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THE SUNDAY TIMES

The 50 best cottages 2014

Summer will come, we promise. When it does, treat yourself to a cracking home from home. We have the pick of this year's holiday properties

Jeremy Lazell Published: 9 February 2014



The beach is so much more fun when you've got a cottage to go back to after (Maria Pavlova)

Where two prices are given, they are for the cheapest and most expensive weeks available at the time of going to press

Beach

1 Tresco, Isles of Scilly

Sleeps 6

The Flying Boat Cottages are so close to New Grimsby beach, you could chuck a Frisbee to your kids from the balcony. And what a beach: sugar-fine, and only a coconut short of the Caribbean. The cedar-clad modern houses are posh, grown-up surfer shacks, with huge windows opening onto the beach, and grant free access to the Flying Boat Club's indoor pool, spa, tennis courts and the golf course at St Mary's. £1,475/£4,725; 01720 422849, tresco.co.uk

2 Padstow, Cornwall

Sleeps 10

Lottery losers, look away now. The Cornish Beach House is unashamedly high-end, an oak, glass and steel luxury pad on the bone-whitest of beaches —

with a price tag to match. Steps from the sand at Booby's Bay, the five-bedroom house has original artworks, Ralph Lauren furnishings, a foreverness of folding glass doors and a cinema room.

£6,580/£8,995; 01242 220006, thewowhousecompany.com

3 Bude, Cornwall

Sleeps 2

We wanted to leave the Beach Hut out. Tori Amos has used it in a music video, Demi Moore has used it in a film, we've featured it before. It's been done. But this 1920s tearoom turned boutique beach hut is just too good, clinging to the cliffs above its own tiny cove, with a clapboard veranda licked by sea spray.

£1,725/£3,000; 01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com

4 Charmouth, Dorset

Sleeps 6

It's more than a fossil toss from Stonebarrow Lodge to the Jurassic Coast beaches of Charmouth, but only just. Great for families, the three-bedroom cottage is only half a mile from the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, where kids can enjoy rock-pool rambles — but good luck getting them out of the panoramic two-acre garden and outdoor hot tub.

£1,413/£1,887; 01326 555555, classic.co.uk

5 Sandbanks, Dorset

Sleeps 7

We don't get Beachboys. It's 50yd from the beach in a part of the world where property prices are up there with Kensington's; it's a three-storey, four-bedroom, fancy-pants modernist house near the iconic Jazz Cafe; and it can be yours for less than £1,000 a week. Book now, before the owners spot the mistake.

£934/£1,884; 01747 828170, hideaways.co.uk; ref H301

6 Rye, East Sussex

Sleeps 7

If Ikea did seafront houses with a dash of funky 1960s design, they'd look like No 7. Bright, breezy and full of colour, with the odd Eames lounge chair and retro sideboard to keep it hip, it's also a snip, given that you're a minute from Camber Sands.

£800/£1,200; 01242 522525, www.camberbeachhouses.co.uk

it has views that are worth the journey alone. Mornacott's owners let kids feed the chickens and cows, while the gamekeeper leads night safaris in search of deer and owls.

£560/£1,040; 01769 550102, mornacott.co.uk

19 Birlingham, Worcestershire

Sleeps 6

Picture a chocolate-box Cotswold thatched cottage: wisteria under the eaves and an orchard in the garden; a Wendy house surrounded by lupins and uneven floorboards under too-low doorways; a thatched pub in the village serving pints of Wye Valley ale. Welcome to Pollyanna, the most glorious cliché on the cottage-rental map.

£835/£1,495; 01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com

20 Llandrindod Wells, Powys

Sleeps 4

Straw Cottage, a two-bedroom straw-bale house on a 130-acre hill farm at the edge of the Cambrian Mountains, is the ultimate antidote to gadget-addled family life. There's no electricity, but it has a stream begging to be dammed, ponds straining to be dipped and woods calling out to any budding Ray Mears. Time to bid farewell to the PlayStation.

£500/£750; 01597 829298, tywynfarm.co.uk

21 Yoxford, Suffolk

Sleeps 2

The owners of Beech House Gite are designers, and it shows. The restoration of this livestock barn is their baby, with touches so loving, you'll want to hug them: an exposed brick bathroom, a four-poster, an open-plan kitchen/lounge, with a vaulted ceiling, that spills out onto a rose-littered lavender garden.

£375/£600; 01502 724782, heritagehideaways.com

22 Cromer, Norfolk

Sleeps 2

Once the gate lodge for Felbrigg Hall, grade II listed Cromer Lodge is a cosy version of the 17th-century pile, with towering chimneys and red-brick walls, offering access to the estate long after holiday hoi polloi have shuffled back to their static homes. There are forest walks on your doorstep, and West Runton and Cromer beaches are 10 minutes away by car.

£345/£725; 0844 335 1287, nationaltrustcottages.co.uk

23 Bassenthwaite, Cumbria

Sleeps 8

It's not every cottage that looks out on England's fourth highest peak and barely has to crane its neck, but the Dash is no ordinary cottage. This rugged Lakeland farmhouse is on a 150-acre hill farm in the shadow of 3,054ft Skiddaw, at the foot of the Whitewater Dash waterfall, and half a mile from the nearest neighbour.

£570/£1,150; 01697 371217, thedash.co.uk

24 Spean Bridge, Highlands

Sleeps 7

You want countryside? We'll give you countryside. Eleven miles from the closest public road — and about 45 minutes from the nearest pint of milk — Strathossian is one of the remotest cottages on the 57,000-acre Corroul Estate, about an hour's drive from Fort William. You'd better like fishing or walking: surrounded by magnificent Highland scenery, this is a dream spot for Munro-baggers and anglers, but that's pretty much the whole glorious story.

£650/£850; 01456 486358, wildernesscottages.co.uk



South Molton, Devon, 18 (Don Salisbury)

£1,164/£2,792; 01647 433593, www.helpfulexperiences.com; ref L160

25 Portaferry, Co Down

Sleeps 4

A tangle of alleys that echo with the mewls of gulls, Portaferry is a pretty seaside town at the mouth of Strangford Lough. Cuan Cottage is a classic Strangford fisherman's cottage on a narrow lane that runs down to the marina. Craic-laden pubs abound, with sunset over the Narrows from Windmill Hill, above town, the perfect way to walk up a thirst.

£300/£450; 01786 871246, lovetoescape.com

Designer

26 Newton Ferrers, Devon

Sleeps 8

Myrtle Quay is the Marmite of Devon's cottages — you'll either love the geometric box design or think it resembles a Rediffusion TV. Either way, the setting of this show-home-on-sea will make you swoon. It's on the steep banks of Newton Creek, so the views from the patio are stunning, while the sleek minimalist interior is wonderfully serene.