

THE FUTURE OF SELF-CATERING

The new breed of holiday rentals offers affordable luxury and added extras – from cinemas to pro chefs.
By Susan d’Arcy

The self-catering holiday has come a long way. No longer are we expected to provide our own linen, towels and cleaning materials. You don’t even have to supply your own entertainment. These days, properties might come with concierges who can arrange everything from chefs to cook for you to teachers who will give hands-on lessons in painting, poker, falconry or make-up artistry. As well as glorious wilderness, you’ll find self-catering cottages in the grounds of country-house hotels (you can share their five-star facilities) and in prime city-centre locations.

Sawday’s, which has just launched a self-catering website, insists that flexibility is now key. “The laminated list of do’s and don’ts is almost extinct,” it says. “Short breaks are pretty common, as are negotiable changeover days.” Self-catering is also a good way to go posh at affordable prices. The upmarket operator CV Travel says: “We’ve seen huge growth among those sharing with friends or extended family, which brings down the rental cost while providing a holiday in the kind of property that dreams are made of.” Here’s our pick.

⊕ Unless stated, prices are for the whole property for a week. Where two prices are given, the first is for low season, the second for high season

LEARNING STAYS

1 PAINTING IN CORNWALL Sleeps 4

Cornwall provides an inspirational backdrop, and Grogley Farm, near Wadebridge, supplies the teacher: the trompe l’oeil muralist Janet Shearer offers painting courses at her 18th-century farmhouse. *Three nights from £850 between September and June, including six hours’ tuition; 01637 881942, grogleyfarm.uniquehomestays.com*

2 ROCK IN WORCESTERSHIRE Sleeps 6

The Hatch Cabin, in Lindridge, is furnished with beanbags, flowers from the garden and a gramophone for “midnight dancing”. There’s a fully equipped music studio in the main house, where you can fine-tune your rock-star fantasies. *Two nights from £210; 01275 395447, canopyandstars.co.uk*

3 POTTERY IN CORNWALL Sleeps 9

It has a priest’s hole in the sitting room, a wood-burner for cosy nights and a stream running through the garden. Cot Manor, near Sennen, also has an owner who’s a skilled potter and will lay on lessons in crafting clay. *£501/£1,992; 01326 555555, classic.co.uk; ref 2276*

4 ANYTHING IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE Sleeps 10

Temple Guiting, a Grade I-listed Tudor manor near Stow-on-the-Wold, goes big on luxury, including a groovy barn conversion decorated by Terence Conran’s daughter, Sophie. It’s all set in 14 acres of award-winning gardens, with a private lake. The best bit is the assortment of A-list teachers who can be hired in: learn professional make-up skills from Ruby Hammer, cookery

from the chef William Harcourt-Cooze or poker from a professional card sharp. *From £2,200 a night; 0845 034 0700, mrandmrsmith.com*

HOTEL COTTAGES

5 SUFFOLK Sleeps 2-4

The fourth Earl of Bristol made his mark at Ickworth House, near Bury St Edmunds, with an extraordinary 103ft rotunda to showcase the family treasures. The east wing is now a luxury hotel, and its Dower House contains 11 flats with kitchenettes that have the run of the hotel’s spa, crèche and restaurants. You can climb the rotunda, now owned by the National Trust, as many times as you like. *From £1,155/£1,435 (sleeping 2) or £2,415/£2,695 (sleeping 4), B&B;*



01284 735350, ickworthhotel.co.uk

6 CORNWALL
Sleeps 4-6

The Cornwall Hotel, in St Austell, has a hamlet of 22 five-star woodland homes, with vaulted ceilings and french windows overlooking sweeping parkland. A key here unlocks the hotel's three restaurants, excellent spa, pool, tennis courts and miles of trails. From £567/£1,582 (sleeping 4) or £756/£1,792 (sleeping 6); 01726 874050, thecornwall.com

