

COUNTRYSIDE IS **GREAT**

BRITAIN

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A guide for international media

Edition 5 - February 2017

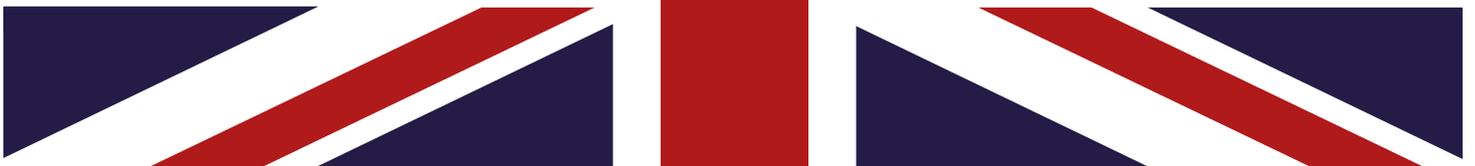
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*The Cleveland Way,
North York Moors National Park, north-east England*

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Countryside is GREAT - *why?*

Britain's countryside is 'not just a pretty face', as the saying goes. Sure, it *is* pretty - from chocolate box villages in The Cotswolds, England, to magnificent glens in Scotland through to 'world's-best' beaches in Wales, there's plenty to look at. But there's also so much to do, eat and be entertained by. It's the wealth of experiences on offer that makes Britain's countryside so great, and so memorable to visitors.

From experiences where you can collect your own food and follow it from field to fork; to staying in a luxurious treehouse high-up above the ground; to getting up-close with wildlife such as red squirrels and bottlenose dolphins, Britain's countryside has got something to please everyone.

Did you know?

- The world's fastest zipline can be found in the British countryside, reaching speeds of up to 100mph over a former quarry in north Wales (see page two)
- Parts of Britain's countryside are extremely accessible - within an hour of arriving at Gatwick or Cardiff airports you could be in a national park (see page six)
- There's a whole festival in England celebrating oysters (see page 18)
- You can create your own bottle of one-off single malt whisky in Scotland, and take it home as a unique souvenir (see page 20)
- Britain's highest mountain is in Scotland and is 1,066 metres/3,500 foot above sea level. Its highest pub, in Yorkshire, England, sits at 528 metres/1,732 foot (see page 26)
- You can get up Wales' highest mountain on a train (see page 47)
- Northern Ireland's stunning Giant's Causeway is said to have been carved from the cliffs by a giant (see page 54)
- Britain has its very own tropical islands (see page 57)
- Britain's longest national trail is 630 miles (1,013 kilometres) long, and you can walk its whole length (see page 67)

10 OMGB countryside moments

Amazing moments - the ones that make you go 'wow!' - come in many forms, and Britain's countryside is full of them. Zipping through the air, happening upon hidden sandy bays, or watching a Shakespeare play overlooking the sea. And that's just for starters. Here are ten OMGB (Oh my Great Britain!) moments you'll only experience in the British countryside.

Swim through the Durdle Door

Why? Wild swimming is, quite literally, one of the most immersive ways to surround yourself with nature. Aquatic adventurers can choose from a vast array of lakes, plunge pools, rivers and bays across Britain - or even swim under the dramatic [Durdle Door](#), a natural limestone arch on the Dorset coast and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. [SwimTrek](#) will take care of all safety and organisational hassles with its carefully designed tours, complete with experienced guides, escort boats and accommodation - so all you need to do is dive in!

Where? On the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, south-west England, three hours from London Waterloo by train.



Swim under the arch of Durdle Door



Walking along history at Hadrian's Wall © VisitBritain / Joe Cornish

Be transported back to Roman times at Hadrian's Wall

Why? Walk along 2,000 years of history and explore the remains of Roman settlements and forts at [Hadrian's Wall](#) - a UNESCO World Heritage Site which once served as the most northerly frontier of the Roman Empire. The wall stretches 118km (73 miles) coast-to-coast across northern England. Visit between 8 April and 10 September 2017 to catch a wall-wide exhibition,

[Hadrian's Cavalry](#) - a celebration of the elite soldiers that guarded the wall. On 1 and 2 July, the largest Roman cavalry re-enactments ever seen in Britain will take place at Bitts Park in Carlisle.

Where? Hadrian's Wall is located in northern England, and runs from Bowness-on-Solway in the west (near Carlisle) to Wallsend in the east (near Newcastle). Both Carlisle and Newcastle can be reached by train from London or Manchester within two to three hours.

Steam through the Highlands on the Hogwarts Express

Why? You may recognise this impressive Scottish Highlands viaduct - it starred in the second and third *Harry Potter* films, when the Hogwarts Express train steamed across it, taking the young wizards to school. In the real muggle world, it is in fact [Glenfinnan Viaduct](#), spanning 1,000 feet, 100 feet above the ground. You can travel across it yourself and soak up the scenic Highland views over Loch Shiel on the [Jacobite steam train](#), which runs from the village of Glenfinnan to Fort William and Mallaig.

Where? Glenfinnan is in the Highlands of Scotland, two hours' drive from Inverness.



Steam along the amazing Glenfinnan Viaduct © RSPB-Images / Guy Rogers



Fly over Snowdonia at 100mph with Zip World Velocity! © Zip World

Zip through the air in Snowdonia

Why? Feel the adrenaline rush through you as you zip through the air, 500 feet above beautiful Welsh countryside. [Zip World Velocity](#) is Europe's longest zipline and the fastest in the world, offering daring adventurers a mile-long airborne ride at speeds in excess of 100mph, plus panoramic views of local coastline and the former slate quarry below. Don't worry, you can build up your confidence on a smaller zipline before you take on the ultimate challenge!

Where? The zipline is located in the Snowdonia National Park, north Wales. The city of Liverpool is a one hour 30 minute drive.

Discover a secret bay on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path

Why? Pembrokeshire used to be known as 'Gwlad Hud a Lledrith', or the 'Land of Mystery and Enchantment'. You'll see why as you walk or cycle along the rugged cliff tops of the [Pembrokeshire Coast Path](#) and suddenly come across the hidden gem of [Barafundle Bay](#). It can only be accessed on foot, and it's worth the walk. This beach really has the wow factor. With its crystal clear water and pristine sand, it's



Barafundle Bay - a true hidden treasure © VisitBritain / Simon Kreitem

been voted as one of the best beaches in the world!

Where? Barafundle Bay can be accessed via a half-mile walk along the Pembrokeshire Coast Path from Stackpole Quay car park. The nearest train station is Pembroke Dock in south-west Wales - a train ride of around two hours from Swansea.

Soak up one of the Lake District's most amazing views

Why? Picking out one amazing view in the [Lake District](#) is a difficult task when the area is so geographically blessed with beautiful landscapes. So much so, its rugged mountains and shimmering lakes have inspired writers and poets throughout history. One of the best vistas to be found, however, is looking east from the top of Cat Bells hill across the lake of Derwentwater to the mountain of Skiddaw. Cat Bells is a short, sharp, steep climb of 451 metres - but totally deserving of the effort!



The amazing view across Derwentwater from the summit of Cat Bells © Adam Burton

Where? The Lake District National Park is located in Cumbria, north-west England. The nearest main train station to Derwentwater is Penrith, approximately one hour and 45 minutes by direct train from Manchester, or three hours and 30 minutes from London.



*Dramatic setting on the rocks at the Minack Theatre.
© British Tourist Authority*

Enjoy a theatrical performance overlooking the sea

Why? Perched on the cliffs high above the Cornish coastline, the spectacular [Minack Theatre](#) offers alfresco theatre in the most dramatic of settings. Sit back and enjoy a play or a concert with the sea as a special background. The theatre has been running since 1931 and the season runs from April through to September, with matinees on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Where? Located in the south-west of England, Minack is around 20 minutes from Penzance station by taxi. Penzance is around five hours by train from London Paddington.

Go monster hunting on Loch Ness

Why? This 22.5-mile Scottish loch has made a worldwide name for itself thanks to legendary tales of a large beast named Nessie dwelling in its waters. If you're not successful in spotting her, you'll still be astounded by the sheer expanse of the loch and the stunning views as you cruise its deep, dark waters. On a sunny day the loch sparkles and the shapes of the atmospheric Urquhart Castle and mountains are reflected on its glassy surface, making for a dreamily-proportioned, Instagram-worthy shot.



Cruise the dark, mysterious waters of Loch Ness
© Sarah Runnacles

Where? Loch Ness is located in Inverness, Scotland, approximately 45 minutes' drive from Inverness airport. [Jacobite Cruises](#) run daily from Clansman Harbour on the loch's banks.



One of Isle of Skye's most other-worldly landscapes © Adam Burton

Conquer the Old Man of Storr

Why? The Old Man of Storr is an iconic part of Skye's landscape - it's a large, pointed, rocky pinnacle seen from miles around. It almost feels other-worldly, and featured in the opening scene of the 2012 sci-fi movie *Prometheus*. The 45-minute walk up to the foot of the Storr starts from the main road (from Portree to Staffin) and is mostly on paths, with a couple of steep rocky sections. Take care as you go - it can get quite windy towards the summit. At the top there

are stunning views in all directions, and, boy, are they spectacular - the perfect photo spot.

Where? The Isle of Skye is around three hours' drive from the city of Inverness.

Take gigantic steps along the Giant's Causeway

Why? Step along the dramatic result of an ancient volcanic eruption - 40,000 interlocking basalt columns jutting into the sea, fittingly named the Giant's Causeway. This eerie landscape is Northern Ireland's only UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been a filming location for TV series *Game of Thrones*. Northern Ireland's Causeway Coast is 18 miles of spectacular coastal scenery with dramatic cliffs, sandy beaches, dark volcanic rocks and wildlife on the offshore islands.



