

UK

The best Christmas cottages in the UK to book now

Fancy a luxury festive retreat in the Cotswolds, an Edwardian villa in Wales or a harbourside stay in Cornwall?



Birkdale House, near Windermere

Joanna Tweedy | Friday October 29 2021, 5.00pm, The Times

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1. Birkdale House, Lake District

The first thing you'll notice at the 19th-century Birkdale House, on the private Matson Ground Estate a mile and a half from Windermere, is the striking green woodwork. A grand pre-lockdown refurb has updated the place while celebrating original features, including stained-glass windows, a sweeping mahogany staircase and an original butler's bell panel. If you've done enough cooking in the roomy island kitchen, the local gastropub delivers. Binge on Christmas flicks in the cellar cinema room (it has a pool table too) and toast marshmallows on the terrace fire pit. All five bedrooms, two with en suites, have views of Windermere.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £6,223

birkdalewindermere.co.uk



Henry's in Port Issac

2. Henry's, Cornwall

Named after a local chap who ran the shop below this whitewashed Cornish retreat, Henry's is no more than 30 paces from Port Isaac's harbour. It's owned by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, the interiors star, who renovated the three-bedroom property (sleeping six) while respecting its original features. There are glossy black floorboards, navy sofas, a crackling fire and exposed timbers alongside floral flourishes and pops of blush and lavender. You could cook, but why would you? Port Isaac's gastro credentials are strong: we recommend the Stargazy Inn or Pilchards at Port Gaverne, or keep it simple with a pasty and a pint of locally brewed Proper Job ale at the Golden Lion on Fore Street.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for six from £1,790 (latitude50.co.uk)



One of the perks at Maison Blanche, Kent
DAVID CURRAN

3. Maison Blanche, Kent

The Kent seaside town of Deal comes with a smart high street, a promenade flanked by the pebble beach, and historic pubs that creak with smugglers' tales. Just south of Deal, the tiny enclave of Ripple is home to the 17th-century Maison Blanche. As the name suggests, its exterior is bright white, with a front door and window frames in playful baby pink. Inside, it's a jaunty place to spend a week, with pale pink walls, colourful velour sofas, a mini library and sink-in beds. The rustic kitchen is a fine place to carve up a turkey-centred feast.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for six from £3,850 (uniquehomestays.com)



Hafod Cae Maen, Gwynedd
SAWDAYS

4. Hafod Cae Maen, Gwynedd

Hafod Cae Maen will put you among rolling Welsh countryside this Christmas. Sleeping eight, this elegant Edwardian villa is a luxury rural retreat overlooking the verdant Dwyryd estuary. There's a panelled library, four snug bedrooms, plenty of board games and terraced gardens that are ideal for hide-and-seek with children. Portmeirion, modelled on an Italian village and with a charming beach, is a ten-minute walk away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £3,200 (sawdays.co.uk)



No 7 Upper Lansdown, Somerset

5. No 7 Upper Lansdown, Somerset

The golden architecture of Bath paints a fine festive picture and No 7 Upper Lansdown, a two-bedroom mews house that sleeps four, is the perfect place to celebrate. There are plenty of luxury touches, including John Cullen mood lighting and Ortigia Sicilia products. The big day? The dining table seats six and the kitchen is fit for a chef, let alone a home cook. The centre of the city, all dressed up in twinkling lights, is a ten-minute walk away.

Details Three nights' self-catering for four from £1,050 (homewoodbath.co.uk)



Althea Cottage in Padstow

6. Althea Cottage, Cornwall

In winter Padstow harbour glints with a merry garland of lights, there's no tourist throng and the seafood is as good as ever. On the high street the two-up, two-down cottage Althea sleeps four in a comfy double and a twin. It dates back to 1860 and comes with an atmospheric arched timbered roof and gothic-style windows. The pine island kitchen has prep space galore, though do test out Padstow's fabled foodie credentials too. Long walks are a must – the round trip west to Harlyn Bay, just shy of seven miles, takes in some of north Cornwall's most winsome coastal scenery.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £840 (harbourholidays.co.uk)

- [Best family-friendly Christmas day trips](#)



