

20 of the UK's most rejuvenating breaks

Embrace the wild weather in a cosy cottage or explore deserted wintry beaches with this pick of post-Christmas holidays designed to blow away the cobwebs

Early January — ideally the very first week — is the optimal time for a life-affirming break (writes *Gemma Bowes*). It doesn't have to be the Caribbean or skiing, it doesn't need to be expensive. The best cure I've found for the post-Christmas come-down is embracing the great UK outdoors — rainy, snowy or murky as it may be. There's nothing like crunching over icy mud or rambling along a windswept coast to jettison the cobwebs and shake off that overstuffed, hungover slump. You might even chuck yourself into an icy lake or the sea for an immune-system boost.

5. Seaside Kent for art and sea dips

So immaculately styled is this grade II listed home it appeared in *Homes & Gardens* magazine a couple of years ago. *Maison Blanche* is located near trendy Deal, and the mood is fittingly bohemian and fun, with a pinch of vintage glamour: a cobalt blue button-back sofa in a pastel pink lounge, antique iron beds, a wall of Penguin books in a reading nook, splendid flamingo curtains. You'll enjoy the wood-fired hot tub on a rear patio, the dog (£60 extra) will appreciate the 12 acres of garden. An ideal base for a long weekend dipping into the arty resorts — and possibly cold seas — of the Kent coast.

Details Three nights' self-catering for six from £1,095 (uniquehomestays.com)