Follow giant steps along Northern Ireland's Causeway Coast

Where? The city of Belfast is around a 75 minute drive away.

Getting out there: from airport to countryside

With frequent train and bus links running from Britain's major airports, you can step off the plane and find yourself among amazing natural landscapes within two hours, or even just 20 minutes. Here are a selection of country getaways easily accessible via public transport from airports in England, Scotland and Wales. To save money on trains, book tickets in advance with [National Rail](#) and opt to travel at off-peak times.

From: London Heathrow or Gatwick

To: South Downs National Park, south-east England

Journey time: 20 - 90 minutes

With 1,627 square kilometres of rolling hills and ancient woodlands, [South Downs National Park](#) is a world away from the urban buzz of London, but is within easy reach of both Gatwick and Heathrow airports.



All aboard the countryside express! © Rail Images

There are plenty of entry points into the park by train, including the village of [Hassocks](#) - just a 20-minute direct train journey from Gatwick and an idyllic spot for cyclists wanting to explore. There's a [community cycle hire](#) centre directly outside the station, and recommended circular cycle routes ranging from eight miles/13 km to 14.5 miles/23 km, so you can pick a route to suit your level.



Cycling the South Downs

At the top, a wild landscape of pine trees, purple heathland, flowering meadows and woodland stretches out before you.

Another option is the quaint market town of [Haslemere](#), reached via a 40-minute train journey from Gatwick Airport to Guildford, followed by a 20-minute train journey from Guildford to Haslemere.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), the creator of literary character Sherlock Holmes, lived in a house near Haslemere at the beginning of 1897, where he entertained famous friends including *Dracula* creator Bram Stoker, who described the view from the house as "a never-ending sea of greenery".

To reach Black Down, the highest point - and one of the best views - in the South Downs, walk directly from Haslemere on the National Trust's [Temple of the Winds walk](#).



Views over the Lake District in Cumbria © VisitBritain / Joe Cornish

From: Manchester Airport

To: The Lake District, north-west England

Journey time: Under two hours

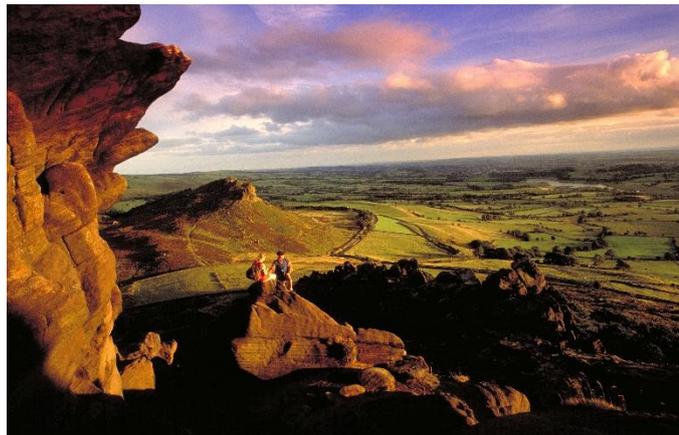
The Lake District is most definitely possible to do without a car, and you can travel there directly from Manchester Airport with public transport. To get to [Windermere](#) - named after the longest lake in England - take the Transpennine Express from Manchester Airport bound for Glasgow Central and alight at Oxenholme after 90 minutes. Then

take the 20-minute Northern train to Windermere, where you can board a lake cruise with [Windermere Lake Cruises](#), or hire your own boat instead! Explore attractions such as Beatrix Potter's house, Hill Top, and cute villages on a car-free tour with [Mountain Goat Tours](#). Or, if you don't fancy an organised tour, [Go Lakes](#) provides information on exploring the Lakes using local buses.

To: The Peak District, northern England

Journey time: 70 minutes

The [Peak District](#) is geographically closer to Manchester than the Lake District and, although less well-known to tourists, it's very popular with walkers and cyclists and has good rail connections on the charmingly-named Hope Valley Line, which stops at various stations in the national park, including pretty villages in the



The Peak District in all its glory © VisitBritain

Derwent, Hope and Edale valleys. Head to Edale to get stuck into some characteristically dramatic Peaks terrain - it's the starting point for the [Pennine Way](#) walking trail, and offers low-level ambles and more challenging hikes. From Manchester Airport, take the Northern train line to Manchester Piccadilly (15 minutes), then the Northern line bound for Sheffield and alight at Edale after a 45-minute journey.

Pride and Prejudice and Colin Firth fans should make a visit to [Lyme Park](#), a short walk from Disley station, which is just 30 minutes from Manchester Airport by train. Lyme Park is the grand stately home and grounds where the famous scene of Mr Darcy emerging from the lake in his white shirt was filmed in the 1995 BBC adaptation of the book.

The Peak District also has a comprehensive bus network across the national park that links with railway services at major centres including Buxton. Bus tickets often entitle you to reductions across attractions.



Escape to beautiful Loch Lomond for some lake-side living © Adam Burton

From: Edinburgh or Glasgow Airport, Scotland

To: Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

Journey time: 70 minutes from Glasgow, two hours from Edinburgh

Step off the plane in Glasgow or Edinburgh and escape to Scotland's famous countryside in two hours or less. The centrepiece of this national park north of Glasgow is [Loch Lomond](#) itself, the largest inland stretch of

water in Britain by surface area. Edinburgh and Glasgow are connected by an hour's train journey, so you can reach this beautiful area from either city airport.

The southernmost point of the loch is the village of Balloch. To get there from Glasgow Airport, take the Glasgow Airport Express (15 minutes) from Stance 1 at the airport to George Square near Queen Street train station in the city centre. Then take a [ScotRail](#) train from Queen Street Station to Balloch (50 minutes). From Edinburgh Airport, hop on the [Citylink Air bus](#), which gets you to Buchanan Bus Station in Glasgow city centre in one hour, then it's just a few minutes' walk to Queen Street Station, where you can get the ScotRail train to Balloch as above. You can hire canoes, pedaloes and bikes in Balloch, but if you prefer to seek a path less travelled, use the village as your starting point to get to the more tranquil eastern side of the loch. Buses depart every two hours from Balloch to Balmaha, a sweet loch-side village 25 minutes' drive away and an ideal place to appreciate the area's beauty and tranquillity.

From: Cardiff Airport, Wales

To: Brecon Beacons National Park, south Wales

Journey time: 40 minutes

From Cardiff, it's just 40 minutes on the train to Abergavenny, which lies on the edge of the beautiful [Brecon Beacons National Park](#). If you're lucky enough to be visiting in autumn, catch the [Abergavenny Food Festival](#), one of the best in Britain, then venture further into the park. If you're into cycling, you could take on the Black Mountains and ride from Abergavenny to the book town of Hay-in-Wye at the top of the national park - it's a 21 mile (just under 40km) route.



Epic landscapes await in the Brecon Beacons © VisitBritain / Britain on View

Year-round countryside

Spring, summer, autumn and winter - Britain's countryside is open all-year round. Enjoy activities such as walking and cycling whatever the time of year, or go along to one of the seasonal special events below.

SPRING

Chepstow Annual Walking Festival, Monmouthshire, south-east Wales *19 - 23 April 2017*

An officially-designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Wales' Lower Wye Valley is stunning in the spring. April's [Chepstow Annual Walking Festival](#) ensures the best panoramas via guided walks and special trails, centering on the riverside town of Chepstow, 30-minutes from Cardiff by train.



Spring is a great time to explore Britain's countryside © VisitEngland/ Warwickshire County Council

Balmoral Show, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

10 May - 13 May 2017

Ireland's largest agricultural event, the [Balmoral Show](#) celebrates the country's farming and phenomenal cuisine. Taking place at Balmoral Park, Lisburn - 50-minutes by rail from Belfast - attractions include a food pavilion, livestock competitions, and show jumping.

May Fayre & Puppet Festival, London, south-east England

14 May 2017

Maypole dancing, a procession, puppet shows and folk music are among the free, village fete-style entertainments at the [May Fayre & Puppet Festival](#). The event celebrates diarist Samuel Pepys encountering his first Punch and Judy show in Covent Garden, May 1662, and brings a distinct taste of the countryside to central London.

Well Dressing, Derbyshire, north England

May - September 2017

The tradition of [Well Dressing](#) takes place in the English rural villages of the Peak District National Park, 40 minutes' drive from Manchester. The dressings are elaborate mosaic pictures often made of flower petals and thought to originate from a Pagan ritual of thanks to the water gods.

Highland Games, north Scotland

May - September 2017

Eighty [Highlands Games](#) are staged across the mountainous Scottish Highlands. Less than an hour by road from Inverness, each games proudly showcases Scottish culture. Spectacles include the Highland Fling dance, and sports such as the caber toss, which involves throwing a four-six metre (16-20 foot) felled tree as far as possible.

SUMMER

Celebrate hunting heritage, Perthshire, central Scotland

30 June - 2 July 2017

Celebrate Scotland's hunting tradition at 19th-century Scone Palace, Perth - an hour by train from Glasgow. Feast on local foods at the [Scottish Game Fair](#), have a go at clay-pigeon shooting and enjoy demonstrations ranging from falconry, to the fisherman's art of fly casting.



Summer on a British beach © VisitEngland/ Jeremy Cangialosi

Experience an urban country fair, south London, England

15 - 18 July 2017

The [Lambeth Country Show](#) brings English rural traditions to urban London. Held in Brockwell Park, the annual event features a city farm, sheep dog shows, market stalls, sports, live music and flower and vegetable contests. The nearest London underground stop is Brixton.