Hoste Barn, Norfolk

7. Hoste Barn, Norfolk

The converted Hoste Barn, in the grounds of a 16th-century manor house, sleeps four but feels big, thanks to the original 15m vaulted timber-framed roof. Uncork the wine and get the food going in the oak and granite kitchen before eating in the open-plan dining and living room. Sneak off to the snug to read a new book or retreat to the homely bedrooms – a twin and a double, both of which come with billowing white duvets. Wild and windy beaches are a 20-minute drive away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £1,875 (premiercottages.co.uk)



Fritton Lake Farm Cottages, Norfolk
EDVINAS BRUZAS

8. Fritton Lake Farm Cottages, Norfolk

Cottage is a misnomer when it comes to the properties at Fritton Lake Farm. These are trendy design-led cabins, sleeping up to six, with chic minimalist decor that manages to keep cosiness at the fore with the inclusion of wood-burning stoves. Guests can also access the Club House, a gorgeous members-only gastropub, although the kitchen is closed on Christmas Day. The outdoor heated pool is ideal for early morning invigoration, or hardier folks will just plunge straight into the lake for a wild swim. Great Yarmouth is 20 minutes away by car and its 15-mile beach is gloriously empty in December.

Details Four nights' self-catering for six from £2,169 (frittonlake.co.uk)



33 The Green, Devon

9. 33 The Green, Devon

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Revealed: the UK's most exceptional entrepreneurs



Meet the woman who believes we may be on track for carbon neutrality before time runs out

This white and powder-blue Georgian home looks Teignmouth in the face across the lovely Teign estuary. Step over the threshold and you'll find two light and airy sitting rooms, both with wood-burners. For festive dinners there's an electric Aga in the midnight-blue kitchen. Besides the first-floor master bedroom with its super-king-size bed and roll-top bath, there are two other bedrooms with king-sizes and one useful twin. Shaldon beach is a four-minute walk away and there are promenades to be had along the river. Afterwards settle in for comfort food at the London Inn, just across the road.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £2,416 (classic.co.uk)



Hillside Cottage, Wiltshire

10. Hillside Cottage, Wiltshire

Decamp your big family Christmas to the idyllic village of Edington, where you'll find an extravagant wreath hanging on the front door of Hillside Cottage. It's a super-luxe country retreat that sleeps 12 in six bedrooms, all with en suites (including steam showers) and has a bold red kitchen that is the stuff of amateur cooks' daydreams. An outdoor plunge pool, hot tub and a barn that includes a wet and dry sauna will soothe tired souls, while the Trailhead Cabin, at the end of a little path, is a private games room hideaway, with a fire pit outside. Pick up Wiltshire foodie treats at the Edington Farm Shop next door, including ales from the award-winning Three Daggers brewery.

Details Three nights' self-catering for 12 from £4,500 ([elevenexperience.com](https://www.elevenexperience.com))



Whitefield's Cottage, Yorkshire
NATIONAL TRUST/JILL WATSON

11. Whitefield's Cottage, Yorkshire

This handsome stone cottage in the 700-acre Studley Royal deer park, near Ripon, has chocolate-coloured leather sofas and a log-burner in the brick fireplace of the living room — perfect for post-Christmas-dinner slumbers. There's a spacious dining room next door and three bedrooms upstairs with antique furniture and decor influenced by nature. You also get access to the ancient ruins of Fountains Abbey, and the follies, statues and mirror ponds of Studley Royal Water Gardens. Up to two dogs can stay; walk them locally, or at Brimham Rocks, 20 minutes' drive away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £2,329 ([nationaltrust.org.uk](https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk))



Inside Rose Cottage in Bamburgh
TRACEY BLOXHAM

12. Rose Cottage, Northumberland

The fragrantly named Rose Cottage is just a short walk from Bamburgh's dramatic castle and its one-and-a-half-mile sweep of beach. From the outside the cottage stakes a claim as the prettiest retreat in the village, its stone exterior cheered by a shamrock green front door. Sleeping four — in a king-size with an en suite, and a twin — the cottage has splashes of smoky blue and grey, with fabrics by Romo and Jane Churchill. Near by? Feast on just-caught seafood at the Potted Lobster or book in for a festive roast at the Castle Hotel.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £1,590

(crabtreeandcrabtree.com)



