

The best holiday homes to rent in the UK

Our edit of the loveliest holiday homes in the UK to rent, including the sharpest new cottages, manors and barns to take over as your own in the UK

Viola, Glastonbury

Just a short drive from the characterful boutiques of Glastonbury, this palatial, six-bedroom, house in the middle of bucolic Butleigh seems, once within, as though it could belong to another world entirely - offering those lucky enough to stay a halcyon holiday experience in utmost luxury. Ethereal in its very nature, balmy days here invite early morning laps of the heated outdoor pool, or a sunrise yoga session, followed by breakfast on one of the terraces (with a spread provided, in large part, by the generous welcome hamper, painstakingly sourced by estate manager and the property's friendly face, Sharon), lethargic rotations of the private lake (storybook-style row boat provided) and sunset soaks in the sunken hot tub, complete with pea-light lit pool house, open fire and sun-kissing views back across the Mendip Hills. And though summer might envelope the house and its 11 acres of undulating gardens (complete with tennis court, ornamental fountains and greenhouse) in a golden glow, the space is meticulously well-prepped for colder climes too. Separate from the house, a converted barn houses a full bar, ping-pong table, fully-equipped gym and, the piste de resistance, two F1 racing simulators, sit, encased by screens, ready to offer an exhilaratingly realistic driving experience. While inside, a crackling fire is ready-to-go within the sumptuous confines of the TV snug (though 'snug' perhaps undermines its larger proportions, a continual theme throughout), peppered with curiosities and a show-stopping sofa for the entire clan to curl up on.

The rest of the house too, which unfurls outward from the grand, double-height hallway, matches the same generous proportions, meaning that those staying have space to spread out not just between rooms but *within* rooms too. The kitchen for example, with views across all angles of the whimsical gardens, gives way to an intimate dining space, merging into a sitting area and then a light-filled orangery, the latter of which takes on a golden glow come twilight - and all without a wall between them.

Upstairs, toss a coin for the duck-egg blue master suite with its separate dressing room and giant, raised bath, each corner enjoying lofty views down over the swimming pool, lake and gardens. While distinctly-designed subsequent bedrooms are worthy in their own right too, playing with quirky wallpapers and their own unique features, from an in-room, freestanding tub to pops of pastel under varnished and vaulted oak beams.

A short meander up the tree-clad lane leads you to a tiny, unmanned farm shop, or more-aptly shed-shop, where freshly-baked baked goods, local cheeses and all manner of local chutneys, spreads and store cupboard essentials can be paid for via an honesty box in the corner. While slightly further afield, the Gothic peaks of Wells Cathedral, heady heights of Glastonbury Tor - a popular hill among walkers, topped by the roofless St Michael's Tower, a Grade I listed building - and historic market towns of Frome and Somerton, with its 17th-century architecture, can be found just a short drive away.

How a house manages to feel so elegant and graceful yet welcoming and liveable, is not for us to question, ours is just to congregate round one of the (many) fire pits and wonder at how we got so lucky. *Anya Meyerowitz*

Sleeps: 12

Price: From £7,495 per short break

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