Attend Britain's biggest agricultural show, Powys, mid Wales

24 - 27 July 2017

Experience Britain's biggest agricultural show in Builth Wells, a town 90-minutes' drive from Cardiff. [Royal Welsh Show](#) visitors enjoy entertainment, demonstrations and contests including carriage driving, sheep shearing, falconry and aerial displays.

Gaze at balloon-filled skies, Bristol, south-west England

10 - 13 August 2017

The largest event of its kind in Europe, [Bristol Balloon Fiesta](#) sees the skies over Long Ashton dotted with hot-air balloons of all shapes and colours. Located 20 minutes by road from Bristol, highlights include passenger rides, a 'nightglow' (where the balloons light up the night sky) and firework finale.

Visit Ireland's oldest fair, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

28 - 29 August 2017

Situated in the seaside town of Ballycastle on the country's north-east coast, 90-minutes' drive from Belfast, [The Auld Lammas Fair](#) includes street entertainers and market stalls, selling everything Irish from crafts, to 'dulse' - an edible seaweed.



*See the beautiful colours of autumn © Lee Beel
Photography*

AUTUMN

Spot wild beavers, Argyll, west Scotland

Year-round

Scottish beavers have been reintroduced to Knapdale Forest, a National Scenic Area less than two hour's drive from Glasgow. They don't hibernate so visit them any season via the [Beaver Detective Trail](#) at dusk and dawn around lochs Dubh and Collie-Bharr.

Explore the River Thames, London, south-east England

1 - 30 September 2017

Celebrate London's iconic tidal river with its wildlife, 80 islands and officially-designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, such as the north Kent marshes. The annual [Totally Thames](#) festival offers boat trips, lectures, regattas, river-inspired art installations, live music and riverside walks.

Explore by quad bike, West Glamorgan, south Wales

September - November 2017

Effortlessly navigate the rough terrain, hills, woodlands and streams of Wales' Dulais Valley Heritage Trail by 250cc quad bike. Situated 50 minutes' drive from Swansea, bike expeditions are lead [Dulais Valley Quads](#) guides, and tuition and kid-sized bikes are also available.

Join Britain's biggest firework festivities, East Sussex, south England

4 November 2017 (usually 5 November)

Held in the English town of Lewes - 30 minutes by train from Brighton, [Lewes Bonfire Night](#) offers fireworks and a procession of burning crosses marking two historic events: Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators plot to blow up Parliament in 1605, and Lewes' 16th-century Marian Persecutions when 17 religious martyrs were burned at the stake.

Learn bushcraft skills, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

19 - 20 November 2017

Join one of the [Northern Ireland Survival School](#) seasonal courses to experience Ireland's wilderness in the raw. Sleep under the stars near the town of Ballymena, 50-minutes' drive from Belfast, go foraging, build fires and shelters and learn to prepare wild game.



Winter in the mountains © British Tourist Authority

WINTER

Get active in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland

Year-round

Get an adrenaline rush with outdoor activities such as off-road driving, ziplines and paintball at the award-winning [Todds Leap activity centre](#). It's located in the tranquil countryside surrounding the town of Ballygawley - 80-minutes' drive from Belfast or Londonderry.

Walk the Gower Peninsula, south and west Wales

Year-round

Britain's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the bays, cliffs and moorlands of the [Gower coastline](#) make for romantic wintertime walks. Gaze across Rhossili Bay beach and watch the wild Celtic Sea lashing serpent-shaped Worm's Head island.

Enjoy illuminations, London, south-east England

November 2017 - February 2018

Some London attractions brighten winter evenings with light installations. [Christmas at Kew](#) offers festive illuminations at the Royal Botanic Gardens, November to January. The Duke of Northumberland's Syon Park estate in Twickenham electrifies its [Enchanted Woodland](#) from November to December. Meanwhile, Chiswick House and Gardens, heralds Chinese New Year in January and February with a [Magical Lantern Festival](#).

Follow the fireballs, Aberdeenshire, north-east Scotland

31 December 2017

Celebrate New Year on Scotland's north-east coast at the ancient [Stonehaven Fireball Festival](#). Watch a street procession swing blazing balls of fire through the town. After throwing them in the harbour there's a firework climax. Stonehaven is around 15 minutes by train from Aberdeen.

Follow a Straw Bear, Cambridgeshire, east England

January 2018

A medieval mascot, the Straw Bear is someone in a straw costume. The [Whittlesea Straw Bear Festival](#) and procession takes place in the market town - an hour's drive from Cambridge. Expect folk music, clog dancing and poetry.

Six of the best: historic countryside pubs

One thing Britain has certainly mastered is its pubs, inns, local haunts and watering holes. Now a national institution, the tradition of the pub dates back hundreds of years with 400-year old taverns surviving to this day. From beer gardens in summer to roaring fires in winter, there's no place quite like a British pub to sip your favourite tippie. Head out to the countryside for a refreshing ramble before heading to one of these historic haunts.



Ye Olde George Inn, Hampshire - ©VisitBritain, Andrew Pickett

Ye Olde George Inn, Hampshire, south England.

Located in the heart of Hampshire's countryside and dating back to the 15th century, this historic coaching inn is bursting with character and still retains its open fires and wooden floors. Situated in the South Downs National Park, [Ye Olde George Inn](#) is an ideal base to enjoy a countryside ramble and can be found in East Meon village, regarded as one of the loveliest places in the valley of the River Meon. The inn offers free-range and organic produce-cooking, with

most of its suppliers on its doorstep. With an ever-changing menu, the team prides themselves on making all of the dishes on the premises, except the hand-made ice cream, which is made at the local farm. If you find yourself not wanting to leave the comfort of the George Inn, there's also five comfortable en suite bedrooms to choose from.

Getting there: Ye Olde George Inn in Hampshire is a 95-minute drive from London.

Treat yourself to a pint at The Spinners Arms, Cumbria, north-west England

Frequently lauded by real ale enthusiasts, [The Spinners Arms](#) in Cumbria is an ideal haunt for those who appreciate the culinary complexities of a good pint. Housed in a Grade II-listed building, the pub has many of its original features, including open fires, tiled fireplaces, wooden panelling, and quirky, decorated gutters. What's more, it's almost equidistant to the North Pennines, the Lake District National Park, and Northumberland National Park, so it's an ideal spot to rest those weary legs after a day of countryside rambles.

Getting there: The Spinners Arms in Cumbria is less than five hours by public transport from London, or less than six hours by car.



Exterior of the Spinners Arms on a snowy winter's day in Cumbria © Cumbria Tourism



The Clachaig Inn, Glen Coe, Scottish Highlands © VisitScotland, Paul Tomkins

Clachaig Inn, Glen Coe, Scotland

Famed for its natural beauty, Glen Coe in Lochaber, is known as the outdoor capital of Britain. Priding itself on its towering mountains, stunning views and rich heritage, the area is a rambler's paradise and what better way to refuel than at a traditional Scottish inn, where travellers, hikers and climbers alike have rested and dined for more than 300 years. [The Clachaig Inn](#) has three separate bars; the Boots Bar, the Snug and the Bidean Lounge, each of which serve locally-sourced food, Scottish cask ales, more than 300 malt whiskies and 40 Scottish gins. The inn boasts 23 en suite bedrooms and self-catering chalets that offer stunning mountain views.

Getting there: The Clachaig Inn is a three-hour drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

The Drovers Inn, Loch Lomond, Scotland

Boasting over three centuries of Scottish hospitality, [The Drovers Inn](#) is a hidden gem just a stone's throw from the still waters of Loch Lomond. Guests can

expect a warm welcome and a roaring fire, and can dine on traditional Scottish comfort food, from mince 'n' tatties and haggis to steak pie. Head to the Loch Lomond Bar to enjoy live music and sample a dram or two from the extensive range of whiskies, or sip a pint of the inn's own Drovers Blonde.

Getting there: The Drovers Inn is a two-hour drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Step into a fairy tale at The Griffin Inn, Llyswen, Wales

This fairy tale pub is located in the pretty village of Llyswen in mid-Wales, and boasts an ivy-clad exterior, old beams and warming log fires. [The Griffin Inn](#) dates back to 1647, and promises homely hospitality, locally-sourced produce, and a selection of real ales and fine wines. Even better, the inn arranges guided walks and fishing in the local rivers for those who like to work up an appetite before supper.

Getting there: The Griffin Inn is a three and a half-hour drive from London, or just over an hour from Cardiff.



The Griffin Inn, Llyswen, Powys, Wales © VisitBritain, Britain on View



The Bushmills Inn, County Antrim, Northern Ireland © VisitBritain, Ben Selway

Sip locally distilled Irish whiskey at The Bushmills Inn, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

Found between Ireland's famous Giant's Causeway and the Royal Portrush Golf Club, [The Bushmills Inn](#) has been a spot for saddle-weary travellers heading to the causeway since 1608. Not only is the inn a 41-bedroom hotel, it also houses its own award-winning restaurant and, of course, features its own pub: the Gas Bar. With [Old Bushmills](#) four century-old whiskey distillery only a stone's throw away, the Gas Bar,

fitted only with traditional gas lamps for an extra-cosy atmosphere, is one of the best spots to sip a smooth glass of this locally distilled malt. Pull up a chair by their roaring peat fire with a pint of Guinness, or get cosy and enjoy a bar nibble, or two.

Getting there: The Bushmills Inn is an 80-minute drive from Belfast, which is a 75-minute flight from London.

