

DUNE HOUSE

Suffolk

If anyone's responsible for the feeling that we could do better than flagstones and flowery curtains, it's Alain de Botton and his team at Living Architecture. The company commissions the world's best architects and then rents the buildings out. You could stay in a silver barn teetering on the edge of a hill in Suffolk, a property clad in tarred shingles in Kent or, our favourite, the Riba-award-winning Dune House, which looks like chunks of Toblerone hovering above marram grass on the Suffolk shoreline. Alternatively, wait until Grayson Perry finishes his gingerbread confection in Essex at the end of the year. As with many of the properties in this article, Dune House gets booked up months in advance, so reserve it as early as possible. *Dune House sleeps nine; four nights from £2,150; living-architecture.co.uk*

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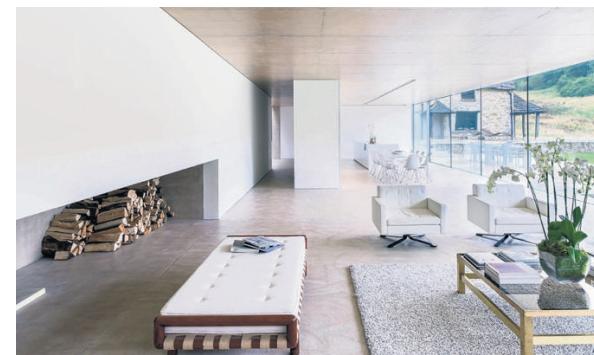
Isle of Skye

Hermits aren't usually fussy about design, but the loner who knocked up this cabin in an empty corner of Skye clearly wouldn't have coped in a cave. The crisp wooden cube has a log-burner, 1950s furniture, a fully kitted-out kitchen and floor-to-ceiling windows filled with views of bronze grasslands, silver loch and pewter sky. You'll feel like you're staying on the edge of the earth, but the owners live nearby and can help city-dwellers with lighting the fire and directions to the oyster shack. *Sleeps four; a week starts at £550; 0117 204 7830; canopyandstars.co.uk*

VISTA POINT

West Sussex

If there were a Miss England of holiday homes, Vista Point, in Angmering, would blitz it. Designed in 1969 by one of Britain's most famed modern architects, Patrick Gwynne (the Homewood, which he created for his parents, is now a National Trust showpiece), it's everything that was cool about the 1960s: colourful, loud and a little bit trippy. The spiral staircase makes you feel as if you're climbing inside a nut, and the rooms are topsy-turvy (the lounge is on top, the bedrooms beneath). Many original features remain – curved headboards and side tables, a floating sofa. There's also a pool, if you can't be fussed walking 150yd to the sea. *Sleeps eight; a week starts at £1,500; 020 7704 3504, themodernhouse.net*



Modern manors

Swap a frosty holiday cottage for the clean lines of an architectural masterpiece, says Laura Goulden

THE BARBICAN

London

The Queen called it "one of the modern wonders of the world", London residents recently voted it their least-favourite high-rise – whatever you think of the Barbican, it's one of Britain's most impressive 20th-century architectural feats. Airbnb has a handful of places to stay on the estate, including a light-filled one-bedroom flat sleeping two. Take a tour of the Centre to learn about the terrapins in the conservatory and how the builders painstakingly hand-drilled all the concrete surfaces to create a pleasing texture (£10.50; barbican.org.uk).

From £145 a night; airbnb.co.uk



THE FIND

Cotswolds

This cottage conversion is more Stella McCartney than Kevin McCloud. The original building stands in a woodland valley near Cheltenham, exactly as it always has, but it recently sprouted a sleek super-wing fashioned from grey Cotswold stone, concrete and glass. The inside has been detoxed, so that it's a mind-clearing vision of white and taupe. Unsurprisingly, pets aren't allowed – a stray hair or a muddy paw would play havoc with those white-leather sofas, white bedsheets and iceberg-size bathtubs – but children are welcome.

