walk away (you arrive by private boat, which you have sole use of during your stay). Wi-fi? Are you kidding? Rooms have the simple, pared-back minimalism of a bygone era. Outside there are white beaches, seals and red deer. The issue is how you readjust to the real world afterwards.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for five from £950 (independentcottages.co.uk)

Ardderfin Carmarthenshire

A five-bed in the best bit of Wales, this former farmhouse among green hills above the River Tywi is 15 minutes' drive from Laugharne, once home to Dylan Thomas. Sensitive refurbishment has revived a house that was near-derelict years ago; now it's fit for a country magazine shoot. Rambling rooms have a lovely, easygoing chic yet they retain the rustic character — raw stone walls



throughout and slate floors in the kitchen — that you came for in the first place. Sunsets are awesome.

Details Two nights' self-catering for eight from £800 (airbnb.com)

Miller's Cottage Shropshire

Offa's Dyke Path is a mile off and the Shropshire Way passes just above. First, though, spend a few days revelling in the

quiet life of this secluded valley in the south Shropshire Hills. Miller's Cottage, once a corn mill (you'll find original ironwork inside), is a bolt hole of 17th-century character — beams spanning low ceilings, painted stone walls, iron bedsteads in two bedrooms, a blooming lovely cottage garden — but 21st-century connections, with good wi-fi and TV reception. There's no phone signal, although you may think that's a bonus.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for three from £420 (birchesmill.co.uk)

Teal House Northumberland

It's remote living, all right, but not as you know it. The modern four-bedroom Teal House is at the end of a farm track on a private estate near Alnwick. The soul-soaring Cheviot Hills ripple beyond floor-to-ceiling windows in the modern kitchen-diner and a burn chuckles in fells beyond the walled garden. Yet there are also free bikes and a private walking guide. What's more, should you fancy it, a masseuse will provide spa treatments, a cook will rustle up dinner and a babysitter will mind the children: hotel services in glorious solitude.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £1,199 (premiercottages.co.uk)

Little Barn Yorkshire

No nostalgic stay, this. Although God's own country billows in blustery splendour beyond its drystone walls

— you're in the north of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, near the hamlet of Hurst (don't pretend you've heard of it) — this one-bedroom former barn is bright and modern, styled with an eye for romance. There's a fireplace to snuggle up to in the open-plan living/kitchen area. Colourful cushions and throws soften crisp white walls in the bedroom. Outside is a fire pit — just the ticket to enjoy this dark-sky reserve.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for two from £500 (oneoffplaces.co.uk)

South Priddacombe Cornwall

You want remote? Try the middle of Bodmin Moor, with footpaths and cycle tracks crisscrossing windblown hills, a place where the lack of light pollution makes for starry skies when weather gods smile. You're staying in a low granite farmhouse where you'll enjoy rustic charm that includes stone walls and beams, slate floors, pretty china on an antique dresser and unlimited wood for the fire. The children will prefer the ping-pong in the barn. The Rising Sun is ten minutes' drive away in Alton, but you won't enjoy better sundowners than those outside on the barn steps.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for five from £700 (sawdays.co.uk)

Thatch Cottage Co Fermanagh

They don't make 'em like this any more. This thatched hidey-hole near Upper



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Ropehawn, Cornwall

Horse Island Cottage
Essex

This red-brick cottage on a 300-acre farm is comfortable rather than designer: three bedrooms, simple pine furniture. What you're paying for is the privilege of a private island. Apart from two hours at low tide, you're playing castaway in Hamford Water Nature Reserve. Birders will marvel at the marsh harriers, barn owls, waders, terns and geese in vast flocks. Boaters will love the canoe trips into the mazy channels that inspired Arthur Ransome's *Secret Water*. Even sitting on the beach gawping at vast skies, you'll be happy.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for six from £1,288 (holidaylettings.co.uk)

Rubens Barn Sussex

Next time someone tells you West Sussex is crowded, refer them to this flint barn in the bosky hills. It's a backroads retreat for families and walkers: the South Downs Way crosses a nearby hilltop and the pub in the village of East Dean is a 20-minute stroll away down a quiet lane. Accommodation is country-modern and revolves around a bright, open-plan living area that leads onto a garden where pheasants strut. An adjacent tennis court will keep energetic teenagers entertained; rackets and balls are provided.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £750 (sawdays.co.uk)