Six of the best: chances to go foraging for your own food

From rugged coasts surrounding sea teeming with crabs, shellfish and edible seaweed, to fruitful hedgerows and wild mushrooms on forest walks, Britain's delicious landscape is abundant with tasty morsels - if you know where to look. Join some of Britain's best foragers and follow your food's journey from land to plate.

Coastal foraging in North Yorkshire, north-east England

Join Taste the Wild on its one-day [coastal foraging course](#) in Staithes, North Yorkshire, where you can learn about the diversity of edible seaweed and shellfish on Britain's rocky coasts. Start your day exploring the foreshore and find seaweeds that can be harvested for food, while discovering different species of crabs and shellfish in the rock pools and gullies. If the sea is calm you'll pull lobster pots from the sea at low tide and check the catch for size. After a morning of exploring, return to Staithes with your foraged food and enjoy lunch in the Smugglers Gallery or Old Sunday School, where your wild harvest will be served.

Getting there: Staithes is on England's north-east coast, and is a four and half-hour journey by public transport from London, or a five-hour drive.

Feast with a wild cookery school, in Cornwall, south-west England

Set up by Caroline Davey in 2007, Fat Hen is a wild cookery school. It will take you back to basics, teaching once-vital skills on how to [forage, cook and feast](#) on your findings from the wild. Enjoy a two-hour foraging trip to west Cornwall's wild landscapes, including seashore, hedgerow, woodland and farmland, and learn how to forage safely and legally. After your exploration, Caroline will take you back to Fat Hen where you'll be taught how to cook a series of wild dishes before enjoying them for lunch.

Getting there: located in Penzance, Cornwall, Fat Hen is a five-hour drive from London, or less than six hours by train.



Caroline Davey teaching at Fat Hen in Cornwall - © Tom Young

Get back to nature with Galloway Wild Foods, Scotland

Join Mark, founder of [Galloway Wild Foods](#), in the wild and be inspired by his passion for foraging while you learn about the delicious and nutritious food you can gather in the great outdoors. A full-time foraging tutor, Mark offers an abundance of foraging walks and teaching events for novices and improvers alike in Scotland and northern England; these include specific themed events such as spring plants, coastal foraging, fungi, drunken botany and wild gourmet days.

Getting there: Galloway Wild Foods will be hosting events around Scotland and northern England, check the website for details.



Sea bass with foraged spinach and samphire, served at Llys Meddyg in Pembrokeshire, Wales

Go seashore and hedgerow foraging through beautiful Welsh countryside, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

With the Llys Meddyg restaurant and rooms as a basecamp, the estuary, seashore and forest are yours to explore when foraging with Don Lawrence and Ed Sykes through the Welsh countryside. Running on selected dates throughout the year, the four-hour [seashore and hedgerow foraging course](#) will take you on a tour of the beautiful local landscape, for a fun and informative guide to food foraging. Taste wild

food along the way, as you source ingredients for your lunch while learning how to safely identify and gather your finds.

Getting there: Llys Meddyg is in west Wales, and is a two hour drive from Cardiff.

Return to your wild self with Monica Wilde, locations across Scotland

Join Monica in the wild landscapes of Scotland on one of her [foraging walks or day courses](#), where you'll learn about native plants and their uses as both wild foods and herbal medicines. Head to the East Lothian coast in the winter and identify tasty, edible seaweed and coastal hedgerow plants, while enjoying the crisp stillness of the Scottish coast on a frosty day. If you prefer something a little warmer, head to Edinburgh to celebrate the spring equinox, and hunt for early wild garlic, wild leek, hairy bittercress, dandelion, sweet cicely shoots, and other spring vegetables. Here you'll understand more about edible and medicinal wild plants and how to prepare and cook them.



Monica Wilde harvesting sugar kelp while on her foraging course - © MonicaWilde.com

Getting there: East Lothian is a 35-minute drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Tuck into home-foraged food, The Forest Side, Grasmere, Cumbria

Set in a 19th-century Victorian hotel and just minutes from the village of Grasmere, [The Forest Side](#) hotel is a serious foodie destination, with Kevin Tickle, former chef and head forager at two Michelin-starred restaurant L'Enclume, heading up the kitchen. Kevin's menu changes daily according to produce available within the abundant 46 acres of forageable grounds, and the extensive Victorian walled kitchen garden.

Getting there: located in Grasmere, The Forest Side hotel is a five-hour journey from London by public transport, or five and a half hours by car.

Six of the best: places to eat Britain's fresh seafood

There are plenty of fish in the four seas that surround Britain; the English Channel, the North Sea, the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. From the fishing ports of Plymouth and Brixham in south-west England to Whitstable oysters in the south-east, go fishing for a tasty meal in one of these top spots, where the distance from sea to fork is minimal.

In Scotland...

Scottish wild and smoked salmon, trout and shellfish are world-renowned - and hand-dived scallops from the Isle of Mull are equally delicious. There's even a [Seafood Trail](#) that takes culinary adventurers to the best seafood restaurants on the west coast of Scotland and its islands, including Arran, Mull and Skye.

Popular with royalty and celebrities, [the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar](#) - set in the small picturesque village of Cairndow on the west coast of Scotland - dishes up salmon, crispy oysters with horseradish and hand-dived Tarbert scallops. There's also a deli, so you can take some of their delicious seafood away with you. On Scotland's south-east coast, the [Lobster Shack](#) at North Berwick harbour serves lobster al fresco, grilled to perfection with garlic and herb butter.



Enjoy fresh seafood overlooking Loch Fyne © VisitBritain / Andrew Pickett

In Yorkshire, north England...

Head to the seaside town of Whitby in Yorkshire, north England, to sample some of the tastiest fish and chips in England. Light, crispy and served piping hot, fish and chips from [The Magpie Cafe](#) on Whitby harbour are known and loved throughout Yorkshire. The ultimate coastal takeaway food, why not tuck into them while strolling along nearby Whitby Beach and admiring the lines of colourful beach huts?



Oyster heaven at Whitstable Oyster Festival

[Oyster Bar](#) in the town centre, or buy them - and a wide variety of other seafood - at the [Whitstable Fish Market](#) on the South Quay, where fishing boats and lobster pots bob about in the harbour. Go in summer and enjoy the barbecue, or buy a pot of whelks or cockles -

In south-east England...

Selsey and Shoreham in West Sussex have two of the few remaining fishing fleets on the south coast. To buy freshly-caught plaice, crab and succulent lobster, head to the wooden huts on Selsey's east beach. At Hastings (East Sussex) and Hythe (Kent), fishing boats land their catches daily for sale on the beach.

Oysters and Whitstable, in Kent, go hand in hand. Try them at [Wheelers](#)

they're delicious with vinegar and pepper. The [Whitstable Oyster festival](#) takes place every summer and is a wonderful celebration of different varieties of oysters.



Takeaway Frito Misto at Rockfish © Jim Wileman

In south-west England...

You'll find shoals of fish markets and excellent seafood restaurants in Devon and Cornwall. Feast on Brixham clams, Salcombe crab, Elberry Cove mussels, or swallow oysters whole with a squeeze of lemon at the [Oyster Shack](#) in Bigbury, Devon.

In Cornwall, British chef [Rick Stein](#) dishes up platters of langoustines, oysters, sashimi and tasty fish and chips at his various restaurants in Padstow and Newquay. Tuck into whole soft-shell crab at [Rockfish](#) restaurants

in Plymouth and Dartmouth - its motto is 'tomorrow's fish are still in the sea', so you know your fish will be fresh as can be! Also in Plymouth is [Kingfisher Fish and Chips](#), which has just been crowned Best Fish and Chip Shop in the UK in the 2017 National Fish & Chip Awards.

In Wales...

Cockles are big business on the Gower Peninsula mud flats in south Wales. Try these small saltwater clams with laverbread (a soft black seaweed paste rather than a type of bread) - it's a Welsh delicacy and very nutritious as well. You can buy cockles at [Swansea's indoor market](#), along with around 40 other varieties of fish. But you won't find seafood any fresher than catching your own - and a north Wales [lobster safari](#) will show you how to do just that! If you prefer your lobster on a plate, [Twnti](#) restaurant on the beautiful Llyn Peninsula, serves them up with garlic butter, along with dishes of local king scallops and crab. For fishy feasts and competitions, visit Cardigan Bay's popular [Seafood Festival](#) in Aberaerom, mid Wales, in July.

In north-east England...

Visitors to the small harbour village of Craster in Northumberland are in for a memorable and delicious experience, feasting on what are widely regarded as the best kippers in Britain. The family behind L. Robson & Sons has been smoking kippers since the 1900s. Follow the scent of wood smoke to the traditional old smokehouse and shop next door, or enjoy the house speciality kipper sandwich at [The Craster Seafood Restaurant](#)



Craster kippers - a Northumberland speciality.

overlooking the harbour (the restaurant is closed during the winter, and reopens at Easter).

Six of the best: places to try traditional drinks in Britain

Britain may be well known as a nation of tea drinkers, but we're also partial to an alcoholic beverage and are rather talented at producing them! Our countryside is home to an array of memorable drinking experiences, from sipping a bottle of craft beer on a Welsh beach or wine tasting in an English vineyard, to tasting Scotch whisky straight from the barrel. Here are six of the best British drinks and where to savour them, served with a lush countryside garnish. Cheers!

The drink: wine

Where to drink it: Denbies Vineyard, Dorking, Surrey, south-east England

Wine production has been part of English and Welsh history for nearly 2,000 years, ever since the Romans first introduced vines to the British countryside. In parts of south-east England the chalky soils are similar to that of France's Champagne region - and English sparkling wine has subsequently garnered a solid reputation in the wine world.