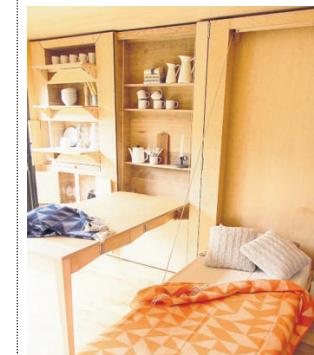
Sleeps 12; four nights from £2,600; 01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com



CROFT 103

Sutherland

It's out with straight lines and in with curves at Croft 103, two semicircular self-catering properties on the northernmost edge of mainland Britain, at Durness. The only things Shore Cottage and Hill Cottage have in common with actual cottages are the stone walls. Everything else about them is ultramodern: zinc roofs, solar panels (the buildings are carbon negative) and glass fronts onto Loch Eriboll, one of the deepest sea lochs in Britain. Interiors are unfussy but cosy, with concrete floors, wood paneling, sink-in armchairs and a log-burner. There are bathtubs big enough for two outside, so you can feel the Atlantic air on your face while splashing about in 60C seas. *Both cottages sleep two; a week starts at £1,500; 01971 511202, croft103.com*



LAKE DISTRICT LOVE SHACK

Cumbria

The setting, in a private woodland with views over Windermere, is a little bit The Cabin in the Woods. So much so that a low-budget horror flick was filmed here in 2006. But don't focus on that – murderous zombies only attack in cobwebby shacks, and this place is anything but. The boxy, local-timber-clad cabin has reclaimed-cedar paneling, mid-20th-century furniture and a decked terrace for sundowners and spotting red squirrels – the only likely intruders.

Sleeps two; four nights from £350; 015394 41242, lakelistrictloveshack.com

TY HEDFAN

Powys

You get the impression that the owners of Ty Hedfan didn't want a house: they wanted to float around in a bubble. The staircase hovers, the fireplace dangles and a glass-walled living room floats over the bubbling Ysgir River. It's the family home of the partners at Featherstone Young architects, who rent it out when they're away. Sheets of glass are held together with slices of local pennant stone and slate, and all that light makes for a pretty cheery interior, as do lashings of wood, dabs of colour and Welsh knitted blankets. The Brecon Beacons are on your doorstep and Hay-on-Wye is a short drive away. *Sleeps eight; a week starts at £950; ty-hedfan.co.uk*



SKY DEN

Northumberland

The chipper television presenter George Clarke pieced together this extravagant treehouse in Kielder Water & Forest Park during the second series of his Amazing Spaces show. The best bit of this wooden structure is the triangular loft space, with walls that open up to

Back to the 1960s at Vista Point

reveal some of the least light-polluted skies in Britain. The main section of the house has everything you need niftily shoehorned in – foldaway beds, a kitchen and a wet room. Then there's a steel tube with a wood-burning stove, so you can brew up outdoors when the weather's inclement – it sometimes rains in Northumberland. *Sleeps four; from £150 a night; 0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk*

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Global grand designs

HOTEL LE CORBUSIER, MARSEILLES

Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles's 12-storey "machine for living in", is probably the master of modern architecture's most famous work. And design fans can stay in it, for peanuts. That's like a film buff being given a part in a Hitchcock film. The rooms are tiny, but who cares? The views from the rooftop stretch to the Med (00 33 4 91 16 78 00, gerardinocorbusier.com; rooms sleeping four from £98 a night).

THE TONY CURTIS ESTATE, PALM SPRINGS

For a modernist pilgrimage, Palm Springs, California, is the place. And to arrange a stay in a slick midcentury pool-party pad, you need Vacation Palm Springs. The rental company even has Tony Curtis's old place on its books, with its Hollywood good looks and mountain views (sleeps 10; 00 1 800 590 3110, vacationpalmSprings.com; double from £250, B&B).

TAUT'S HOME, BERLIN

It wasn't the German architect Bruno Taut's actual abode, but it's one of many cutting-edge homes he designed in the first half of the 20th century. This one, on his Unesco-listed Horseshoe Estate, in south Berlin, has bright walls and 1930s fittings (sleeps four; 020 7704 3504, modernhouse.net; three nights from £429).