The shepherd's hut at Dimpsey Hither, Somerset
CANOPY & STARS

Book a stay at the vintage shepherd's hut Dimpsey Hither and you'll spend Christmas on a 30-acre rural estate in the Blackwood Hills, an area of outstanding natural beauty in Somerset. Cosy up by the wood-burner, and there's also a hot tub surrounded by fairy lights. The hut's kitchen is fully functioning, although it would be a crime not to book into a nearby country inn for the big day — the Candlelight Inn, a mile away, is a hit with the locals. **Details** Two nights' self-catering for two from £390 (canopyandstars.co.uk)



Blyford Manor Farm, Suffolk

14. Blyford Manor Farm, Suffolk

Big groups will love the grade II listed Blyford Manor Farm, which sleeps 12 in rural Suffolk. Expect a proper country Christmas at the whitewashed property, which has six double bedrooms (that can be easily converted into twins), a games room and a large, manicured garden. Vaulted timber ceilings and a cosy farmhouse kitchen ramp up the charm, while the Queens Head, a thatched foodie pub, is a short walk away. Southwold, with its independent shops, the Adnams brewery and famous pier, is 12 minutes' drive.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £8,500 (fishandpips.co.uk)



Cromwell House, West Sussex

15. Cromwell House, West Sussex

Whether or not you believe that Oliver Cromwell tried to kill Christmas, staying in a house named after him might at least reinforce the desire for a second helping of pudding. Cromwell House is an immaculately restored grade II listed home in the West Sussex village of Lickfold, with six bedrooms sleeping 12. There's an inglenook fireplace in the entrance hall and a generous sitting room, which looks out across the property's tennis court. Christmas cooking will be done using the five-door Aga in the kitchen, and other treats include a hot tub, a swimming pool, and a sauna and steam room.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £9,495

(thewowhousecompany.com)



The Salutation, Cumbria
RICHARD HODGSON

16. The Salutation, Cumbria

An all-mod-cons apartment in the grounds of grade II listed Netherby Hall lets guests tap into the historic splendour of Cumbria's honey-hued home — seat to the Graham family for almost 400 years — and then retreat to a modern pad. The Salutation, with its freshly painted white walls, is perfect for families, with a king-size en suite room and sofa bed for the children. You'll arrive to find the apartment fully decorated to reflect the season too. Just above the River Esk, this is Borders country: there are 36 acres of the estate to wander, with misty Scottish hills beyond them. Dogs are allowed.

Details Four nights' self-catering for four from £1,140 (netherbyhall.co.uk)



TIMES TRAVEL

Mistletoe and wine

It might be harder to travel abroad this year, so check out our list of the best Christmas markets in the UK. There's a production of *The Nutcracker* at Blenheim Palace and light projections at Norwich Castle

[Read the feature](#) >

17. Coachman's Cottage, Co Antrim

Roll through the iron gates of Stranocum Hall, an imposing Georgian manor house, and check in for Christmas at the rustic two-bedroom Coachman's Cottage, which dates from the mid-18th century. Rustle up Christmas lunch in the cosy kitchen, before decamping for drinks by the wood-burner in the sitting room. This corner of Northern Ireland is *Game of Thrones* location territory — watch Jon Snow et al at the cottage, then head out to visit the filming locations, including Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Cushendun Caves and Downhill Beach. Don't miss a trip to atmospheric Dark Hedges either — the region's famous canopy of beech trees is just two miles away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £1,677 (vrbo.com)



Stay One Degrees' Cotswolds cottage near Beckford

18. Cotswold cottage, Worcestershire

Pretty as a greetings card — and a vision of cream walls and light stone — this three-bedroom luxury cottage near Beckford, in the Cotswolds, has been thoughtfully renovated with young families in mind. The large gardens are enclosed, there's a big farmhouse kitchen for relaxed dining and a “baby suite” off the master bedroom. There's underfloor heating, a log-burner, Egyptian cotton linen and fluffy white towels. The historic riverside town of Tewkesbury is 15 minutes away by car.

Details Four nights' self-catering for six from £684 ([stayonedegree.com](https://www.stayonedegree.com))



The Old Parlour, Cheshire

19. The Old Parlour, Cheshire

This characterful barn near the pretty village of Wrenbury may be the perfect bolt hole for a small family Christmas. Why? There's a statement antler light fitting in the lounge area, while faux furs and a wood-burning stove enhance the cosy midwinter vibe. A roll-top copper bath tub is ideal for long soaks, and the two bedrooms, one on the mezzanine level, come with White Company linens and products. The Cholmondeley Arms, just up the road, was named gin pub of the year 2021, so is ripe for a Christmas Eve tippie.

