

Naval gazing

The Historic Dockyard Chatham in Kent opens a new £9m project, the Command of the Oceans galleries, on 27 May. They feature objects from HMS Invincible. £21.50/£14, thedockyard.co.uk



Cabin fever

Eleven new cabins have opened on Loch Lubnaig in Strathryre, Scotland. They have hot tubs, hammocks, wood-burning stoves and sunken baths. Three nights from £295 for two, forestholidays.co.uk



Back to nature

19 Splendid isolation Lake District

Situated near the bottom of the steepest road in England, **Bird How** in Holmrook is in a super-remote location in one of the least-visited parts of the Lake District, above the river Esk. Small and rustic, it's perfect for a back-to-basics stay and for hikers wanting a challenge without the crowds. There's a twin bedroom and another with bunk beds (bring your own sheets) but there's no bathroom – use the kitchen for washing, and the toilet's in the former cow barn in the basement of the cottage.

● *Sleeps four, £642 a week in July/August, £335 low season, 0344 800 2070, nationaltrusholidays.org.uk*

20 Private meadow Suffolk

New this year, the **Hobbit Box** is a cleverly converted wooden horsebox in its own wildflower meadow on a 115-acre glamping site, Secret Meadows. With handcrafted wooden furniture, vintage velvet curtains and a Middle Earth theme (from goblets and round windows to Tolkien-themed prints on the walls), it's a total charmer. There are two double bunks, a wood-burning stove, private loo and shower and wooden deck for moonlit nights underneath the oak trees. The site is run by The Sinfield Nature Conservation Trust and there are nature trails through old woodland and meadows, and bushcraft and Wild Way workshops too.

● *Sleeps four, £894 a week in July/August, £779 low season, 01394 382992, secretmeadows.co.uk*

21 Converted hayloft Yorkshire Dales

With its gleaming white walls and stripped floors, **Nethergill's** two self-catering cottages might imply a vision of unsullied escapism – but most of their guests come here to get a bit of mud on their boots. On a working hill farm in Langstrothdale, these two converted haylofts are part of an environmentally sensitive retreat on 400 acres of moorland, meadows and pasture at the head of the river Wharfe. On site there are two observation hides (spot otters, black grouse, wagtails, redstarts, snipe and oystercatchers)



“**Bird How is in a super-remote location in one of the least-visited parts of the Lakes, perfect for a back-to-basics stay**”

and a field centre, while walks include direct access to Greenfield Forest (a red squirrel reserve) and the Dales Way.

● *Both cottages sleep four, £655 a week in July/August, £401 low season, 01756 761126, nethergill.co.uk*

22 Private island Highlands

There's something totally magical about Eilean Shona, the private island off the west coast of Scotland that inspired JM Barrie to write Peter Pan. And the recently opened **Old Schoolhouse** adds a dreamy new place to stay. Totally off-grid (with no electricity, Wi-Fi or phone signal), it's in a wild setting on a secluded bay with incredible views. The 1,300-acre island has eagles, otters and dolphins to spot. Inside, every inch has been beautifully styled, with a mix of retro and contemporary furniture (not surprising when the designer is Vanessa Branson – sister to Richard).

● *Sleeps four, £1,250 a week year-round (closed November to late March) including transfers from the mainland, 01967 431249, eileanshona.com*

23 Luxury log cabin Moray

A clean-lined take on the log cabin, **Culbin Edge** mixes natural experiences with total comfort. Inside the cosy forest sanctuary there's a modern kitchen, walk-in shower, bedroom with kingsize bed and living room with floor-to-ceiling windows. Outside a wooden hot tub and covered deck mean you can gaze at the surrounding fields and pine forest (and try to spot roe deer, badgers, foxes, red squirrels and pine martens) in all weathers. Wild sandy beaches are a walk away, or head to the pond to watch dragonflies. Recent guests have even seen the northern lights.

● *Sleeps four, £550 a week in July/August, £400 low season, 0117-204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk*

24 Railway cabin Brecon Beacons

**Ty Donkey** is the closest you'll come to a frontier cabin this side of Colorado – albeit with a bit more comfort than your average settler's homestead. The off-grid former railway cabin outside Crickhowell, in the Brecon Beacons

national park, is a mix of log cabin simplicity and rustic decadence, with a hand-built kitchen, freestanding bath, solar-powered lighting, wood-burning stove, double platform bed and chunky wooden bunks (for under-eights only). It's surrounded by 50 acres of woods and fields (also enjoyed by the two rescue donkeys that give the cabin its name) and visitors can spend their time swimming in a river pool and hiking through untamed countryside.

