

## Design tricks to steal from the UK's most stylish holiday lets

A holiday rental should be pretty, escapist, functional and practical. How? Here are the tips from the best in the business

### Comb reclamation yards for fascinating finds

Tucked away up a track, surrounded by sweet-scented roses, the Fable is a charming thatched cottage set in a pretty village three miles from the Perranporth Beach in north Cornwall.



Its owner, Sarah Stanley, the founder of the website [uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com), had been searching for a hideaway close to the coast, with a beautiful garden. "The Fable, on first sight, was truly magical," she recalls. "It was in great condition, but we wanted to add a more rustic edge, so we replaced the flooring where necessary and designed a new kitchen and bathroom." Stanley loves to scour reclamation yards and source interesting furniture finds in order to create spaces that are as homely and welcoming as they are interesting. "With a large family, I'm accustomed to creating functional and beautiful spaces to live in, where sociable spots combine with places to enjoy quiet time," she says.



The cottage was originally a dairy, so it was important to her to keep sight of its agricultural Cornish roots. Inspiration came from its unique character, which she enhanced with a neutral, muted palette that sets the scene for layered linens, one-off furniture finds and botanical artworks. The look is simple yet cosy, with a palette of whites, greys and taupes, and lots of plants.



"We wanted to create an immersive experience from the moment guests arrive," says Stanley, who partnered with The White Company for the furnishings and fragrance used in the cottage. "We were keen to create a 'real home' aesthetic, ensuring all the touchpoints, from the blankets to the crockery, were high quality and timeless."

The farmhouse feel of the interior centres on the kitchen, where Stanley's mum's old farmhouse table, upcycled with a zinc top, now stands. The furniture and accessories are tactile and special, rather than purely functional. "It's the finer details that elevate a lovely cottage experience to a memorable stay," points out Stanley. Age and interest were also key to creating the lived-in look. "In the kitchen, we stripped, sanded and re-oiled the worktops, remade and repainted the cupboard doors and added blacksmith iron handles; and I adore the bespoke scaffold-board cupboard and galvanised tub in the bathroom." The main sitting room has character aplenty, with gorgeous gnarled beams and a huge granite fireplace.

"It's a combination of form and function when you're creating a holiday let," says Stanley. "The Fable attracts lots of couples, so large, sink-into sofas are a must – with the lighter-coloured sofas, we'll often opt for a second set of covers in case of spillages. Wooden floors are a practical choice, as light rugs are easily replaceable, and the wood tends to improve with wear. Washable, removable scatter-cushion covers and throws are a practical solution, and you need lots of spare crockery and linen. Above all, creating a tranquil living space that enables those with busy lifestyles to relax and leave feeling rejuvenated is key."

Interview by Natalie Millar-Partridge

*The Fable sleeps four and costs from £1,450 for a three-night weekend break (four nights mid-week) via Unique Homestays ([uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com))*