

House party: Celebrate summer in the UK's grandest stays

From a barn amid Kent vines to a chic Cotswolds retreat — these digs are ideal for family reunions. By **Joanna Tweedy**

★ Prices apply to summer months and all had availability at the time of going to press

1 Sleep amid the Kent vines

The exterior at Bokes Barn is a trendy vision of blond wood and anthracite-grey windows, but the surrounding 100 acres of scenery has been unchanged for centuries until vines were planted in the 1970s. Set in the grounds of the Chapel Down vineyard in Tenterden, it's great for groups of aspiring gourmands; a full day of sampling English wine with Wine Tours of Kent is included in the price. Rye, Hastings and Tunbridge Wells are perfect for perusing antiques. **Details** Three nights' self-catering for 12 from £2,940 (bokesbarn.co.uk)

2 Bedfordshire estate retreat

When Wrest Park's gates shut for the night to visitors, those checking in to Gardener's House, which sleeps eight, will have the grand 18th-century 100-acre country estate in Bedfordshire to themselves. Inside, this modern three-bedroom English Heritage abode in the grounds is decked out for 21st-century guests. From your doorstep, take the tranquil Long Water Walk and seek out the striking Chinese Bridge. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for eight from £1,200 (www.english-heritage.org.uk)

3 Somerset farmhouse with hot tub

Large groups are bread and butter for this rental specialist; many of its glamorous villa-style UK properties come with a hot tub and swimming pool as standard. Withymans in south Somerset is an 1840 Georgian farmhouse with wide-screen views of the countryside and room for 12. There are six bedrooms, a cinema room, cellar and drawing room, plus a trampoline and hot tub on the terrace. There's also room for two dogs, at £50 each. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for 12 from £4,150 (sleeps12.com)

4 Devon in high-spec surrounds

The single-storey Secular Retreat, made entirely of concrete, sits in rolling emerald hills a few miles east of Salcombe in south Devon. One of seven holiday properties in the philosopher Alain de Botton's Living Architecture fold, it's the handiwork of the world-renowned architect Peter Zumthor. But

it's hard to know what's most alluring: views of wooded valleys down to the sea, or the high-spec interiors, with an open-plan kitchen, five super-stylish en suite bedrooms and a bookshelf crammed with erudite literature.

Details Four nights' self-catering for ten from £3,650 (living-architecture.co.uk)

5 Beautiful moors barn

Long Barn, a grade II listed 18th-century beauty on Town End Farm, close to the village of Appleton le Moors in the North York Moors National Park, has seven light and luxurious en suite doubles. The converted interiors are thoughtfully done, in a modern country style, with a long teak table crying out for a family banquet, and a Danish wood-burner. There are walks aplenty from the doorstep, and you're in an international dark sky reserve, so stargazing can be a nightly pastime. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for 14 from £2,310 (townendfarm.org.uk)

6 New Cotswolds rental

A short stroll from the centre of well-heeled Stow-on-the-Wold, Hawford House is freshly finished in butter-coloured Cotswolds stone. It sleeps ten in five fashionable bedrooms that aren't afraid of bold colour schemes. In the kitchen there's a trendy handcrafted Everhot stove; outside there's a fire pit and spacious terrace. Pick up sausages for the barbecue from the award-winning, family-run butcher Lambournes in town. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for ten from £3,762 (cotswoldshideaways.co.uk)

7 Rock'n'roll in Surrey

There's a hefty price tag for Rhapsody, a surreal Surrey pad set in 20 acres in Haslemere. But your £20,000 for a peak summer week doesn't just get you a heated pool, hot tub and yoga hut. You're also staying in a home that has hosted rock-star royalty including Queen, the Police and Genesis — friends of the former owner and self-certified playboy Philip Rhodes. Inside expect a carefully collated art collection, a kitchen made for professional chefs and six supremely comfy bedrooms. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £20,000 (rhapsody.uniquehomestays.com)

8 Adventures in Aberdeenshire

Arrive first at the Preston Tower Apartment, a castle owned by the National Trust for Scotland, and watch eyes pop when your fellow guests catch sight of this grand baronial pad. In Fyvie, it sleeps 16 in eight rooms over four floors, with decor in keeping with its 800-year history. Children will love exploring the snugs and cavernous cellar — the rumours of ghosts are laid bare in the visitors' book. Visit nearby 18th-century Haddo House or try your hand at trout fishing at Lochter Activity Centre. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 16 from £3,233 (sykescottages.co.uk)

