

Secret Garden meets Great Gatsby

All at once wrapped in Dartmoor's mossy-hued clutches and minutes from the good-living village of Ashburton, this photographer's home is a portrait of minimal maximalism that has the River Dart in its backyard.



Botania is an Arts and Crafts manor built between 1903 and 1911 for Major Bolitho, a wealthy financial trader, and the famous landscape artist Thomas Mawson designed the gardens. They hold a very important place within British gardening history and are written about in many books. Specimen rhododendrons, fragrant camellias, and hydrangeas sit alongside enormous redwood cedars, all overlooking the Buckland Beacon.

Its current owner is a photographer who perhaps found something enchantingly irresistible about its sense of proportion: rooms big enough to dance in and enormous stone mullion windows through which giants could peer. Or maybe it was the labyrinthian blueprint, soft light, and secret doors concealed within wall panels that won him over. Authentic and imagined, curated and foraged; there's a folkloric feel to this Dartmoor manor that vibrates through each parquet mosaic, fossilised coral, and strawberry thief textile.

Botania is the analogue antidote to the digital age. With inglenook fireplaces, deep window seats, and a minstrels' gallery that overlooks a triple-height salon, it has all the hallmarks of Ruskin's pared-back, clean-lined ideology. And yet... among this monasticism, little curiosities hint at 21st-century living.

A wise old soul

There's a library made for drinking cocoa where books on pond life and portraiture sit alongside a Puglian passata bowl. Meanwhile, grayscale prints by Szabo and original Abstract Expressionist studies bring contrast to the manor's past life.

"This home wouldn't be out of place in a Baz Luhrmann film," says the owner. Expect a handcrafted kitchen from 'Plain English' in a "mash and kipper" palette that boasts a four-door Aga with twin plates, a Miele oven, a gas twin hob and Sub-Zero Fridge and freezer along with 2 Bosch dish-



washers and a Quooker boiling tap. There is also a utility room with a Miele washing machine and tumble dryer.

A garden with a life of its own

Tiny birds are nesting among the stonework and lilac wisteria braids the balustrades in this botanical landscape that the moors have reclaimed. You'll find cuckoo-pints sprouting through gravel, gladiator alliums swaying on spires, and bumblebees doing waggle dances on hyacinths.

If society calls, go to Ashburton, where bunting hangs like tin can telephones between bakers and antique curators. But, with a toe-dipping pond, walks from the door, and a nearby wild swimming river, you'll want to rush home. ® uniquehomestays.com



Room for 10

Botania sleeps up to ten guests with children of any age and well-behaved dogs welcomed. There are five bedrooms, ample parking for eight cars and a stay includes a delightful welcome hamper, iPad, Wi-Fi internet, Smart TV, Nespresso Vertuo coffee machine with pods, Weber charcoal barbecue, Kadai fire bowl, books and board games included, along with logs and kindling to get you started. Private catering is available upon request.