7 NORTHUMBERLAND
Sleeps 4-8

Avail yourself of the fabulous facilities at Slayey Hall, in Hexham, which include three restaurants, an 18-hole golf course, a spa, a pool and kids' activities, then retreat to your spacious lodge, with double-height rooms and views over Hadrian's Wall from your balcony. £549/£1,155 (sleeping 4) or £999/£2,065 (sleeping 8); 0844 346 1206, deverluxurylodges.co.uk

8 CO KERRY
Sleeps 8

Mossy woodland and cascading waterfalls dot Sheen Falls Lodge's 300 acres, which offer views of the magnificent McGillycuddy Reeks. Its thatched villas overlook Kenmare Bay, and you're free to mingle with the hotel guests at its restaurants, in the health club or while fishing for salmon on a private stretch of river. £521/£747 a night; 00 353 64 664 1600, sheenfallsloodge.ie

GO REMOTE

9 HIGHLANDS
Sleeps 2

The cosy cottage of Taigh Uaine offers views across the sea to the Assynt

Mountains and spectacular walking to Eas a' Chual Aluinn, Britain's highest waterfall. Bring supplies: you're eight miles from a restaurant (at Lochinver). £260/£550; 01228 406731, scottish-cottages.co.uk

10 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Sleeps 2-8

Be among the first to stay in one of the 65 swanky new cabins at the 3,300-acre Sherwood Pines Forest Park. From your door, you can go (bike) riding through

the glen or just soak up the views from your hot tub. Or watch Robin Hood on your flatscreen TV. From £357/£1,588 (sleeping 2) or £741/£2,733 (sleeping 8); 0845 130 8223, forestholidays.co.uk

11 CARMARTHENSHIRE
Sleeps 4

It's books instead of television, the dawn chorus instead of an alarm, and only weak mobile reception... half a mile away. Safe to say that Manal is in a tranquil corner of the Brechfa Forest. It's not completely technophobic — there is a dishwasher. £1,145; 01865 764087, sheepskinlife.com

12 NORTHUMBERLAND
Sleeps 4-5

Fancy watching badgers and barn owls while you snuggle up around the wood-burner inside, sipping cocoa? The three properties at Whitelee Holiday Cottages are nestled into 60 untamed acres near the Scottish border, dotted with infrared cameras that beam the wildlife direct to your TV. £249/£620 (sleeping 4) or £258/£665 (sleeping 5); 01830 520530, whiteleeholidaycottages.com

13 NORTH YORKSHIRE
Sleeps 5

Harry Potter, The Trip and Calendar Girls all used the Yorkshire Dales as a stunning backdrop. Its next performance: your holiday. At Cowside, in Upper Wharfedale, wall paintings of

biblical texts were recently uncovered beneath layers of limewash. From £541/£1,463; 01628 825925, landmarktrust.org.uk

14 SUFFOLK
Sleeps 8

High-concept design has come to self-catering at the extraordinary

Balancing Barn, near Aldeburgh. It's cantilevered over a hill to maximise the views of a nature reserve. £1,454/£3,068; living-architecture.co.uk

15 DEVON
Sleeps 8

Tawstock Castle is a Grade II-listed 18th-century bailey castle, and here's how to get your hands on the key. It perches proudly on top of a hill, with 360-degree views of valley, vale and sea from its crenellated terrace. From £1,767/£3,100; 01386 701177, ruralretreats.co.uk

16 CORNWALL
Sleeps 10-12

On the edge of Bodmin Moor, Tregulland has been painstakingly renovated to include Britain's first indoor freshwater swimming pool (and a borehole, so you can drink Cornish spring water from the tap). You can book chefs from Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant to do the cooking. From £3,000/£5,000 in the barn (sleeping 10) or £3,600/£6,000 in the cottage (sleeping 12); 01566 770880, tregulland.com