From grape to glass: sample award-winning wine at Denbies Vineyard © VisitSurrey / VisitEngland

There are now more than 500 vineyards dotted around England and Wales, including [Denbies](#), England's largest vineyard and one of Britain's best-known wine producers. The vineyard is ten minutes' walk from Dorking train station, which can be reached directly from London's Victoria or Waterloo stations in under an hour. Take in beautiful vineyard views on two leisurely 50-minute train tours, or for something more hands-on, opt for the 'Vine and Dine' experience and spend the day (8.30am until 3.15pm) grape-picking and tasting wines, with a delicious lunch included. You can even get married here - the perfect venue for a couple who love wine as much as each other!

The drink: gin

Where to drink it: Bombay Sapphire Distillery & The Mill Bar, Hampshire, south-east England

Gin isn't England's national drink for no reason. A huge variety of top quality gins are distilled across England and other parts of Britain.

For a special gin drinking experience, go behind the scenes at the [Bombay Sapphire Distillery](#) at Laverstoke Mill in rural Hampshire, set on the banks of the River Test. Choose between a



Enjoy a gin cocktail or two at the Bombay Sapphire Distillery in beautiful Hampshire

hosted or self-guided tour - both culminating in an all-important drink at The Mill Bar of course! Discover how ten exotic botanicals from around the world - ranging from liquorice to juniper - are infused into Bombay Sapphire gin. The tropical plants are housed in two striking heated sculptural glasshouses designed by Thomas Heatherwick (creator of the London 2012 Olympic Games cauldron). You could always skip the tour and go straight to gin cocktails at the Mill Bar, or opt for the one-hour Gin Cocktail Masterclass. The distillery is open seven days a week, from 11am to 6pm, with last admissions at 4pm. The closest train station is Whitchurch, which can be reached in under an hour from London's Waterloo station.



Sample crisp cider straight from the barrel at Thatchers in Somerset © Neil Phillips Photography

The drink: cider

Where to drink it: Thatchers cider farm and The Railway Inn, Somerset, south-west England

Family-run [Thatchers Cider](#) has perfected the art of turning apples into refreshing cider for more than 100 years at its orchards and mill nestled at the foot of the lush Mendip Hills in Somerset, one of Britain's Areas of Outstanding Beauty. Head to the home of Thatchers, Myrtle Farm, to learn how cider is made during a 90-minute guided tour. At the end you'll sample some of Thatchers best ciders, from Somerset Haze - a premium cloudy cider with a crisp, sweet finish - to the mature, distinctive Thatchers Vintage. You can buy these alongside traditional ciders straight from the barrel in the Cider Shop, or pay a visit to the adjacent pub, The Railway Inn.

The drink: Real ale

Where to drink it: Ty Coch Inn, Llŷn Peninsula / The BlackBoy Inn, Caernarfon - north-west Wales

If you're after a pint of real ale with an amazing view, [Ty Coch Inn](#) is the place to go. This traditional tavern sits right on the sandy beach at Porthdinllaen, on the north coast of the Llŷn Peninsula. Enjoy your ale right on the beach with your toes in the sand as you soak up uninterrupted views across the Irish Sea.



Beachside beer at Ty Coch Inn on the Welsh coast

If you want to work your way through a larger selection of ales and craft beers, just 40 minutes' drive north of the Ty Coch Inn is [The Black Boy Inn](#) in Caernarfon, near

Snowdonia National Park. The owners are passionate about providing a wide selection of excellent beers, ales, ciders, lagers and wines - many of them brewed by local suppliers. They have a changing menu of featured guest beers.



Savour a dram of Glengoyne whisky in the Scottish countryside

The drink: Scotch whisky

Where to drink it: Glengoyne Distillery, north of Glasgow, Scotland

Whisky is the national drink of Scotland, so where better to savour it than in the heart of its rural homeland, where the art of distilling has been perfected for generations? There are five whisky regions in Scotland and numerous different types to try.

A great start for a whisky pilgrimage is [Glengoyne Distillery](#) in Dumgoyne,

40 minutes' drive north of Glasgow, which has matured Highland single malt whisky in the Scottish Lowlands since 1833. There are a range of tours on offer, from the 45-minute Glengoyne Tour to the Wee Tasting Tour - each welcoming you with a dram of Glengoyne 12 Year Old whisky. You'll learn how bold flavours are created and how the whiskies age. Or, you could opt for the Master Blender course, where you'll be immersed in whisky - not literally! - but by nosing, swirling, tasting, and ultimately creating your own one-off single malt, presented to you in a branded Glengoyne bottle. The distillery also offers private dining, overlooking the waterfall and glen, where guests enjoy a special menu perfectly matched with Glengoyne whiskies. The distillery is open from December to February and then March to November, seven days a week, with tours running on the hour. The Master Blender course must be booked in advance. It's easy to get to the distillery with public transport - the number 10 bus (destination Balfron) departs from Buchanan Bus Station in the centre of Glasgow and stops right at the gates of Glengoyne.



Cosy up in a pub with a pint of Guinness © VisitBritain / Ben Selway

The drink: Guinness

Where to drink it: The Cross Keys Inn, Toomebridge, Northern Ireland

This distinctive Irish dry stout made from roasted unmalted barley, hops, yeast and water is one of the most successful beer brands worldwide, with its home in the Republic of Ireland.

When you order a Guinness, watch the "perfect pour" in action, because it's a skill in itself. A Guinness must be poured in two parts at a 45 degree angle, with a rest in between to allow it to settle into a satisfying black colour (actually a

very dark ruby red) before the rest of the glass is filled, resulting in a perfect white crown of creamy froth atop your pint. Just how a Guinness should be. A cosy place to enjoy a pint of Guinness is at [The Cross Keys Inn](#) in the Northern Irish countryside, just 30 minutes' drive from Belfast. This tiny hatched-roofed pub dates from 1654, when it was a coaching inn on the route from Belfast to Londonderry. Its musical heritage is famous throughout Northern Ireland, so you're likely to have live music served with your pint.

Six of the best: National Trust picnic spots

The National Trust is a charity that looks after some of the most beautiful countryside in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It cares for 775 miles of coastline; more than 2,400 square kilometres of land; and more than 500 historic houses, castles, parks and nature reserves. One of the joys of the British countryside is having a picnic – a meal eaten outdoors. Grab some sandwiches and your [National Trust touring pass](#) and settle down at one of the scenic spots below.



Studland's beautiful sandy beach is four miles long © VisitBritain/ Rod Edwards

Studland beach, Dorset, south-west England

Enjoy a good old-fashioned day out on this [golden sandy beach](#), which stretches for four miles. It's an ideal place to enjoy the simple pleasures of a beach picnic and building sandcastles. And with shallow bathing water, it's perfect for paddling. Just sit on the beach, or take a walk down to one of the most famous landmarks on the south coast – a towering chalk formation known as 'Old Harry Rocks'. Did the rocks get their name because, as legend has it, the devil

took a nap on them, or were they named after the notorious local pirate Harry Paye? Either way, they provide a picture-perfect picnic spot. Studland is around an hour and 20 minutes by road from Southampton.

Flatford, Suffolk, east England

[Flatford Mill](#) is right in the middle of Dedham Vale, part of the rolling landscapes on the Suffolk/Essex border that inspired the works of famous English painter John Constable. This is great walking countryside, so why not pack a rucksack full of treats and head out onto the trail? There are plenty of spots along the way to relax by the water's edge and enjoy your feast. Or you can even hire a boat from the nearby boathouse and row down river to see the beautiful



The area around Flatford inspired John Constable © VisitBritain/ Rod Edwards

surroundings from a new perspective. Flatford is around two hours from London by road, or you can catch the train from London to Manningtree station (55 minutes) and then hire a bike.

Dinefwr Park and Castle, Carmarthenshire, Wales

Settle down for sandwiches at [Dinefwr Park](#) and keep an eye out for the resident fallow deer that have been roaming the land for 1,000 years. Dinefwr is an 800-acre estate near

to the Brecon Beacons National Park. A nature reserve, it is home to many species of Britain's native wildlife, including badgers and otters, as well as some of the oldest trees in Britain. Stop beneath a 400-year-old old oak tree, or next to a flower-rich hay meadow, enjoy your picnic and watch the world go by. Dinefwr is under an hour's drive from Swansea. The nearest train station is Llandeilo, a mile away from Dinefwr, with trains from Swansea taking around an hour.



*Clumber Park is home to a spectacular avenue of lime trees
© Paul Jones Photography*

Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, central England

Escape the hustle and bustle and take the time to get closer to nature at [Clumber Park](#). The huge estate was home to some of England's dukes for more than 300 years and was once part of the famous Sherwood Forest - still only a 30-minute bike ride away. The park is fantastic for cyclists and walkers, with more than 20 miles of open trails to explore. Enjoy a shady picnic in the woodlands or overlooking the glittering lake - home to more than

200 species of birds. Clumber Park is less than an hour's drive from Sheffield.

Borrowdale and Derwentwater, Cumbria, north-west England

Just five minutes' walk from the quaint market town of Keswick, the [Borrowdale Valley](#) is a great place to get an introduction to walking in the Lake District. There are plenty of trails up onto the fells, or you can stick to exploring the pebbly shores around Derwentwater. Brandelhow on the western edge of the lake makes the perfect picnic location, with far-reaching views across the water. Keswick is in the north of the Lake District. It's less than an hour's drive from Carlisle.



