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THE  TIMES

### Britain's 20 best beach houses



5. Artists' Beach House, Whitstable, Kent

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## From an artist's house in Kent to a Cornish cottage or a Fife villa, Joanne O'Connor picks spots for a seaside break

### South Coast

#### 1 Sea Gem

##### Camber, East Sussex

Camber's impressive dunes are a popular location for film and photo shoots, and when this ultra-contemporary beach pad is not being used as a base for crews, it's available for holiday lets. Nautical touches such as porthole windows, wooden decking and uninterrupted ocean views lend a cool cruise-ship vibe.

**Details** £4,250 per week between July 17 and August 5 for eight (01797 224754, [camberbeach.co.uk](http://camberbeach.co.uk))

#### 2 The Beach House

##### Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex

The design may be modern but this spacious beach retreat is all about the simple pleasures of an old-fashioned seaside holiday. The decor is bright and breezy with white walls and shuttered windows. The beach is just steps away and is quiet even at the height of summer. With five bedrooms and a separate sitting room which has a football table and TV, it's perfect for large family groups.

**Details** From £975 per week for ten (020-8675 2004, [sawdays.co.uk](http://sawdays.co.uk))

#### 3 SeaGlass

##### Cowes, Isle of Wight

More California than Cowes, this sleek, glass-fronted beach retreat with six bedrooms boasts an extensive teak deck with sea views on one side and a sheltered courtyard and outdoor heated pool on the other. It's insanely expensive but totally lovely. A short walk through the wood takes you down to the property's private beach.

**Details** About £8,000 per week for 11 (01983 866455, [island-holiday-homes.net](http://island-holiday-homes.net))

### South East

#### 4 Manor Beach Cottages

##### Osea Island, Essex

For pure escapism these two beach cottages, on a peaceful private island in the Blackwater Estuary, are hard to beat. Though it's just an hour's drive from London, Osea — only accessible by car at low tide — feels much farther away. The stylish cottages have four-poster beds, roll-top baths, woodburning stoves and antique furniture. There's an outdoor pool and gym and the

shoreline is a short stroll away.

**Details** £968 a week from August 2 or 9 in Manor Beach Cottage II, sleeping four (0845 268 0763, cottages4you.co.uk)

### 5 Artists' Beach House

#### Whitstable, Kent

Expect to attract envious stares from passers-by as you sit on the veranda of this elegant four-bedroom Edwardian house overlooking Tankerton Beach. The weather-bleached clapboard exterior, cosy sitting room and crisp, white bedrooms have featured on the pages of many fashion and interiors magazines. The chi-chi restaurants and shops of Whitstable are a short stroll along the pebble beach.

**Details** £3,250 a week starting July 12 for eight (01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com)

### 6 Monkey Beach Cottage

#### Mersea Island, Essex

Frequented by seafood lovers and sailors, Mersea is a popular day-trip destination in Essex. Stay at the charming three-bedroom Monkey Beach Cottage and you can enjoy this atmospheric estuary island after the visitors have gone home. This 300-year-old weatherboarded house has been in the owner's family for decades, which gives it the feel of a much-loved home rather than a bland holiday let. Not only is it one of the most beautiful houses on the island, but it also enjoys one of the best locations, overlooking the beach and is a short walk from West Mersea's celebrated oyster sheds and seafood shacks.

**Details** £700 a week in July for seven (07973 741148, monkeybeachcottage.co.uk)

## East Anglia

### 7 Edinburgh House

#### Aldeburgh, Suffolk

The Suffolk coastline has no shortage of enticing places to stay, but this four-bedroom Georgian house really stands out — and not just because of its sky-blue façade. The location, opposite Aldeburgh's pebbly beach, is excellent, but the interior is as appealing with a fresh, contemporary feel and plenty of details such as a piano and master bedroom with balcony overlooking the sea.

**Details** £1,317 a week starting July 5 for eight (01728 638962, bestofsuffolk.co.uk/suffolk-cottages)

### 8 Martello Tower

#### Aldeburgh, Suffolk

This restored martello tower was one of a chain built in the early 19th century to keep out Napoleon. Standing at the root of the Orford Ness peninsula, between the River Alde and the sea, it's been restored by the Landmark Trust and today its vaulted brick interiors, teak floors and parapets make for a dramatic coastal hideaway.

**Details** £1,638 a week starting July 15 for four (01628 825925, landmarktrust.org.uk)

### 9 Friday's Barn

#### Salthouse, Norfolk

This recently refurbished barn with four bedrooms makes a great family getaway with an airy open-plan living area, large farmhouse kitchen table, an attractive garden and uninterrupted views across the saltmarshes and sand dunes of this stretch of Norfolk coast. Pick up a seafood platter and some crab sandwiches from Cookie's Crab Shop in the village and head for the shingle beach, a short walk away for a picnic.

**Details** £840 per week in June, for eight (01485 211022, norfolkhideaways.co.uk)

## West Country

### 10 Shell House

#### Porlock Weir/Devon

Watch the boats coming and going in the harbour from the patio of this peaceful hideaway on the edge of Exmoor. Highlights include the light and airy open-plan living area with high-spec kitchen and views of the attractive tidal inlet, and a huge cinema and games room. There are two good restaurants and a real ale pub on your doorstep.

**Details** £2,350 per week for eight (01865 764087, sheepskinlife.com)

### 11 Black Moon

#### St Ives, Cornwall

Forget cute fishermen's cottages, this sexy waterside apartment raises the bar for self-catering accommodation in Cornwall. Dark granite walls, fibre-optic lighting, a super king-sized bed, Bose music system and walk-in showers combine to create a decadent hideaway for two with stunning views across St Ives Bay. At night you can fall asleep to the sound of the surf crashing below.

**Details** £2,150 per week for two, arriving August 18 (020-8740 3097, beachspoke.com)

### 12 Penkenna Beach Barn

#### Crackington Haven, Cornwall

There is no need to fight over who gets the best bedroom at this delightful stone barn — all three have sea views. The feel throughout is relaxed and rustic, with whitewashed walls, slate floors and beamed ceilings. There's a walled garden and a lovely courtyard. Walk through the gate and you're right on the pebble beach.

**Details** £1,825 per week for six, starting June 15 (01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com)

### 13 Sea Garden Cottages

#### Tresco, Isles of Scilly

The Island Hotel on Tresco completed a major refurbishment last year which included the construction of several luxury