

FEATURES

Book your great British summer

Whether you favour a classic cottage, a child-friendly campsite or a pampering hotel break, we've found dozens of venues, all with availability this summer — as long as you're quick

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(Adrian Green/Getty)

Cottages: homes from home

By Susan d'Arcy

Cornwall

Sleeps 2-4

The collection of shepherds' huts and cottages at **Little White Alice**, an organic smallholding near Redruth, have kitchen units made from oak by local craftsmen, and some beds have woven willow headboards. Children can help collect chickens' eggs and groom the Shetland ponies before a hack; adults get to linger in the sauna and woodburning hot tub, complete with stargazing kit.

From £794 for two, £1,463 for four; farmstay.co.uk

Cornwall

Sleeps 2-6

Bude Bay's sandy beaches are an easy walk from **Broomhill Manor's** 17 whitewashed cottages and one apartment, but the manor itself concentrates on equestrian pursuits. It has a stable of Shetland ponies and horses to suit all ages and abilities, with gymkhanas held every Friday during summer to gauge guests' progress. There's also tennis and archery, 18 traffic-free acres, a gym, a sauna and an indoor pool for when the weather misbehaves.

From £1,055 for two, £1,295 for four, £2,000 for six; premiercottages.co.uk

Cornwall

Sleeps 6

Poldark has turned the spotlight on Bodmin Moor, and **Blackadon Farm Cottage**, in Bolventor, offers 360-degree views of its wild landscape. The enormous stone fireplace in the sitting room provides dramatic focus for the cottage — perfect for brooding beside after a hard day's hiking. Alternatively, switch authors and head for a pint at Jamaica Inn: the pub immortalised by Daphne du Maurier is just two miles down the road.

From £831; sykescottages.co.uk

Cornwall

Sleeps 7

The **Old Quay House** sits in a prime position to watch the world sail in and out of Falmouth harbour. It's sandwiched between Custom House and King Charles quays, so from every window of its three storeys you are rewarded with eyefuls of gleaming yachts, tall ships and fishermen's boats. The decor is as bright and breezy as the surroundings.

From £2,170; stayincornwall.co.uk

Cornwall

Sleeps 8

booked up a year in advance. The reason why **Tonga** has availability is that it has only just come onto the market. Rest assured, though, Instagram will soon be full of shots of the view from the floor-to-ceiling windows in its sitting room, and terraces that fold into the clifftop and catch both sunrise and sunset. Even Nigella would covet its high-spec kitchen, so rustling up supper won't be a hardship.

From £2,770; cornishhorizons.co.uk

Cornwall

Sleeps 8

Dreamcatcher's ornate stained-glass windows and gallery, now part of the master bedroom, are spectacular reminders of its previous incarnation as a Wesleyan chapel. If you need another excuse to visit, nearby Penzance will unveil its restored art-deco lido in May, with jaw-dropping views to St Michael's Mount.

From £2,994; boutique-retreats.co.uk

Devon

Sleeps 4

Stevenson manor is now a romantic ruin, but **The Library**, a dainty pavilion in its landscaped gardens, has been returned to its 18th-century finery throughout its double bedroom, bathroom, fully equipped kitchen and fantastic upstairs sitting room. And though its rooms are no longer lined with leatherbound tomes, the restoration team has built an eye-catching bookcase into its spiral staircase. At night, stroll 100ft across the lawn to The Library's companion building, The Orangery, now converted into a striking second bedroom. Pop into nearby Great Torrington to stock up on provisions.

From £1,251; landmarktrust.org

Devon

Sleeps 4

Convention dictates that living spaces are downstairs and bedrooms upstairs, but by flipping the usual layout, **The Boat House**, in Kingsbridge, ensures guests get to soak up fantastic views of one of the country's most photogenic estuaries all day long. The huge open-plan kitchen, dining and living room also comes with a balcony — the ideal spot for a G&T.

From £1,281; bluechipholidays.co.uk

Devon

Sleeps 6

Cottages do not come cuter than this ivy-clad thatched number, with its low beams, wongys floors and doorways designed for the diminutive. **Honeyford Cottage** (ref A229) even has chickens pecking at the lawn and ducks swimming in the pond. Add three acres of seclusion, Dartmoor on the doorstep and Drewsteignton's village shop and pub just a mile away, and you're well set for the week.

From £1,186; helpfuleholidays.com

Devon

Sleeps 4

SLEEPS 4 House will keep its place among big groups who can't come on a beach on a walking holiday. From the town of Modbury, it's an easy drive to the sandy coves of Mothecombe and Bigbury-on-Sea, as well as to the trails of Dartmoor. And if some in the party would rather just stay at home, the grand Georgian manor offers a well-stocked games room and 2½ tree-filled acres.

From £3,901; toadhallcottages.co.uk

Somerset

Sleeps 7

Grade I listed **Castle House** is part of the courtyard of Taunton's imposing 12th-century castle, and is probably where Judge Jeffreys stayed when he presided over the town's Bloody Assizes in 1685. He would certainly have visited its beamed Tudor Room, with vaulted ceiling and a door leading through to the tower. So remember that impressive heritage if you trip on an original floorboard or hit your head on a low lintel.