Details Four nights' self-catering for four from £1,119

([cheshireboutiquebarns.co.uk](https://www.cheshireboutiquebarns.co.uk))



Tenbury Cottage, Shropshire

Just east of Ludlow, this inviting rural cottage has two bedrooms sleeping four people (and two dogs). There's a neutral colour scheme of pastels and mid-blues and it's open plan, with a wood-burner and spacious doubles. You're in the middle of 12 acres of farmland too, with the Cleve Hills and Mortimer Forest wrapped around that, so there's no excuse for not walking off the Christmas excess. There's fun to be had too in the stables next door, which have a dartboard and an open fireplace — BYO festive tippie and you've practically got your own pub.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £3,824 (caninecottages.co.uk)



12 Banks Street, in Horncastle

21. 12 Banks Street, Lincolnshire

Make merry in Horncastle, a town full of pubs, book shops and antique stores. A stay at central 12 Banks Street, which sleeps four, puts you in the thick of this ancient market town's festive action. This handsome red-brick Georgian townhouse has white-painted floorboards and moody slate grey walls — with matching fireplace — and pinstriped sofas on the ground floor, giving way to light-and-bright decor in the two bedrooms upstairs. The Lincolnshire Wolds countryside is perfect for a traditional Boxing Day walk, while the cathedral city of Lincoln — 17 miles away — feels like stepping into a period drama.

Details Five nights' self-catering for four from £720 (sykescottages.co.uk)



Euan in Newhall Mains, Ross-shire

22. Euan, Ross-shire

Flee north to Newhall Mains, a renovated farm in Ross-shire, and you could be sharing Christmas with a neighbouring field of Jacob sheep. The two-bedroom Euan is a suitably stylish cottage with a wood-burning stove and a chic drawing room complete with bold wallpaper, a velour sofa in teal and rugs made using wool from those sheep. Bracing walks are available thanks to the gorgeous stretch of wind-lashed beach at Cromarty, six miles away.

Details Three nights' self-catering for four from £900 (newhall-mains.com)



The Agency at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire

23. The Agency, Staffordshire

Santa might wonder if you've gone up in the world when he delivers your family's presents to the Agency at the regal Staffordshire pile Sandon Hall. Recently opened to guests, this swish former land agent's house sleeps eight in four lavish bedrooms — all designed by the Countess of Harrowby, who lives at Sandon. Look out for the Colefax & Fowler fabrics and Bramley toiletries. In the open-plan kitchen there's a butler's sink and cream Aga. Spend festive evenings in the double-chambered drawing room, or hidden away in the snug. By prior appointment the head gardener can show you around Sandon's spectacular gardens.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £5,000 (sandonhall.co.uk)



24. The Lodge at Dun Aluinn, Perthshire

You could be the very first guests to toast Christmas at the Lodge at Dun Aluinn; the five-star property only opened to self-caterers this July. All four en suite bedrooms come with king-size beds, the Scandi-influenced open-plan kitchen cries out for a Christmas banquet and there's a fire pit on the wooden decking outside. Walk into nearby Aberfeldy for indie shops or to watch a movie at the Birks art deco cinema. Your show-stealing festive walk is the 1.5-mile circular route, steep in parts, around the Birks of Aberfeldy.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for eight from £8,000 (scottwilliams.co.uk)



Pavilion Cottage, in the grounds of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight
ENGLISH HERITAGE

25. Pavilion Cottage, Isle of Wight

Hope for a cloudless Christmas Eve for stargazing on the veranda at Pavilion Cottage in the grounds of Osborne House. This English Heritage hideaway, on the estate of Queen Victoria's palatial former holiday home, is on one level, sleeping four in a double and a twin. The decor is modern and fresh, with soft greys and dashes of colour. You can enjoy the same scenic pleasures Mrs Brown once did, including the Italianate terrace and Andromeda fountain.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £2,400 (english-heritage.org.uk)

Are you spending Christmas at home or abroad? Let us know in the comments below