Cottage Chester
Devon

Ever heard of the Blackdown Hills? They're a forgotten area of outstanding natural beauty behind the honeypots of Lyme Regis and Beer. This stay in Membury (the village, not the services) will go straight to your head. You'll love the thatched cob-and-stone cottage set in two acres of meadowland and woods fed by a stream. You'll really love its pea-green shutters and curving kitchen, the library-snug with a wall of books and the ceilings papered with modern florals. In short, it is bold, a little eccentric and all the better for that.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for five from £2,310 (stayonedegree.com)

Lough Erne is one of the best-preserved traditional cottages in Northern Ireland. Beyond a shiny red door is a time warp from the 1950s: patchwork quilts on armchairs, floral curtains across tiny windows, iron bedsteads in two bedrooms. It's so vintage, it's bang on trend. There's a peat fire, of course — oh, and an actual painted wooden caravan in the garden. It's pure romance, with Geaglum beach half a mile away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for five from £562 (underthethatch.co.uk)

Birch Cottage Co Down

Carbon-neutral, using harvested rainwater for the loo, Birch Cottage, on an organic smallholding, is proof that sustainable does not mean slumming it. Underfloor heating is powered by renewable energy and there are hand-crafted fittings in the kitchen and bedroom. Fuel for the wood-burner comes from the owners' forest (feel free to explore it). They sell free-range eggs and fresh veg for your meals when you get back from mountain biking in the Mourne Mountains or day trips to the beach at Newcastle ten miles away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for two from £560 (lackancottage.co.uk)

Hex Cottage Suffolk

All set for a fairytale break for two? From tree-trunk columns to duck-egg-blue paintwork, this former woodsman's cottage comes straight from the pages of *Hansel and Gretel*. It's on the 5,000-acre Wilderness Reserve between Aldeburgh and Southwold, so there's no electricity. That only adds to the romance when the pretty bedroom shimmers in candlelight and the fire crackles in the sitting room. By day, you'll explore the reserve: stomping in wellies (provided), taking to the lakes on a paddleboard (also provided), riding a Pashley bicycle (you guessed it...).

Details Seven nights' self-catering for two from £2,709 (fishandpips.co.uk)

Longstone Cottage
Isle of Wight

In place of wi-fi and TV, there are birdsong and stargazing to entertain in this handsome Edwardian house on the National Trust's Mottistone Estate. Though off-grid, with solar electricity powering the lights, and gas for heat and cooking, there's no roughing it: rooms are cosy and relaxed. Mottistone Down rears up at the windows behind. Ahead,

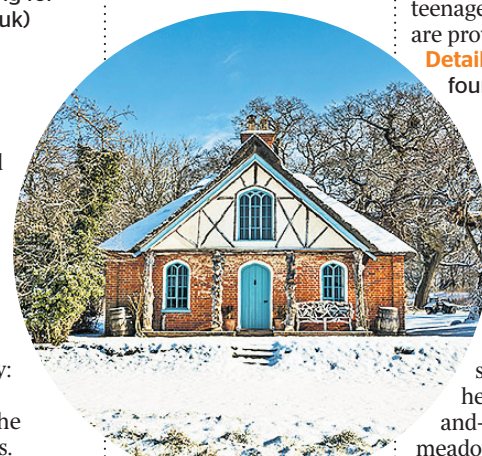
through the bluebell woods, are gardens and cream teas at Mottistone Manor, plus Brook Bay beach two miles further on. Hop in the car for surfing at Compton Bay.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for six from £519 (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Ropehawn Cornwall

This is a stay for wild swimmers and sailors; also for hopeless romantics and escapists. Beyond a woodland protected by the Cornish Wildlife Trust is a house straight out of the pages of *Daphne du Maurier*, a former fisherman's cottage on a natural sea pool, with its own moorings and a slipway. Within is low-key, hotel-standard luxury: muted chalky colours, comfy chairs at windows overlooking the bay, understated bedroom spaces. Kayaks and a sailing dinghy are in the boathouse. A beach appears at low tide. Mevagissey (four miles) and Fowey (ten miles) feel a long way off. Amen to that.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £2,961 (boutique-retreats.co.uk)



Hex Cottage, Suffolk

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