From £1,233; classic.co.uk

Somerset

Sleeps 9

The cocktail bar at **Number 36** is a reminder that the house used to be Axbridge's Red Lion pub. This quirky feature is typical of the place, which has rooms sprinkled with collectables and artworks. On one floor there is also a library with 4,000 books, but who's going to read when the place comes with its own cinema, the Roxy?

£350 a night; airbnb.co.uk

Dorset

Sleeps 6

The restoration of **The Wellhouse** was a labour of love for the award-winning furniture-maker James Verner. The serene, minimalist space is filled with his exquisite pieces, created to complement views over a lake and 15 acres of woodland. If you don't want to mess up the pristine kitchen, the pubs and restaurants of Lyme Regis are a 10-minute walk away.

From £1,955; sawdays.co.uk

Gloucestershire

Sleeps 4-8

JRR Tolkien is said to have based Middle-earth's forests on the mossy woodlands of **Puzzlewood**, a private park in the Forest of Dean. Its 14 acres of oaks and beech have also starred in Doctor Who and Star Wars: The Force Awakens. The three simple cottages on site don't try to compete with the great outdoors, but they do come with out-of-hours access to Puzzlewood's pathways — without the crowds.

From £650 for four, £1,100 for eight; puzzlewood.net

Wiltshire

Sleeps 6

Castle Combe could not be more English if Miss Marple were on the parish council. The 16th-century, wisteria-clad **Well Cottage** sits above the village and is a tick-list of inglenook fireplace that's so appealing, you'll hope for bad weather just so you can light the stove.

From £1,081; cottages.com

West Sussex

Sleeps 14

The **New England Beach House** is a celebration of the seaside, its interiors styled with driftwood and pebbles, but don't spend the whole time indoors. The beachfront deck is huge, with sun loungers and squidgy sofas, and a barbecue for alfresco dining. There's also a palm garden with a hot tub that leads directly to the pebble beach at Angmering-on-Sea.

From £7,875; homeaway.co.uk

East Sussex

Sleeps 7

Humpingbird House, near Lewes, is as photogenic as its most famous former resident, the Edwardian music-hall star Lily Elsie. The cosy sitting room has an open fire, beams and exposed brickwork, there is hand-carved oak throughout, and a four-oven Aga means that even cooking is a pleasure. The gazebo and hot tub in its two-acre magical garden take care of evening entertainment.

From £2,250; uniquehomestays.com

Suffolk

Sleeps 8

Wrought-iron gates and a gravel drive lead up to this Georgian mansion in Saxmundham. Even though you only have the east wing of **Fairfield House**, you'll cope, thanks to four floors with enough space for a vast bespoke oak kitchen, an elegant sitting room, a playroom and a TV room tucked into an old vaulted cellar. You probably won't need the gogglebox, though, as there is also a heated indoor pool, and Aldeburgh and Southwold's beaches are within easy reach.

From £1,945; cottageholidays.co.uk

Norfolk

Sleeps 4

A 1940s jukebox is one of the fittings in 400-year-old **Reclaim Cottage**; the original features include an inglenook fireplace in the sitting room, complete with baker's oven. The garden is a suntrap and Colkirk is a reassuringly sleepy village, but Wells-next-the-Sea is only 30 minutes in the car if you crave company.

From £611; norfolkcottages.co.uk

Norfolk

Sleeps 4

The **Mustard Pot's** octagonal sitting room and bedroom, the latter reached via a narrow, winding suitcase, add charm to this Cromer cottage, while the conservatory is a great estate before a constitutional in the surrounding woodlands of the Felbrigg estate. A stay includes free entry to the 17th-century Felbrigg Hall and its lovely walled garden.

From £1,123; nationaltrustholidays.org.uk

Pembrokeshire

Sleeps 5

Rover is not only welcome at **Glantawel**, a swanky, newly renovated stone cottage outside Newport, he'll also get a pat on the head at the nearby dog-friendly beach and a bowl of water at the local pub. For his walks, the property is surrounded by 30 acres of woodland.

From £1,525; experience-mor.org

Carmarthenshire

Sleeps 3

Ty Unnos ("One Night House") gets its name from the 17th-century tradition that anyone who could build a croft between sunrise and sunset could claim the freehold of the land. That might ring alarm bells as to the workmanship, but this modern-day cottage outside Carmarthen is pure quality. It has a stylish, if basic, open-plan living space, with limewashed walls, Welsh antique furnishings and a sleeping loft on a mezzanine. Thankfully, the bathroom is reassuringly 21st century.

From £311; thewelshhouse.co.uk

Shropshire

Sleeps 10

Anyone suffering from Downton withdrawal can get an aristocratic fix at this Elizabethan stately home. **Harlequin Manor**, in Bridgnorth, comes with elaborate murals, gold-leafed coffered ceilings and oak-panelled walls. Draw lots for the Great Chamber bedroom, which dates back to 1380 and has a grand tester bed and oak-beamed ceiling — even Carston would be impressed.

From £3,750; uniquehomestays.com