*Looking across Derwent Water from Brandelhow © NTPL/
Paul Harris*

The Argory, County Armagh, Northern Ireland

Deep in the green County Armagh countryside is a place where the mist rolls down to the River Blackwater and time stands still. [The Argory](#) is a home built by members of the Irish gentry in the 1820s - the mansion's interiors have remained virtually unchanged since the 1900s, and it is surrounded by woodland. Settle down by the river to enjoy your picnic and keep a look-out for a darting kingfisher. The small birds are bright blue and orange, hunting fish from riverside perches. The estate is less than an hour's drive from Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland.

Six of the best: restaurants with great views

Restaurants offering tasty, innovative dishes can be found all over Britain's countryside - on the shores of lakes, overlooking valleys and even up mountains. Dine at one of the following restaurants and take in a stunning view while eating.



The Ptarmigan is Britain's highest restaurant © VisitScotland/ Paul Tomkins

The Ptarmigan, Scotland

The Ptarmigan - named after a bird that breeds in Scotland's tallest mountains - is the highest restaurant in Britain, sitting at 1,066 metres (3,500 foot) above sea level. The restaurant is at the top station of Cairngorm's funicular railway, where carriages are hauled up the mountain using a cable system. It offers great views of the surrounding countryside and lochs - on a clear day you might even be able to make out Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, on the horizon. The food

menu changes uses local ingredients where possible. Cairngorm is at the heart of the national park that takes its name - it's around three hours from Edinburgh by road or rail.

The Horn of Plenty, Devon, south-west England

[The Horn of Plenty](#) overlooks the Tamar Valley, an officially designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty around the rivers Tamar, Tavy and Lynher in Devon. Enjoy sweeping views while dining on British food with a hint of French flair. Dishes change daily depending on the availability of seasonal ingredients and local produce, but might include local venison, duck or fish. The restaurant is housed in a four-star manor house hotel of the same name. The restaurant is 40 minutes by road from Plymouth, or just under an hour from Exeter.



The Horn of Plenty overlooks the beautiful Tamar Valley

The Tan Hill Inn, Yorkshire, north England

The [Tan Hill Inn](#) is Britain's highest public house, standing at 528 metres (1,732 foot) above sea level. The pub dates back to the 17th century, and is located in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, known for its valleys, waterfalls, and pretty, stone-built villages. The inn is a haven for walkers and cyclists, offering a welcoming fire, exposed beams and stone-flagged floor. Outside, there are stunning views over the dales. Food is served at lunchtime and in the evening, with the pub offering traditional, hearty dishes such as pies, and sausage and mash. The inn is around one hour 45 minutes by car from Leeds, or is ideally situated for those tackling the Pennine Way - a 268-mile long hiking route stretching between Derbyshire and the Scottish borders.

The White Horse Inn, Norfolk, east England

The [White Horse Inn](#) overlooks the coastline of north Norfolk. The area is an officially designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, offering spectacular sunsets and panoramic views over beaches and tidal marshes. Enjoy it from the inn's conservatory restaurant, which also has an outside deck area, as you dine on local seafood - you may even see the local fishermen bringing in their catch. The inn also offers 15 bedrooms, and is around an hour's drive from Norwich.



See tidal marshes from the White Horse Inn © Iain Lewis



The view from the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel & Spa

The Lake Vyrnwy Hotel & Spa, Wales

Lake Vyrnwy is a reservoir just outside Snowdonia National Park in stunning north Wales. Built in the 1880s to supply water to the northern England city of Liverpool, the 355-metre long reservoir boasts an unusual turreted tower, which looks like it should belong to a fairy tale castle. The [Lake Vyrnwy Hotel & Spa](#) overlooks the water and has two dining experiences on offer: the Tower Restaurant is more formal, with a three-course menu

showcasing seasonal and local produce, while the Tavern Brasserie is more relaxed and offers classic dishes such as burgers, and fish and chips. Both eateries share the same great views of the lake.

Sharrow Bay, Cumbria, north-west England

[Sharrow Bay](#) stands on the shores of Ullswater, the second largest lake in the Lake District. The award-winning restaurant overlooks the water - enjoy dishes containing local and seasonal ingredients. Got a sweet tooth? The restaurant says it invented the sticky toffee pudding - a sponge served as dessert, with every member of staff asked to sign an agreement banning them from ever revealing the secret recipe. Try it while looking out at the water and surrounding hills. Sharrow Bay also offers 17 individually-designed bedrooms, and is a 40-minute drive from Carlisle.



Sharrow Bay overlooks Ullswater in the Lake District

Six of the best: country house hotels

The comfortable cousin of the chic townhouse, the country house hotel first took off post-war when city workers sought the tranquillity of the British countryside. As countryside escapes grew in popularity, the number of these great country houses opening their doors to the general public grew. These days, countryside seekers have a wealth of spectacular historical properties to choose from, from castles and grand manors, to luxury treehouses, and even private islands.

Chewton Glen Hotel, Hampshire, south England

[Chewton Glen](#) is a five-star country house hotel and spa that dates back to the early 18th century. Only a short distance from the New Forest National Park, the hotel is a sumptuous base for a countryside break and offers an array of outdoor pursuits including golf, tennis, croquet, falconry and mountain



Chewton Glen's treehouse is built on stilts on the edge of the New Forest National Park © VisitEngland

biking. Neighbouring England's south coastline, Chewton Glen is also a favourite spot for those drawn to the coast, where sailing, and beach walks are the order of the day. After a day of fresh air and ocean spray, unwind in a luxurious room while enjoying views of the hotel's lush parkland. To really embrace the countryside lifestyle, stay in a treehouse; the luxury accommodation is suspended 35 feet above ground and boasts forest views, an outdoor hot tub, and a large outside terrace.

Getting there: Chewton Glen Hotel in Hampshire is a little over two hours by train or car from London.



Askham Hall in Cumbria © Jonathan Marchant 2013. All rights reserved

Askham Hall, Cumbria, north-west England

This award-winning countryside retreat can be found just over the hills from Lake Ullswater in the Lake District National Park and boasts 15 bedrooms and a restaurant, a converted ancient oak party barn, a spa, and an outdoor pool. Surrounded by the beauty of the Lake District, [Askham Hall](#) also has acres of its own grounds within Cumbria's Lowther Estate. The spa is exclusively available for overnight guests and

features a Swedish sauna and more than 25 treatments including Hopi Candle Therapy, Reiki and Indian Head Massage.

Getting there: Askham Hall in Cumbria is a four-hour journey by public transport from London, or a little over five hours by car.

Gravetye Manor Hotel, Sussex, south-east England

Built in 1598, [Gravetye Manor Hotel](#) is bursting with historic charm and has peacefully passed through the centuries in the idyllic surroundings of High Weald, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Kent. With tranquillity and the philosophy of great country house hospitality at the heart of the hotel, guests are



Gravetye Manor Hotel, Sussex, England

welcomed to grand, yet comfortable surroundings, with rich fabrics, fine antiques and handcrafted beds gracing the rooms. You'll be treated to unhurried classical dining, and leisurely lunches in the garden during the warmer months.

Getting there: Gravetye Manor Hotel is a 90-minute drive from London.



Inverlochy Castle, West Highlands, Scotland © VisitScotland, Paul Tomkins, all rights reserved

Inverlochy Castle, West Highlands, Scotland

One of Scotland's finest luxury hotels, [Inverlochy Castle](#) can be found amongst the glens, lochs, and mountains of the West Highlands of Scotland, a real countryside gem hidden amongst the wild Scottish landscape. Situated in Lochaber, considered the outdoor capital of Britain, the castle offers sporting and country pursuits on the Achnacarry Estate, a round of golf at Fort William Golf Course at the foot of Ben Nevis,

white-water rafting, mountain biking, and clay pigeon shooting. Inside the hotel, things take a much slower pace with comfortable, individually-designed rooms that overlook the grounds, which come complete with beautifully-appointed bathrooms. Dining is an experience in itself at the hotel, where acclaimed chefs and father-and-son Albert and Michel Roux Jnr are in charge of the kitchen, serving fine dishes that use the very best of local produce.

Getting there: Inverlochy Castle is a three-hour drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Llangoed Hall, Wye Valley, Wales

The historic [Llangoed Hall](#) is an elegant country house hotel found in the beautiful Wye Valley, in the heart of the Welsh countryside. With classical Edwardian features, charming, beautifully-appointed rooms and a rich history dating back to 1632, the country house hotel offers guest a bespoke and comfortable stay in historic surroundings. Offering an intimate fine dining experience, the restaurant serves fresh ingredients from the hotel's own kitchen garden, as well as locally-sourced Welsh ingredients including beef and lamb. Sit down to afternoon tea and sip loose leaf tea from fine bone china cups, and choose from handmade scones, preserves and clotted cream, or Bara Brith (Welsh fruit loaf).

Getting there: Llangoed Hall is a three hour and 30-minute drive from London.



Isle of Eriska Hotel, Scotland © VisitScotland

Isle of Eriska Hotel, Spa and Island, Scotland

Located on its own island off the west coast of Scotland, the [Isle of Eriska Hotel](#) adds a whole new meaning to a remote weekend retreat. Live the 'Eriska experience' and enjoy a slow-paced round of golf, before heading to the Stables Spa. It uses ingredients sourced from the island, combined with relaxing treatments, offering the chance to unwind. As with any older property, Eriska is bursting with character and offers luxury rooms of

all shapes and sizes, including two bedroom cottage suites for that extra element of privacy. Head to the Michelin-star restaurant, and enjoy a four-course gourmet meal.

Getting there: The Isle of Eriska Hotel is a three-hour drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Six of the best: quirky countryside accommodation

Want to be close to nature, but still have the comforts of modern life to hand? Britain has a host of options on offer - you can stay in lodges, cabins, tents or even bubble domes and enjoy the beautiful countryside, while also having top-notch facilities.



