

Travel

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'The grapes seem happy here — the extreme heat and cold results in pure, intense wines'
British Columbia's Okanagan Valley is Canada's Napa

3 The Manor in Somerset



Great British breaks

UK holiday houses with pools

Heated dips at a Georgian manor house in Somerset or in an infinity pool looking on to the South Downs — Sarah Gordon has the top picks

1 Countryside chic Devon

Clad in tumbling wisteria, 15th-century Devon countryside is as easy on the eye as holiday cottages come. Inside the boutique feel continues, with vaulted ceilings, exposed beams and old stone archways dressed up with chic Designers Guild furnishings. How to pass the time? Take afternoon tea under the arbour in the colourful garden, dive into the heated pool or make for the cooling shade of the surrounding woodlands. Enjoy afternoons out shopping in Exeter, just seven miles away, or on the caramel sands of Exmouth beach.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £3,577 (boutique-retreats.co.uk)

2 Gothic head-turner Cornwall

A grade II listed house in the style of a gothic vicarage, Maryfield House has all the trappings of a regal country estate. Alongside the roll-top baths and four-posters there's an ornate dining room crying out for a banquet. Relax in the sunroom, thumb a book in the library or grill a Cornish catch on the terrace barbecue. The manicured gardens of the 18th-century National Trust property Antony House and the pretty fishing harbours of Looe and Polperro are within easy reach, but with the triple temptations of



Place Barton in Devon

a heated pool, treehouse and trampoline, the children will be begging to stay put. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 16 from £4,150 (thewowhouse.com)

3 Grade II grandeur Somerset

While Scott of the Antarctic devoted his life to exploration, his family lived a quieter existence in the Manor, a Georgian house in Holcombe. The grade II listed building has been lovingly restored with plush furnishings, original artwork and stained-glass windows that light up the grand entrance hall. Teenagers will

► love the gym and games room with a full-size pool table. Outside there are pristine lawns, a barbecue and heated swimming pool and an all-singing children's play area. Seeking some peace? Slink off to the private courtyard for a soak in the hot tub or spend an afternoon moseying around nearby Bath. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 18 from £9,500 (luxurycottages.com)

4 Characterful thatch
Suffolk

Rendered in pastel pink beneath a thatched roof, the Cider House sits prettily in 5,000 acres of Suffolk parkland. A modern, quirky interior — with yet more pink — includes six en suite bedrooms. There's a lake for boating, tennis courts for evening contests and Pashley bikes for two-wheeled exploration. A private pool, hot tub and sauna add to the fun, and if you fancy a stretch, pull on your walking boots for a yomp through the Wilderness Reserve, once-arable pasture land returned to nature. A ranger on the estate will help to identify the flourishing native species. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £16,428 (fishandpips.co.uk)

5 Double hot tub villa
Lincolnshire

Why have one hot tub when you can have two? And why settle for an outdoor heated pool when you can add a retractable glass roof and use it year-round? At the English Country Villa everything is just a little bit bigger and bolder. Behind the exterior of steel and wood, you'll find rooms in shades of deep red and royal blue, eccentric patterns and a vast, open-plan kitchen, lounge and diner with a pool table. Sliding doors lead outside to the courtyard and each of the 12 bedrooms has an en suite. It is set in Bainland Country Park and you can hire a bike — Lincolnshire is flat, remember — or play tennis or badminton. The Edwardian town Woodhall Spa is down the road. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for 24 from £3,999 (bainland.co.uk)



wine cellar, indoor pool and sauna sounds like a fun way to reacquaint yourself. This three-storey, five-bedroom Fulham home, a short stroll from the Thames in London's leafy southwest, comes with a private courtyard garden. Inside there's sleek wood and marble with walls of glass and skylights illuminating the art-filled space. A formal dining room is crowned with golden chandeliers. After a day ticking off London's sights, take a dip in the pool before uncorking a bottle from the cellar and enjoying it alfresco. **Details** Four nights' self-catering for seven from £17,473 (homesandvillasbymarriott.com)