CITY CENTRE

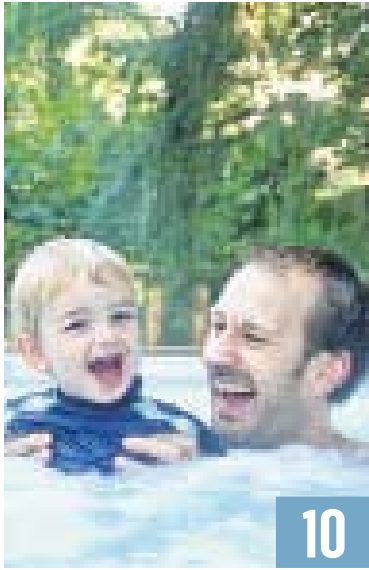
17 EDINBURGH
Sleeps 2

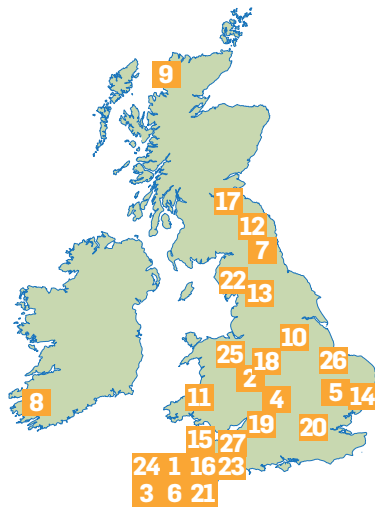
A wee stroll from Holyrood Palace, Blackie House is furnished with pieces

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Theresa Simon & Partners; Harriet Wood

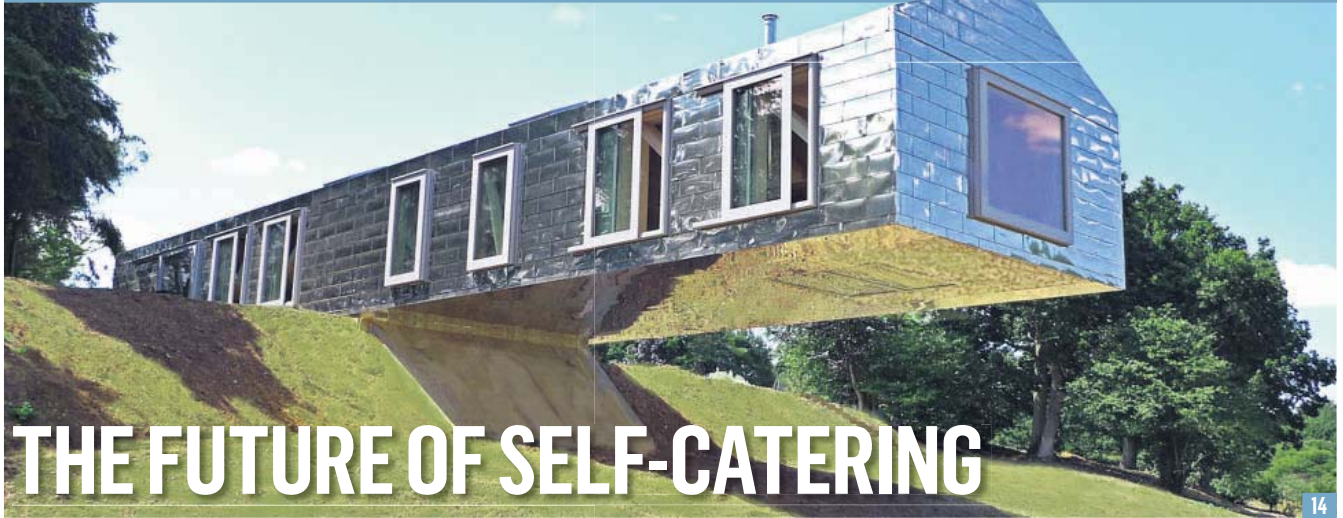




BRITISH ISLES

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by the leading designer Rupert Williamson (he has items in the V&A) and has a Philippe Starck shower room. There are hand-woven angora and yak-wool blankets on hand, too, in case the weather takes a turn for the, well, Scottish. *From £750/£1,250; 01275 395430, sawdays.co.uk/self-catering*