● *Sleeps four, £655 a week in July/August, £615 low season, 01237 426289, sugarandloaf.com*

25 Private forest Powys

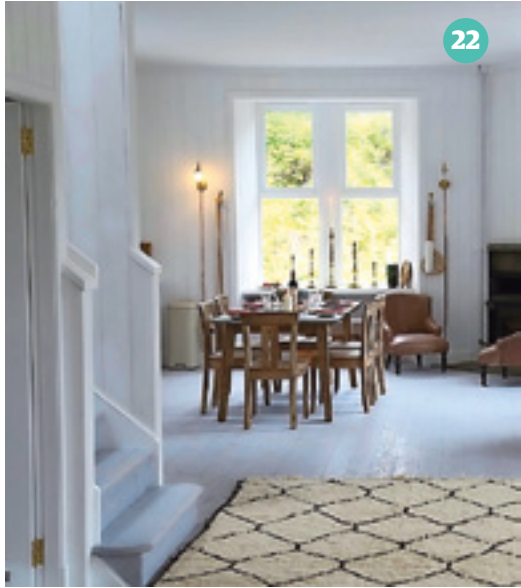
Named after the birds that sweep overhead, **Red Kite Barn** lies in a private forest north of Builth Wells in mid-Wales, surrounded by rolling hills. The traditional exterior hides a chic contemporary interior (and it's eco-friendly too, with ground source heat pumps and wool wall insulation). The upstairs open-plan living area is flooded with light from windows on all sides, and downstairs there are three bedrooms (with beds rescued from London's Savoy Hotel). But it's the isolated location that's the real winner: wrap up and enjoy a drink under the stars in the raised garden and forget about the rest of the world.

● *Sleeps six, £1,735 a week year-round (special rate of £1,200 for two people), 01865 764087, sheepskinlife.com*

26 Clifftop bothy north Devon

**Foreland Bothy**, the National Trust's newest holiday property, may not be what you're expecting if you're used to the organisation's plush self-catering cottages. In this clifftop bothy, right on the South West Coast Path above Lymmouth, facilities stretch to a composting toilet and a cold-water sink. Think of it as a stone tent: if you want light after sunset, pack a torch; if you want to cook, you'll need a camping stove. But what it lacks in frills, the bothy makes up for with unhindered access to wildlife. Instead of TV, enjoy panoramic sea views, tune in to the sound of stonechats on gorse bushes and spot black back gulls, kites, peregrines and, if you're lucky, red deer or free-roaming Exmoor ponies.

● *Sleeps four, £20 a night all year, 0344 800 2070, nationaltrusholidays.org.uk*



Architectural gems

27 Modernist bungalow Peak District

**Bridge End** is a luxury mid-century modern bungalow in Ashford-in-the-Water in the heart of the Peak District, with characteristic clean lines, large windows and open-plan layout. It was built in 1962 by a local architect, and has a big garden with Derbyshire's Wye river running along the bottom of it. Inside it's bright, airy and stylish, with carefully chosen furniture, four double bedrooms (plus four bath/shower rooms) and a games room with pool table. The location, in between Bakewell and Buxton, is great for exploring the whole region.

● *Sleeps eight, £1,675 a week in July/August, £1,369 low season, 07585 229002, bridgeendashford.com*

28 Art deco Northumberland

A three-storey 1930s-built house by the coast in Beadnell, **4-2 The Haven** has curves in all the right places. The bedrooms are downstairs and the living area is upstairs to make the most of the sea views. There's oodles of space, with a terrace on the first floor and a sun deck on the second; two large lounges and a games room, make it perfect for large groups and families. Sandy Beadnell Bay stretches for two miles; the harbour town of Seahouses is two miles away and Bamburgh Castle four miles away. Summer availability is very limited, however, so move quickly.

● *Sleeps nine, £2,085 a week in July/August, £1,050 low season, artdecoheadnell.co.uk, ownersdirect.co.uk*

29 Tudor pile Herefordshire

Live out your Tudor fantasies at **The Throne**, a grade II-listed gentleman's residence that dates back to 1478 (Charles I spent a night here during the English civil war). The house has secret doors, oak boards and panelling, stone flags, leaded windows, and wattle and daub walls – but marries old and new with the modern, bright, spacious kitchen and living area. There are seven bedrooms, and a lovely garden with trampoline and badminton net. Weobley is one of best-preserved “black and white villages” in England, full of timber-framed Tudor houses.

● *Sleeps 12, £1,913 a week year-round, 01873 890 573, cottage-holiday-wales.co.uk*

30 Gothic temple Buckinghamshire

For a very special holiday steeped in history, try the **Gothic Temple** at Stowe (though it comes at a price). Built in 1741 and surrounded by Capability Brown-designed gardens, the rooms are all circular with pilasters, and the sitting room is decorated with heraldry and mosaic and topped with a gilded dome. The bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom are squeezed into turrets. There is a first-floor belvedere at the top of a spiral staircase, with stone seats and a view over the grounds, and a roof terrace.

● *Sleeps four, £2,491 a week in July/August, £1,107 low season, 01628 825925, landmarktrust.org.uk*



31 Modernist masterpiece West Sussex

Designed by modernist British architect Patrick Gwynne in the late 1960s, **Vista Point**, close to the pebbly beach in East Preston, has real wow factor – it feels like you've stepped back in time, with furniture and wallpaper from the era completing the look. The grade II-listed house (Gwynne completed it in 1970) has a striking spiral staircase, five bedrooms, and an outdoor swimming pool (heated May to September) in the large garden, along with table football and trampoline. It's one for splashing out on for a special occasion.