8 Pennines views
Lake District

It may have a cosy name, but the Grotto is truly grand, with soaring double-height living spaces. A wall of windows perfectly frame the views over the two-acre grounds, which stretch across to the distant Pennines. There's interior drama via an overhanging oak staircase, which connects the lounge with a mezzanine kitchen and roomy dining area. Every bedroom is en suite and there's a swimming pool, hot tub and gym too. Outside, a multilevel patio is G&T territory and has a sensational vista. If you can bear to tear yourself away, the lapping water of Ullswater is just round the corner. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 19 from £3,500 (kateandtoms.com)

9 Glorious gardens
Norfolk

A double whammy of views — salt-lashed countryside and wild coastline — are offered up to guests staying at Redshanks in north Norfolk, which comfortably sleeps 12. The interior has flagstone flooring, an oil-fired Aga and soothing neutral interiors with decadent bedrooms. A walled back garden with heated pool, patio and barbecue area is a sheltered sun-trap, while the private front garden is as nature intended, with fruit trees, sea lavender and sea fennel thriving. It's in one of the Norfolk Burnhams — Burnham Deepdale — so you can spend days visiting well-heeled villages, exploring the sand dunes of Scott Head Island or kicking a ball about at Brancaster Bay. The music room, in the house's beautiful barn conversion, is made for parlour games. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £5,280 (barefootretreats.co.uk)

10 Georgian pile
Buckinghamshire

Set within the grounds of Hartwell House and Spa, this Georgian house maintains its 18th-century authenticity with traditional floral decor and furnishings, and grandiose bay windows. In the ample gardens tucked behind the hedge you'll find the blue of the pool and an entourage of sun loungers made for lazy days. For a little more indulgence there's the added perk of free use of the hotel's spa. Excursions? The market town of Aylesbury is just up the road and the Chilterns has cycling and country walks galore.



13 Whiteshoot Farm in Hampshire

Details Seven nights' self-catering for seven from £3,410 (nationaltrust.org.uk)

11 Manor house
Cheshire

The old bones of Scarlet Hall, a wisteria-covered 17th-century manor house, can still be glimpsed alongside a tasteful renovation that has transformed it into a bright open-plan space. A crisp colour scheme of dove grey and white breathes new life into the exposed beams, vaulted ceilings and old stone walls. French doors lead out to gardens and a sunny patio looking across 12 acres; when night comes, light the fire pit for a cosy evening of stargazing. Get combative over badminton in the adjacent barn or complete morning lengths in the indoor swimming pool. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £4,495 (uniqueshomestays.com)

12 Rustic farmhouse
Caernarfonshire

An 18th-century farmhouse on the Llyn peninsula, Plas Newydd is

surrounded by rolling countryside with the village and beach of Aberdaron a short drive away. Restored, but with bags of character remaining, thanks to tiled floors, stonework and oak beams, it's a house made for family reunions. Pass long summer days outdoors, surrounded by green space, wildflowers and a meandering stream. Inside, there's lots of communal spaces for conflabs, and a wood-burner for cooler evenings. One hundred miles of Welsh coastline, including some of the country's most beautiful beaches, are yours to explore. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering for seven from £2,295 (qualitycottages.co.uk)

13 New Forest barn
Hampshire

Retreat to the wilds of the New Forest in the height of summer and there's coast and woodland in equal measure. Whiteshoot Farm is an impressive barn conversion in six acres of private grounds. A vaulted ceiling and full-height windows flood the space with

At the time of going to press, all properties listed had some availability between April 12 and the end of September. Prices are for the cheapest week in that window. For travel restrictions, see gov.uk



Scarlet Hall in Cheshire 11

17 Infinity pool
West Sussex

Be among the first to push through the door of this elegant manor in 17 acres of gardens and grounds. Honeybridge House opens to guests for the first time in 2021 and the period property is a brim with curios. Paintings by the old masters decorate the walls alongside daring contemporary pieces, while sculptures bring the gardens to life. Yet on sunny days you're more likely to be admiring the 14m infinity pool below the house, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open on to views of the rolling countryside beyond. Soak away stress in the Jacuzzi, hurtle along the zip wire or try to catch yourself a fish supper in the lake.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 16 from £8,000 (honeybridgesstate.co.uk)