18 BIRMINGHAM
Sleeps 2-4

The New York Times recently named our second city as one of the hottest destinations for 2012. (It has more miles of canal than Venice, apparently, although fewer *palazzi*.) The article waxed lyrical about the culinary scene and the famous balti belt. Its favourite place to stay? Staying Cool's apartments atop the Rotunda, which have bespoke sofas, Macs and Poggenpohl kitchens with espresso machines. *From £95/£199 a night (sleeping 2) or £289/£499 (sleeping 4); 0121 285 1250, stayingcool.com*

19 BATH
Sleeps 2-4

Near the Roman baths, these flats are so sumptuously Georgian, you'll want to wear a bonnet. You'll need smelling salts when you realise that the Grade II-listed mellow stone exterior hides 21st-century goodies such as espresso machines and iPod docks. *From £125/£155 a night (sleeping 2) or £175/£205 (sleeping 4); thecourtyardapartments.co.uk*

20 LONDON
Sleeps 2-5

It's self-catering taken to a sophisticated level, as you move into someone else's des-res home in central London. You're not in the spare room: the properties have been vacated by their owners, thoroughly cleaned, and come with insider neighbourhood tips.

From £89 a night for a studio sleeping 2-3 in Laabroke Grove to £1,499 for a property sleeping five in Knightsbridge; 0800 612 4377, onefinestay.com

GOOD FOR COOKS

21 CORNWALL
Sleeps 4-6

Green Acres is a cluster of 10 stone-faced cottages outside Fowey, each with large, well-equipped kitchens and views that make peeling the potatoes enjoyable. Produce is sometimes available from the garden farm next door. *From £525/£1,225; 01621 784666, breaksincornwall.com*

22 CUMBRIA
Sleeps 14

Pugin designed gothic Boston House, in Windermere — but we don't think he schemed in the 14-seat cinema in the cellar. After the credits have rolled, move the party on to the kitchen, which is made of solid oak, with Lakeland slate worktops, and has a 46-bottle wine cooler, an eight-seat central island and a range cooker with seven burners. *From £1,740/£2,410; 01228 599960, cumbrian-cottages.co.uk*

23 DEVON
Sleeps 14

Homecroft, in the Domesday village of Cheriton Fitzpaine, has a heated outdoor pool, a games room and a walled fire pit for nights under the stars. But foodies will most relish the Ready Steady Cook challenge of turning the orchard's figs, apples, cherries, walnuts, quinces, strawberries and raspberries — as well as home-produced hen and goose eggs — into delicious dishes. *From £969/£1,409; 0844 704 4987, bluechipholidays.co.uk*

PARTY PADS

24 CORNWALL
Sleeps 16

If you're after tumbledown, look away now. Estuary House is unflinchingly modern and minimalist, with eyefuls of the Camel estuary from the open-plan living area on the top floor, a private boat mooring, for forays into Rock and Padstow, geothermal heating and solar panels, so you can feel all smug and eco-conscious as you pop open another bottle of fizz. *£3,000/£6,000; 020 7401 1086, cvtravel.co.uk*

25 POWYS
Sleeps 20

Set in 14 acres of landscaped gardens and parkland on the Shropshire/Powys border, 17th-century Bryn Tanat Hall is loaded with log fires and swathes of silk and velvet. Crank up the pageantry by booking extras such as falconry, riding, fishing, ballooning and archery. *£2,700/£4,100; 01691 828266, premiercottages.co.uk*

26 NORFOLK
Sleeps 20

Carrington House, in Snettisham, Norfolk, has been transformed from a rather proper Georgian manor into a house of hedonism. It has a disco room with decks, mirror balls and a karaoke machine,

a 6ft cinema screen — and a dressing-up room. Camp it up even further in the alfresco hot tub; then, next morning, blow out the cobwebs at the beach hut. *From £3,650/£3,850 for three nights; 01237 426777, thebigdomain.com*

27 SOMERSET
Sleeps 24

Built in the 13th century,



Spencer Manor, near Taunton, was made for a grand occasion, with seven acres overlooking the Blackdown Hills, a miniature lake, a heated swimming pool, a tennis court and a paddock for games and activities. Or just settle in for Henry VIII-style feasting in the medieval banqueting hall. *£11,000 for three nights; 01835 824642, ltr.co.uk*