Wonderfully Wild is on the Isle of Anglesey

Wonderfully Wild, Anglesey, north Wales

Anglesey is an island off the coast of north Wales. Connected to the mainland by a bridge, and around two hours from the city of Liverpool, it's home to lovely landscapes, beautiful beaches and rare, red squirrels.

[Wonderfully Wild](#) is a luxury glamping site near the seaside town of Beaumaris, home to the unfinished but impressive Beaumaris Castle.

Accommodation is split between four lodges, which have wooden walls with

a canvas roof. Each has three sleeping areas accommodating a maximum of six guests, and is set in beautiful, green surroundings - expect swallows flying overhead and spectacular sunsets from the outside seating areas. Each lodge has a fully-equipped kitchen, and gas-powered hot water shower.

Jollydays Glamping, Yorkshire, north England

[Jollydays](#) is set within 200 acres of woodland, close to the North York Moors National Park, and offers a range of glamping choices. You can choose to sleep in a hut, or a series of tents, with each offering accommodation for between four and six people. Wake up to the sound of tweeting birds before exploring your surroundings - you may see deer, buzzards, or foxes. Keep to yourself or gather at the communal campfire, where you can toast marshmallows, bake pizzas in a clay oven, and make some new friends. The site is open between March and November, and is under an hour's drive from the city of York.

Finn Lough, Fermanagh, Northern Ireland

If you want to be close to nature, but also to a four-poster bed, coffee machine, and luxury toiletries, then the forest domes at [Finn Lough](#) resort could be for you. Finn Lough is a 75-acre luxury resort on the edge of a huge lake in Fermanagh, Northern Ireland - around two hours' drive from Belfast. Nestled in woodland, the domes feature 180 degree transparent walls, so you'll feel completely immersed in your beautiful surroundings. Watch the skies as dusk falls and the stars come out - get a close-up view with the telescope provided. After a good night of sleep or stargazing, enjoy the stillness of the morning.



Under the stars: the forest dome at Finn Lough

Eagle Brae, Scotland

A unique hideaway in Scotland's stunning countryside, [Eagle Brae](#) is a collection of seven individually-crafted log cabins. Sleeping between two and six, the cabins offer true comfort in the countryside, coming complete with log-burning stoves, local artwork, modern appliances and Wi-Fi - you can even order groceries or home-cooked meals using the site's own intranet system. You'll be surrounded by trees and close to a range of outdoor activities, from walking to fishing. Also close by (around 30 minutes by car) is the famous Loch Ness, said to be home to the mysterious Loch Ness monster. Eagle Brae is around 40 minutes by car from Inverness, which has its own airport.



Stay in a luxury log cabin at Eagle Brae © AndrewPickettPhoto.com

Roulotte Retreat, Scotland

A roulotte is a traditional gypsy caravan, and [Roulotte Retreat](#) is home to seven of them, all arranged around a three-acre meadow nestled beneath hills close to Scotland's border with England. The caravans sleep between two and four and are decorated in bold colours, with sumptuous soft furnishings. They offer wood burners and shower rooms. The site is close to the small town of Melrose, home to Melrose Abbey, which dates from 1136. A casket found on the site is said to have contained the heart of Robert the Bruce, who was crowned king of Scotland in 1306. The casket's resting place is marked with a commemorative stone tablet. Melrose is over an hour from Scotland's capital, either by train or car.



Go glamping in a pod at Woodovis Park

Woodovis Park, Devon, south-west England

[Woodovis](#) is a tranquil, family-owned park in 14 acres of countryside near the historic market town of Tavistock - a 45 minute drive from Plymouth. If you like camping, but don't want to transport a tent then its camping pods could be the solution - they are double-glazed and come with heaters, an electric socket and lighting. The park offers activities including circus skills, story-telling and archery, and its red

phone box houses maps of local routes to be enjoyed on foot or electric hire bikes. Special features include a twice-weekly hog roast, visits from the weekly fish and chip van and the site-owned pub is just down the road.

Six of the best: farm stays

For a great value countryside adventure with a difference, immerse yourself in real rural life on a working farm. Farm stays are heaven for kids - green spaces to run around in and daily farm duties to get involved with. Learn about the 'farm to fork' journey and feast on freshly picked produce, head out on scenic walks and relax into the gentle pace of country life in homely accommodation - from renovated barns to glamping retreats. Here are six of the best farm stays and nearby places to visit.

Cwmcwrth Farm, Carmarthenshire, south-west Wales

Located on the edge of the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park, award-winning [Cwmcwrth Farm](#) offers a variety of accommodation, including the three-bedroom Milking Parlour - a former dairy converted into a contemporary cottage. Adults can explore the foodie trail while young visitors help farmer Rob bottle-feed the lambs and cuddle the piglets, before clambering around the new adventure play area.



Picture-perfect country living at Cwmcwrth Farm

Getting there: The farm is 25 minutes' drive from the nearest train station, Carmarthen. Carmarthen is 45 minutes by train from Swansea, which is a direct three-hour train journey from London Paddington.

Places to visit nearby: Explore the Brecon Beacons National Park surrounding the farm or head to the beautiful Pembrokeshire coast, one hour's drive away.



Make some four-legged friends at Beechenhill Farm

Beechenhill Farm, Peak District National Park, central England

Explore the scenery of the Derbyshire dales straight from the door of this 92-acre organic dairy and sheep farm. Guests can choose between [Beechenhill Farm's](#) ivy-clad, 16th-century limestone farmhouse, the converted milking barn that sleeps six, or a two-person former stallion pen. For breakfast, sample the farm's own organic yoghurt, honey and seasonal fruit, and there are locally prepared ready meals for self-caterers. A farm trail winds through meadows and woodland, and guests can watch the milking of the cows. The farm has a handy [map](#) showing all the best spots for activities, including unwinding and stargazing in the outdoor Swedish hot-tub.

Getting there: The nearest train station, Derby, is a 45-minute drive from the farm and one hour and 25 minutes on the train from London.

Places to visit nearby: Magnificent [Chatsworth House](#), home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, is a 45-minute drive from the farm.



Picturesque farm living at Eastside © Tigerchick

Eastside Farm and Cottages, Scotland

When you're watching farming life in action at [Eastside Farm](#), you might forget that you're only 20 minutes' drive from Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh. Spring is the best time to visit - lambing time starts in mid-April so you might get to meet and feed some new arrivals! There are three holiday cottages at Eastside - The Byre, family-sized and with underfloor heating and a wood burning stove; The Steading, which

was originally a hay-shed, and The Stable - a country hideaway for two overlooking the main farmyard. You can even check out the local area in advance on Eastside's webcam, which looks out over the farm and surrounding countryside.

Places to visit nearby: It's just 20 minutes' drive to vibrant Edinburgh, home to the world-famous Edinburgh Festivals during the summer months.

Upper Shadymoor Farm, Shrewsbury, West Midlands, England

This picturesque 13th-century farm is owned by a local farming family who keep ponies, sheep, cattle and red deer. The farm's shop sells duck, rabbit, venison, pheasant and tasty ready meals. Guests can choose between three bedrooms in the farmhouse, which have breakfast included in the room rate, or a safari-style tent in the grounds, which sleeps up to six people. Spend your days at [Upper Shadymoor](#) on wildlife walks, looking after the miniature ponies, fly-fishing, clay-pigeon shooting and wild swimming in the lakes - one of which has a floating trampoline, and you can warm up in a lakeside log-fired hot tub!



Lakeside hot tub relaxation at Upper Shadymoor Farm

Getting there: The farm is 30 minutes' drive from the nearest train station, Shrewsbury, which is one hour by train from Birmingham or two and a half-hours from London Euston.

Places to visit nearby: Explore the pretty market town of Shrewsbury, or 18th-century mansion [Attingham Park](#) is 20 minutes' drive away, or a 30-minute bus journey.

Ballylagan Organic Farm, South Antrim, Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's first organic farm, [Ballylagan's](#) organic shop was opened by the Prince of Wales in May 1999, selling produce grown and reared on the farm - from organic beef, pork, chicken and eggs to seasonal fruit and vegetables. The bed and breakfast accommodation includes The Guest House, originally built as a farmhouse in the early 19th century, or a self-catering apartment at the heart of the farm, which sleeps four

guests. Explore the farm trail and look out for new-born lambs and piglets, before visiting the new tea room, where choices includes gammon sandwiches and afternoon teas with home-made jams.

Getting there: The farm is 25 minutes' drive from Belfast and 20 minutes' drive from Larne and Belfast ferry ports.

Places to visit nearby: Join the Causeway Coastal Route - a dramatic coastal road trip - at Whitehead, 20 minutes' drive from the farm. The route reaches the Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the North Antrim made up of 40,000 basalt columns, the result of an ancient volcanic eruption.



Escape to the country at The Dandelion Hideaway

**The Dandelion Hideaway at
Osbaston House Farm,
Leicestershire, central England**

If you like the idea of living deep in nature but with cosy home comforts, head to [The Dandelion Hideaway](#). Available from April to October, these six three-bedroom 'canvas cottage lodges' are set on the edge of woodland within the farm's acres of peaceful countryside. Each cottage has a bathroom with a roll-top bath, a big dining table, a fridge and a wood-

burning stove. Guests can collect fresh eggs from the hens at any time, join farmer John to milk the goats, groom the Shetland ponies, and spot badgers in the badger's hide. There is also a new indoor children's den play area and The Old Cow Shed shop sells sausages, bacon, eggs and goat's cheese. Guests can request one of owner Sharon's homemade stews and eat under the stars by the warmth of a campfire.

