

Escapes

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timeout.com/daytrips

The best UK breaks we went on this year

Big blow-out adventures around the world were cancelled in 2020, but there were alternatives. Here's how *Ellie Walker-Arnott* made use of her annual leave

1 The close-to-home staycation

When you've been stuck inside your own home for four months, it turns out there's no need to head somewhere exotic – just going outside is a total high. This was the year of the staycation, whether that meant rediscovering the city or kipping in a London hotel, relishing every minute under a duvet that wasn't ours. Or full of crumbs from working lunches in our bed office.

Top spot The Coop, a plush cabin with a hot tub overlooking a field of sheep. It's just beyond the M25, yet when we visited it felt like travelling to a different dimension.

→ The Coop, Essex. Sleeps two. From £155 a night. www.colemans-farm.co.uk

2 The off-grid digital detox

We woke up one day and said: Enough. We were done with the doomscrolling, the virtual pub quizzes, the stilted Zoom drinks – and the popularity of off-grid

escapes all over the UK this summer is proof we weren't the only ones.

Top spot Kent's the Beach House is a solar-powered cabin that even requires you to bring your own drinking water, and was booking website Canopy & Stars's fastest-selling place of all time when it went live this summer. It has no signal, no wifi, zero opportunities to 'jump on a call' and plentiful ways to embrace the world IRL, sea swims and all.

→ The Beach House, Isle of Sheppey. Sleeps four. From £150 a night. www.canopyandstars.co.uk

3 The one where you WF (someone else's) H

The beauty of living a huge chunk of our lives online this year meant that, if we were WFH, we didn't have to be tied to the same desk, or even the same city. Thanks to a blend of annual leave and logging on from afar, an extended trip to an Airbnb was the ideal break from our over-familiar four walls.

Top spot Barn conversion The Loft



Linea



Shellbeach

comes with a workspace that's probably nicer than your office. If you can even remember what that looks like, at this point.

→ The Loft, Northamptonshire. Sleeps six. From £99 a night. www.airbnb.co.uk

4 The camping trip we weren't entirely prepared for

Pitched as the ideal post-lockdown holiday, campsites were absolutely winning this summer. It felt like everyone we knew was sleeping under canvas. They made it look so

LINEA: © LINNIE HE HOME STAYS; BERTY'S CAMPSITE: DANA ARVIS; SHELLBEACH: ELLIS ANASTASIADES

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Beryl's Campsite



fun, we went too. And discovered that camping requires a lot more equipment than it appears. We found ourselves in a compost loo sans bog roll, in a sink queue without a washing-up bowl and attempting to live in a field with just a pair of wellies and a two-man tent, but we were not alone.

Top spot Beryl's Campsite is what alfresco dreams are made of. It's rustic, surrounded by greenery and just minutes from the sea.

→ Beryl's Campsite, Devon. From £8.50 a night.
www.berylscampsite.co.uk

We found ourselves in a compost loo sans bog roll

5 The outdoorsy adventure

We'd never actually been hiking before, but so what? We heard the call of the Great Outdoors this year, and we answered, whether or not we had ever read an Ordnance Survey map. There were probably a lot of Londoners attempting to Google-Map their way through dense stretches of woodland, but we got a kick out of being so wholesome.

Top spot The South Downs are London's closest National Park, for a stroll or a week's walking hol. Just don't wear-in new boots walking the entire 100-mile South Downs Way.

6 The let's-pretend-we've-gone-abroad one

Holidays in the UK are always great, but this year they were forced upon a lot of us a little unwillingly. So we tried to replicate our cancelled foreign trips. The most dedicated booked the kind of holiday home that you'd find on genuinely sun-soaked shores. Lucky with the weather? We almost got away with it.

Top spot Clifftop villa Linea has an infinity pool and a swanky alfresco living space. It *could* be Ibiza, but is on the north Devon coast. ■

→ Linea, Devon. Sleeps ten. From £6,250 for a short break. www.uniquehomestays.com

And what we'll book in 2021...



Lesser-travelled spots

Certain places go with summer holidays like buckets go with spades but plenty of us will be swerving them in favour of places like Northumberland, the quietest county in England. It has just 63 people per square kilometer (for context, London has 5,701) as well as dramatic coastlines and a brilliant National Park.

Book this Remote shepherd's hut Cheviot has an alfresco tub and a stargazing window above the bed.
→ www.kiphideaways.com

Nostalgic stays

According to booking site Canopy & Stars, nostalgic breaks will be big in 2021: treehouses sprung up all over the place: in fields, in hotel grounds, even a beach in Cornwall became a temporary campsite.

And that pop-up attitude is set to continue right on into 2021, taking us on trips to unique corners of the country to have experiences shared by only a few others.

Glamping pop-ups

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Book this Hinterlandes, a bus-camper hybrid, will be moving around the Lakes next summer. *EW-A*
→ www.canopyandstars.co.uk