9 Art deco Cornish cool

Just when you thought there wasn't a bed left anywhere in Cornwall this



7 Rhapsody in Surrey

summer, the coastal holiday company Beach Retreats, from the team behind the Watergate Bay Hotel, has launched Bol-y-Maer, four new art deco inspired apartments (each sleeping four) near Bude. There's plenty of July and August availability. Rooms offer coastal chic with clean lines, there's a swish indoor pool and the crashing waves of Crooklets Beach are a short walk away. The water is calmer at nearby Summerleaze beach — have a dip in the tidal pool. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for four from £950 (beachretreats.co.uk)

10 Rustic Hereford stay

Roomy Brick House Farm sits on verdant working pastures in rural Herefordshire. You'll have to toss a coin for the freestanding metal bathtub in one of the six bedrooms, but everyone can enjoy the games room, cinema and hot tub. Enjoy a day-trip to foodie Ludlow, Hereford's cathedral and the bookshops in Hay-on-Wye. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 14 from £5,998 (boutiqueretreats.co.uk)

11 Worcestershire manor house

Personal privacy with hotel perks — including a full English each morning — are what you get at the Manor House in the grounds of Stanbrook Abbey, a grade



4 Secular Retreat in Devon

At present only groups of up to six or two households can share holiday accommodation, but this is expected to change on July 19. See govuk for details

II listed Victorian gothic priory that became a luxury hotel in 2015. The Manor House's five en suite rooms come with vintage-style wallpaper. A cloister links the house to the hotel, but this feels like your own space — the garden is a good size too for evening soirees. Long walks in the Malvern hills aren't far away. **Details** Two nights' B&B for ten from £5,000 (handpickedhotels.co.uk)

12 Georgian glam in Gloucestershire

Sheepscombe House, a honey-hued Georgian manor house, lies just south of

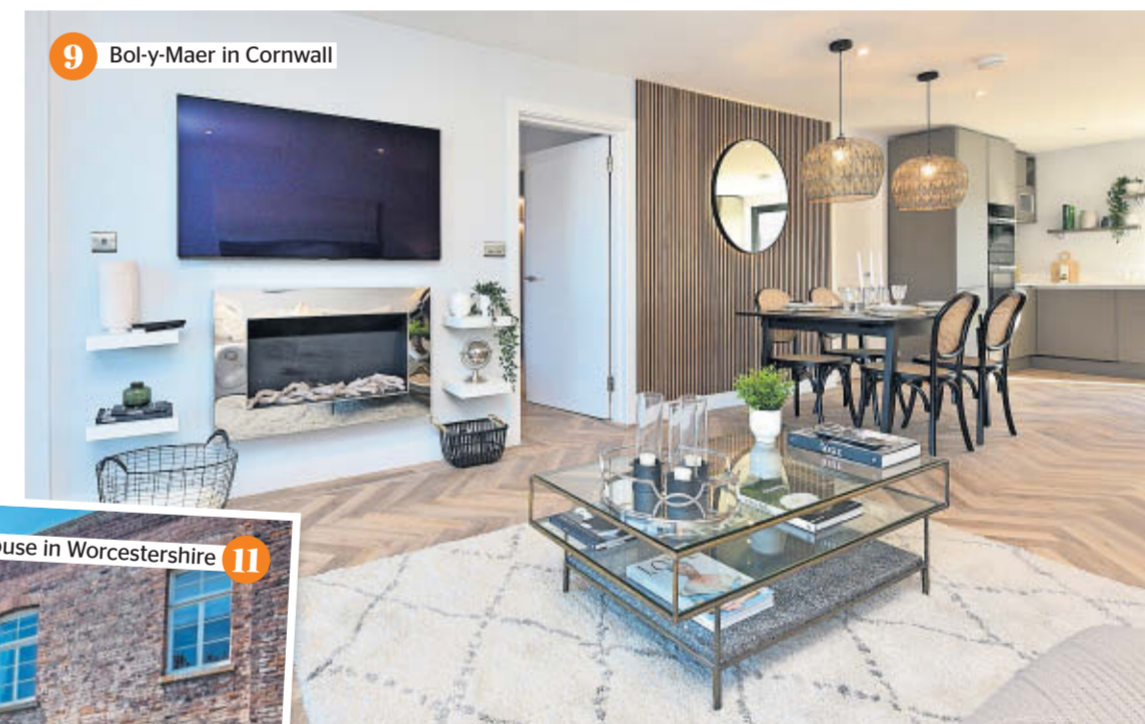


11 Manor House in Worcestershire

Gloucester, 1 hr 45 min by train from London Paddington. The traditional interiors — there's a Shaker kitchen and sweeping staircase — have been given a bright lick of paint for summer. Other indoor novelties include a drawing room, cinema room and music room. Outside a heated outdoor pool and wood-fired pizza oven add to the fun. Stage your own mini Wimbledon on the private grass tennis court. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £17,500 (luxurycotswoldrentals.co.uk)



