

AN INSIDER  
GUIDE TO PARIS

# Condé Nast Traveller

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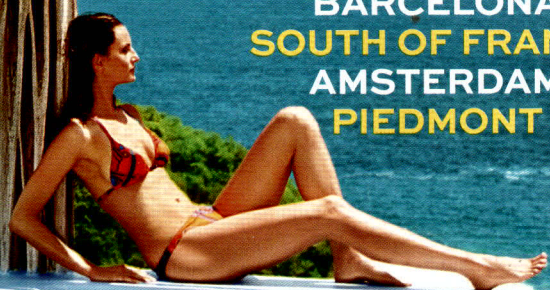
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## EUROPEAN ESCAPES

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**BEST BRITISH  
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TONI COLLETT

## ISLAND LIVING

IBIZA ★ CUBA ★ ICELAND ★ MOZAMBIQUE ★ CORSICA

## NATURAL RETREATS RESIDENCES

JOHN O'GROATS, SCOTLAND

Although destined to be eternally monopolised by Lycra-clad cyclists taking photos next to the John O'Groats signpost before the epic ride to Land's End, the north-eastern tip of Scotland has now received an injection of style. After buying the 1870s John O'Groats Hotel, the Natural Retreats group set about adding a Norse-style extension and a fleet of stand-alone eco-lodges. Made from Scottish-larch timber, topped with living sedum roofs and propped up by teepee-style poles, the three-bedroom houses are positioned to take in the drama of the North Sea through floor-to-ceiling glass. Inside, they're tricked out with homespun yarn: tartan rugs thrown across beds, heather-coloured cushions on the sofas and locally made pendant lights. Rain-style showers, under-floor heating and a log burner will sort everyone out after wet walks to craggy Dunnet Head, the northernmost point of the British Isles. The Natural Retreats RIB goes seal-, dolphin- and puffin-spotting, there's a little spa in the hotel for a Swedish massage and the Storehouse café serves seafood platters, extra-large hot chocolates and still-warm-from-the-oven cakes.

**SLEEPS** Six

**BOOK IT** Three-night weekend from £416; [www.naturalretreats.com](http://www.naturalretreats.com)



## THE PARISIAN STAMFORD, RUTLAND

Glowing golden in the evening sun and used in many of Cambridge's older colleges, the stone of Rutland is as magnificent as that of the Cotswolds, but the area is largely unknown to visitors. This cottage once formed the stables of the elegant Georgian rectory next door and was renovated by heritage builders Dovetail & Capstone. It's a Farrow & Ball Tardis, opening onto a lavender-scented terrace which looks over lawns and mature chestnut trees – a sheltered spot to stretch out on wicker loungers, read a book or sit with a glass of prosecco watching swallows loop the loop. The sitting room is filled with books, throws and antiques from local expert Hester Cresswell. Oak stairs curve up to the one gorgeous bedroom with its soft-grey-painted rafters. Under the wool-and-alpaca-filled duvet there's a Westin Heavenly mattress, imported from the USA because the well-travelled owners believe that a good night's sleep is half the holiday. In the morning, nip out to nearby Stamford to pick up croissants from British Baker of the Year Julian Carter at the Hambleton Bakery or go to Otters Smokehouse and Deli in Oakham for home-smoked salmon. Afterwards, stroll it off on the Four Counties Walk.

**SLEEPS** Two

**BOOK IT** Three-night weekend from £600; [www.uniquehomestays.com](http://www.uniquehomestays.com)

## THE ORCHARD HOUSE

MONNINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE

It has been a three-year labour of love to deck out this 18th-century, red-brick manor for a new generation. The cleverest thing was the addition of new windows, including a double-height pane of glass halfway up the staircase to bring light to previously dark corners. The interiors are country chic, a mix of Oka-esque fresh and new with old family pieces, velvet Day Birger et Mikkelsen cushions on herringbone wool sofas and an oak dining table that seats up to 18 (handy when you take the adjoining three-bedroom cottage at the same time). The bounty left on the kitchen counter is more than thoughtful: bottles of Chablis, quail eggs and celery salt, locally churned butter, bread and a basket of fresh walnuts. Bedrooms are big and no one gets a bum deal, even the two up in the attic feel spoiling, and each has their own bathroom. This is cider land and the village is surrounded by apple-tree orchards. Hereford and its soaring cathedral is 15 minutes' drive in one direction and Hay-on-Wye the same distance in the other, which explains why the house is booked up months in advance for the literary festival.

**SLEEPS** 18

**BOOK IT** Three-night weekend from £2,200; [www.sugarandloaf.com](http://www.sugarandloaf.com)

