



BEST OF BRITISH

Welcome to a celebration of all things British: from food festivals and our wonderful honey, to the best places to rent for a seaside holiday and gourmet travels to Suffolk in search of gastronomic perfection...





Beside the seaside

Pay a visit to the coastal areas of the British Isles this summer and you'll be delighted with what you can find so close to home, as Debbie Taylor discovers



THIS PAGE, HOUSE AND GARDENS AT BAY VIEW. OPPOSITE: DRAMATIC VISTA DOWN TO ROBIN HOOD'S BAY



WHITBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE BAY VIEW

Rocky brown cliffs; sweet shops seemingly preserved in aspic; cobbled streets snaking through town towards a watercolour harbour: Whitby offers the old-fashioned British seaside holiday on a plate – with a side-order of cockles, of course.

The parish is a postcard-perfect backdrop for exploring rock pools, building sandcastles and paddling in the North Sea. Overlooking Robin Hood's Bay is Bay View, a stables conversion with incredible coast and countryside views. From its open-plan layout and local artworks to wood-burning stove and mezzanine area for sleeping, the place epitomises relaxation.

A stroll down to Robin Hood's Bay village is a must. The steep road runs down to the shore; a pub is located conveniently at the end if you've worked up a thirst. Away from the coast, take to the mile-long Roman road (which dates back to AD1) or poke around the ruins of 13th-century Whitby Abbey; perched forebodingly on a cliff top above the town, it exudes Gothic splendour, especially in its decaying state.

The 200 steps leading to and from the abbey allow you to whet your appetite for Greens (greensofwhitby.com), a restaurant and bistro near the harbour. If you're up early, you might see chef Rob Green at the docks, cherry-picking from the day's catch. His six-course tasting menu is a highlight of Whitby's cuisine. For more casual eating, head to Fusco's Royal Fisheries (fuscowhitby.com) and add a vinegar tang to the salty air with fish and crinkle-cut chips wrapped in newspaper. Also, take home a tasty souvenir in the form of kipper from Fortune's (fortuneskippers.co.uk), a tiny smokehouse and shop to the east of the town. The Fortunes have been smoking fish for 139 years; try one of their kippers and you'll understand how they've managed to stay in business so long.

THE DETAIL Bay View (uniquehomestays.com) sleeps two and costs from £630 a week. The Beach House (the-beachhouse.co.uk) sleeps six from £555 a week. Cliff House and Over Cliff (cliffhousewhitby.co.uk) both sleep two from £195 a week.

UK

WHERE TO STAY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
THE BEACH AT WHITSTABLE.;
ARTISTS' BEACH HOUSE
INTERIOR; OVERLOOKING THE
BEACH AND THE TERRACE



WHITSTABLE, KENT ARTISTS' BEACH HOUSE

It may have once been a fishing village, but Whitstable now flourishes as a bohemian hotspot, with galleries sandwiched between boutiques and bric-a-brac shops. The aptly named Artists' Beach House is often used as a studio by writers, photographers and filmmakers – unsurprisingly, given that the 180-degree views of Tankerton beach from its wraparound deck could inspire even the least creative minds. Should you be struck with the urge to paint, a plethora of art books and an easel are on hand to help you make the most of the moment.

Whitstable is probably best known for its oysters, still harvested from the shoreline as they have been for centuries. Nip into the local museum for a history lesson on the town and then head down to the harbour to taste why the seafood has made the place so famous.

Local fishermen fill quayside stalls with their daily offerings of shellfish and wet fish – pick up some fresh pollack or sea bass to fry back at your home-from-home. The 14-seat Wheelers Oyster Bar (whitstable-shellfish.co.uk) on the High Street has been serving fishy delights for 150 years – go for the full feast and take your pick of

seaside classics such as bowls of eels, king prawns with mayonnaise, smoked mackerel or rollmops. For afters, choose from Kent's wide range of artisan cheeses at The Cheese Box (thecheesebox.co.uk): Winterdale Shaw, the county's take on cheddar, and the buttery Bows Brie will be a welcome addition to any cheese board. If you can't wait to get your purchase home, you can tuck in at their on-site wine bar.

THE DETAIL Artists' Beach House (uniquehomestays.co.uk) sleeps eight and costs from £2,250 a week in low season. Yards from the beach, Harbour Cottage (welcomecottages.com) costs from £418 a week in low season. Author and artist Emma Thomson rents out the charming 17th-century Buttercup Studios (seewhitstable.com/Buttercup-Studios-Self-Catering-Whitstable.html), two minutes' walk from the beach and sleeping two, from £500 a week in low season. Whitstable Cottage Company (whitstablecottagecompany.com) has everything from fishermen's cottages to modern beachfront apartments to rent.