18 French flair

Surrey
Classic English farmhouse design is given a touch of French country flair in this 18th-century home. All the characterful touches you might expect — inglenook fireplace, beams and vaulted ceilings — are here, but souped up with ornate mirrors, glittering chandeliers and soft upholstery; it's all tres chic. Gardens surround the farmhouse, and within them lie a pool, tennis court, pond and covered outdoor dining area. An opulent conservatory makes for a sunny reading room. It's in Peaslake, in the heart of the Surrey Hills area of outstanding natural beauty and some of the county's loveliest scenery is a short stroll away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £17,500 (stayonedegree.com)

19 Smart postcode
Dorset

With a blue flag flying on the nearest beach, and exclusive property enclave Sandbanks down the road, Woodridings, set in an acre of land, has exactly the right postcode. It's light and airy inside with oak floors, modern decor and a delightful quirk: an original art deco bathroom perfectly preserved with its avocado suite. If the weather isn't quite balmy enough, the conservatory is an ideal spot for devouring a bestseller, but when the sun is high and hot, pour an Aperol spritz and enjoy being lord or lady of the manor, taking in views across the landscaped garden and pool.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for seven from £1,745 (holidaycottages.co.uk)

20 Atlantic views
Cornwall

The name of this whitewashed cottage, Gwel Mor, means "sea view" in Cornish and from the top floor you can indeed glimpse the deep cobalt of the Atlantic beyond green pastures. From the expansive patio, with its barbecue and seating area, gaze out across the lawn (ideal for a game of croquet) to the heated pool at the bottom of the garden. The interior has just been refurbished and you'll find a farmhouse kitchen, a dining room within the sunny conservatory and a log-burner for when the mist rolls in. With Port Isaac, Polzeath and Rock near by, you won't be short of beaches to visit, waves to surf or pubs to imbibe in.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,495 (latitude50.co.uk)



Redshanks in Norfolk 9

star Restaurant Andrew Fairlie is a fine way to spend your final night away.
Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,724 (premiercottages.co.uk)

16 Traditional manse
Cotswolds

Whether you want to brush up your tennis, whack some croquet balls or take a dip in the pool, the handsome red-brick Old Queens Manor is here for your staycation whims. Plus, there are views to the Cotswolds in one direction and across the River Severn to Wales in the other. A traditional country kitchen — yes, with an Aga — and five modern bedrooms come with rural vistas and traditional open fireplaces. Country walks web out from the property, and the market town of Oldbury, perfect pub-lunch territory, is a mere stroll away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,929 (olivertravels.com)



Honeybridge House in West Sussex

meandering path to the swimming pool or head out to explore five acres of gardens and woodland. The Brewhouse is one of a clutch of cottages belonging to the Artisan Bakehouse, which teaches breadmaking and has a pop-up café, so good sourdough is guaranteed.
Details Three nights' self-catering for four from £525 (cabinsandcastles.co.uk)

15 Country house wing
Perthshire

It may only be part of the property, but the East Wing has the lions share of space at Alexander House and it comes with stirring views over the Strath to the Highlands beyond. There are six bedrooms and a vast kitchen that opens out to the garden, while a separate sun-drenched courtyard has a heated pool and hot tub. It's tastefully upgraded inside with muted colours, log fireplaces and free-standing baths, and there is also an expansive front garden with picnic benches and a play area. Just three miles away, in Gleneagles, dinner at the two-Michelin-

...but, but the honeyed beams, open fireplace and warm red furnishings keep it characterful. Outside, you can relax in the hammock alongside the heated pool, while the grounds beyond come with a vineyard, lake and zip wire. If that's not enough to get you going, grab your bike or put on hiking boots and explore the trails that carve up Perthshire's wild forests and heaths, spotting wild ponies as you go.
Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,586 (newforestcottages.co.uk)

14 Cottage core
West Sussex

Picking your own fruit and veg and making it on a cherry-red Aga sounds like the rural dream, then the conservatory is the place for you. Exposed brick walls, beams rubbed smooth with oil and an inglenook fireplace create the perfect cottage experience, while the flowerbeds are filled with seasonal blooms, and lunch can be taken on the sun-dappled patio. Follow the