● *Sleeps nine, £3,700 a week in July/August, £1,850 low season, vista-point.co.uk or themodernhouse.com*

32 Regency splendour Lake District

Hidden away in private woodland south of Newby Bridge – and 10 minutes from the shores of Windermere – **Eller How House** is a grand, self-contained wing of a Regency villa, and has beautiful views. Its striking exterior is matched by unusual features inside, from ornate plasterwork in the living room to a collection of “heads” holding up the ceiling in the master bedroom, and furniture to match. With three en-suite bedrooms there's plenty of space for families, and the lovely grounds, complete with summerhouse, are fun for children to explore. And, of course, the delights of the Lakes await, from walking on the southern fells to water sports on Windermere and Coniston.

● *Sleeps six, £1,250 a week in July/August, £795 low season, holidaylettings.co.uk*

33 Monastic retreat Scottish Borders

It will come as little surprise that **Kirknower**, now a peaceful, dog-friendly holiday cottage, was once a retreat for monks from Jedburgh monastery. Its double-height living area has an ecclesiastical feel, with a soaring arched window, huge tapestry and galleried bedroom (there are two more traditional bedrooms in a side wing). Colourful, boho decor and the wood-burning stove make this a convivial space to return to after a day walking or cycling around nearby Newcastleton forest, which is also home to one of Scotland's renowned 7Stanes mountain biking centres. (The cottage has a separate bike store.)

● *Sleeps six, £595 a week in July/August, £305 low season, 01665 830783 northumbria-cottages.co.uk*



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Readers' tips UK tearooms

★ **Winning tip Bumble and Bee, Exmouth**

With a fantastic location in the pretty Manor Gardens just off the beach, this place offers creme egg brownies, stacks and stacks of homemade fluffy pancakes, arty sketches on the walls and great fresh proper coffee. The best thing of all though (aside from the cute surfer-looking staff) are the incredible homemade scones – they're blinking perfect, exactly the right amount of crumble, flavour and Devonshire clotted cream.

● *bumbleandbee.co.uk sachapaisley*

The Sunshine Bakery, Leeds

This is a vintage, boutique cafe in Chapel Allerton headed by David Bennett, former chef for Marco Pierre-White. As well as the award-winning cupcakes and tasty handmade cakes and treats, this small cafe offers lunch served on dainty porcelain plates – the food is simple but delicious.

● *On Facebook ablaylock*

The Ash Tea Rooms, Stockport

This is much more than just a tearoom serving scrumptious food (afternoon tea from £13.50, including sandwiches, scones and cakes made on the premises) – it's a chocolate shop and a wonderful bakery, too. The millefeuilles are scrumptious – light, creamy, with strawberries or other seasonal fruit. I was treated to a



The Sunshine Bakery, Leeds

memorable birthday tea last year, and would rush back!

● *the-ash.co.uk malagnou*

**Old Stables Tea Rooms, Hay-on-Wye**

This cafe on Bear Street is a welcome haven for the weary bookshop lover. If it's sunny you can sit outside; if not, you can enjoy the great range of teas and homemade cakes in the traditional, cosy tearoom with a big fireplace. From traditional Welsh *bara brith* to delicious Danish pastries and 37 types of tea, there's plenty of choice.

● *On Facebook ID815996*

Aunt Martha's Victorian Tea Rooms, Drybrook, Gloucestershire

The food here is delicious and classic, with quirky titles such as Saxe-Coburg

Roll, Prince of Wales Repast and Her Ladyship's High Tea. Everything is served in fine bone china by staff in Victorian regalia.

● *auntmartha.co.uk angdale*

Steyning Tea Rooms, West Sussex

Descend the South Downs into Steyning and stick your head round the door of this charmingly shabby little corner cafe. My favourite thing is the duvet of Sussex cheese smothering a thick slice of proper local bread. I usually follow this with apple cake and ice-cream. My wife likes the savoury scones.

● *On Facebook Carlo Gilmour*

Glenarm Castle tearoom, County Antrim

A delightful and secluded haven, Glenarm Castle Walled Garden

and Tearoom combines Irish rustic charm with English country garden. Afternoon tea (£10.95) includes sandwiches, scones, cakes, and mini flowerpots with sugar mushrooms atop a delicious “chocolate compost.”

● *glenarmcastle.com Hannah Millar*

**Dolly's Tea Shoppe, Hinckley, Leics**

We recently booked this place for my dad's 90th birthday and were really pleased with the service and food. The vintage interior makes you feel as if you've stepped back in time to an age where the pace of life was slower. We were lavishly supplied with delicately cut sandwiches, homemade cakes and scones as well as fresh fruits, all with plenty of tea or coffee.

● *On Facebook ID707644*

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