5 Long Barn in North Yorkshire



9 Bol-y-Maer in Cornwall

13 In the pink in Wales

In Anglesey's captivating coastal town of Beaumaris, 16th-century Ty Pinc is as rosy as its name suggests, thanks to a candyfloss-colour exterior paint job. Inside it's just as colourful — with an extravagant lounge in pistachio and gold that feels rather Gatsby. Sleeping 12, the house is great for compartmentalising children and grown-ups — set up the young 'uns with a movie in the second lounge. The real selling point lies outside the front door, though: direct access to the town, spectacular coastal paths and views of the Menai Strait and Snowdonia. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £3,000 (premiercottages.co.uk)

14 Cosy Sussex cottage

Head back in time at the Forest House, a 17th-century East Sussex cottage with vaulted ceilings and inglenook fireplaces, antique furniture, plus the odd stylish modern sofa. Deer roam in the fields near by and the house lies a short walk from the village of Turners Hill, high in

the picturesque Sussex Weald. The steam-powered Bluebell Railway runs close by too. Splash out on dinner at the Michelin-starred Gravetye Manor hotel. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,500 (cabinsandcastles.co.uk)

15 Cornwall cool

Rose Cottage in Callington, east Cornwall, is thoroughly modern with a bright, Bauhaus-inspired decor with punchy pops of colour. The house rises out of the Tamar Valley, and a first-floor terrace is best for views; the large benches and sunloungers are well placed for sundown. Dip into the high season hullabaloo with afternoons on the coast — the delightful fishing harbour town of Polperro is an hour south, down meandering Cornish roads. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £4,532 (luxurycoastal.co.uk)

16 Isle of Wight luxe

Jump on a ferry across the Solent bound for this luxury villa and you'll almost feel

as though you've been abroad. Modern, monolithic Aquanaut, in Gurnard, is a swish four-bedroom home with a sociable island kitchen, earthy sisal carpet in the bedrooms and Turkish marble tiles in the bathroom. Rain won't stop play, thanks to the covered terrace and alfresco hot tub. You're not far from Gurnard's pebble and shingle beach, and Cowes, the sailing hub, is also near by. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £9,509 (dogfriendlyretreats.com)

17 Perthshire loch-side luxury

Invite everyone — including the dog — to turreted Port An Eilean, a massive Scottish country home in Pitlochry on the banks of Loch Tummel. Sleeping 24, the house has lustrous upholstery, a dining room that has its own bar, and a piano ready for someone to show off. Book a fishing or boat trip, or just soak up the sweeping mountain and loch views. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 24 from £14,962 (caninecottages.co.uk)

18 Cumbrian comfort

Two hot tubs, you say? Well, if you've filled the 12 en suite bedrooms at luxurious Howgills House, you'll probably need them. The Sedburgh property started life in 1879 as a mansion for a Victorian mill owner but reopened as a holiday home last year. There are plenty of spots to retreat to — the library, the outdoor den with pool table, or the fells on your doorstep — and a high-end catering service available. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 28 from £7,812 (howgillsaccommodation.co.uk)

19 Literary London

Friends or families reuniting at Henry's Townhouse, the one-time Marylebone home of Jane Austen's favourite brother, have the pick of London's nearby tourist attractions, but it may be hard to prise your party away from this four-storey, seven-bedroom Georgian masterpiece. Its artwork and antiques tip a hat to the Austen family and you'll find all the author's classics on the bookshelves. Staff are on hand for duties including serving breakfast in Monsieur Halavant's Pantry, the grand dining kitchen. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 14 from £4,950 (theluxurytravelbook.com)

20 Baths and bunks in Devon

If you're not tied to school holidays, hang on until September, when properties such as the Hideaway, in the Devon greenery between Exmoor National Park and the Blackdown Hills, have more availability. Grown-ups will tussle for the master bedroom with freestanding bath, while ankle-biters can cosy up in bunk beds. A midnight-blue lounge has cool geometric tiles on the floor, and the open-plan kitchen diner, framed by walls of glass, lets light flood in. The Lost Kitchen, a new restaurant serving a wood-fired menu, in nearby Chettiscombe, is the place to eat. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 11 from £8,000 (scottwilliams.co.uk)