Getting there: The farm is a 25-minute drive or one-hour bus ride from Nuneaton station, which is a 75-minute train journey from London St Pancras International.

Places to visit nearby: Spot deer in sprawling Bradgate Park, a 20-minute drive away, or visit magnificent country mansion Belvoir Castle, a one-hour drive away.

Six of the best: child-friendly places to stay

Bringing little ones to Britain and keeping children of all ages entertained is made all the easier with baby, toddler and older child-friendly accommodation options. Here are six of the best places to stay and play in the countryside where children's and parents' needs are made a priority.

Bedruthan Steps, Mawgan Porth, Cornwall, south-west England
Voted the top UK hotel for families by *The Sunday Times* newspaper in 2015, you can expect lots of fun and happy smiles at [Bedruthan Steps](#). This spacious seaside hotel certainly knows how to cater for families and young children. As well as big open-plan family suites and interconnecting rooms, there are villa suites with private terraces leading out onto a large lawn and children's play area - just one of the seven on site, including a ship-themed play park overlooking the sea.



Bedruthan Steps - a seaside haven for kids and parents alike

There is a baby listening service, early children's dinner between 4pm and 6pm, and activities and entertainment for all ages - from multiple swimming pools to surfing lessons. The hotel even offers dedicated baby and toddler break packages, which include free use of sterilisers, baby backpacks, all-terrain pushchairs, kites, spades, wellies and more, plus two hours' free childcare every night and one complimentary night's babysitting. So all that's left to do is enjoy your stay!



Bovey Rangers making feathery friends in Devon © Bovey Castle

Bovey Castle, Dartmoor National Park, Devon, south-west England
Set deep in the Dartmoor National Park yet only a 45-minute drive from Exeter International Airport, [Bovey Castle](#) is a wonderful escape for families who love the outdoors. With a wealth of country pursuits on offer, adults and children can enjoy rock climbing, archery, crof (a mixture of croquet and golf) and daily falconry displays. During school holidays, 'Bovey Rangers' activities for seven to 14-year-olds include survival skills, raft building, collecting

eggs from the hotel's chickens, and pony rides around the estate in the summer months. For three to seven-year-olds (under threes must be accompanied by an adult), the hotel's playroom has dressing-up boxes, painting, LEGO, clay work, story time, mask and puppet making, games and baking sessions - all run by qualified staff.



Country fun for all ages at Crieff Hydro

Crieff Hydro, Perthshire, Scotland
 Designed with families in mind, this hotel and leisure resort set on a 900-acre estate just one hour from Glasgow aims to ensure that children of all ages will never get bored! And they're not likely to, because [Crieff Hydro](#) is heaven for energetic kids. There are sports galore, with more than 60 indoor and outdoor activities on offer - from football, tennis, basketball and archery to summer water sports, fun in the swimming

pool, quad biking, mountain bikes, Shetland pony rides and exploring the indoor castle. There's plenty of entertainment too, such as cinema nights, live bands, ceilidhs, a bouncy castle and more. Guests can choose between family rooms and suites in the hotel or self-catering cottages. Included in the price is the BIG Country service - pre-book a place direct with the hotel and kids can enjoy six hours of fun each day. Yes, that means six hours of free childcare! So parents can enjoy the Victorian spa, 18-hole golf course and clay pigeon shooting.

Trefeddian Hotel, Aberdovey, Wales

Set on the tranquil west coast of Wales on the edge of Snowdonia National Park, [Trefeddian Hotel](#) is just a few minutes' walk from lovely beaches - perfect for collecting shells and building sandcastles with buckets and spades provided by the hotel. The larger family rooms and superior rooms sleep up to two adults and four children, with extra beds and cots available on request. There is an optional earlier children's dining slot and menu in the hotel restaurant, and staff are happy to warm bottles for



Escape to Trefeddian Hotel on the Welsh coast
 © Paul Fowles / Barnacles Photography

the tiniest of guests. A complimentary baby and child listening service is also available, so parents can take some time out together knowing that the little ones are tucked up in bed after a day of enjoying the swimming pool, tennis courts, outdoor and indoor play areas and games room. There are also lots of things to do in the surrounding area, including local attractions like the Talylyn Railway and Corris Craft Centre.

Centre Parcs Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire, central England

There are currently five Centre Parcs in Britain - Whinfell Forest in Cumbria, Elveden Forest in Suffolk, Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire, and Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. These woodland holiday villages provide an ideal environment for families to have fun together while connecting with nature. Each leafy location offers an action-packed, child-friendly, wholesome experience supported by friendly staff, but the Sherwood Forest village has the added 'Robin Hood' factor.

According to English folklore, the surrounding 400 acres of the historic Sherwood pine forest were once home to legendary outlaw, archer and swordsman, Robin Hood. Kids can get into the spirit with Little Outlaws and Mini Crossbow experiences, trying out archery or fencing - just two of the myriad of indoor and outdoor activities on offer. Water sports with expert instructors range from kayaking and sailing to stand-up paddle boarding, alongside other outdoorsy pursuits like raft building, adventure golf, tennis, a treasure trail, a high ropes challenge and a quad bike safari. Accommodation comes in the form of villas or bungalows surrounded by trees and there are restaurants, a spa, and a sandy beach, as well as an indoor subtropical swimming paradise with flumes and slides. Other indoor activities range from creative craft sessions like jewellery making, baking and pottery painting to indoor climbing and caving adventures. Ready, set, go!



An idyllic Cotswolds retreat for families © Calcot

Calcot, Cotswolds, Gloucestershire, south-west England

This charming 14th-century English farmhouse set in 220 acres of meadowland is an idyllic Cotswolds bolthole for families with young children, as well as couples and older guests. There are 13 family bedrooms and suites set away from the main house, all decorated in homely country-modern style. Each room has a 'baby box', containing necessities such as changing mats

and sterilisers, and the hotel offers a baby listening service, as well as children's high tea every evening. Children have plenty to do at [Calcot](#) - it has indoor and outdoor pools, tennis courts, a croquet lawn and a cinema and hosts special activities such as Easter egg hunts, cookery classes and sports games during school holidays. Not far from the hotel are a range of attractions, including Westonbirt Arboretum, Berkeley Castle and Longleat Safari Park. Or, parents can just relax in the Calcot Spa while the kids hit the Playzone (for ages up to 16) and littler ones are looked after qualified nannies in the crèche.

Six of the best: child-free stays

Many British countryside boltholes are extremely child-friendly, but if you're looking to take a trip away from the kids (your or other people's), there's a lot of choice for you too. Here's six places where you can enjoy a child-free stay.

Belle Tout Lighthouse, East Sussex, south-east England

[Belle Tout](#) stands on southern England's famous white chalk cliffs beside Beachy Head, an hour's drive from Brighton. Built in 1832, the lighthouse was decommissioned in 1902. It has since survived being used for target practice for Canadian troops in World War Two, and a huge feat of engineering that saw the whole building being moved 17 metres back from its original position to protect it from coastal erosion. Nowadays, it serves as a unique bed and breakfast with just six rooms, serving those aged 15 and over. Enjoy panoramic views over the sea and surrounding countryside from its lantern room. For an extra quirky stay, pick the keepers' loft - the original lighthouse keeper's bunkroom - and climb a ladder to get to bed.



The Belle Tout lighthouse © Laura Smith



Craigatin House is an award-winning bed and breakfast

Craigatin House, Pitlochry, Scotland

An award-winning boutique bed and breakfast, [Craigatin House](#) is set in secluded woodland grounds in the highland town of Pitlochry, just over an hour's drive from Dundee. It offers 14 individually-designed rooms in an early Victorian building, with guests having to be older than 13 to stay. Pitlochry is perfectly situated for exploring the great outdoors - it even has its own mountain, Ben Vrackie, which can be walked in around four-hours. It's also home to the famous

Pitlochry fish ladder: a series of 34 connected pools that allow salmon to travel upstream during the breeding season. There's a counter at the site showing how many fish have used it - in 2016 more than 5,000 fish had swum up the ladder.

Coes Faen Lodge Spa, Barmouth, Wales

[Coes Faen](#) is the perfect base for exploring north Wales - it's only 500 metres away from Snowdonia National Park (home to Snowdon, Wales' highest mountain) and is located on the an estuary, proving great access to beaches and rugged coastline. The lodge has six individually-designed rooms, each of which offers an individual spa experience. Borth, for example, has its own steam room, while Cadair has a Jacuzzi steel bath and bathroom TV. There's also an on-site restaurant serving Tuscan dishes on Friday and Saturday nights. The lodge is a drive of around two hours from the English city of Liverpool.

Swain House, Somerset, south-west England

[Swain House](#) has just four rooms, and is located in a recently restored Victorian shop and town house in the ancient harbour town of Watchet, Somerset. The luxury bed and breakfast is a short stroll from the town's marina: enjoy a walk along the coast, with views across the Bristol Channel towards Wales. The area is well-known for its fossils, so pay close attention - you may be lucky enough to find an ammonite laying on the beach. Swain House is the perfect place to relax after exploring - rooms come complete with high-spec bathrooms, with freestanding baths, and quality REN toiletries. The hotel is around one hour 30 minutes from Bristol, either by road or train.



Explore Somerset's coast with a trip to Swain House



The Brimstone Hotel is in the heart of the Lake District

Brimstone Hotel, Cumbria, north-west England

[Brimstone Hotel](#) is in the heart of the Lake District, England's largest national park, and offers a luxurious, adult-only stay. Rooms come complete with balconies, and most have log-burning stoves - guests also have access to the recently-opened Brimstone Spa, which offers a wide range of facilities and treatments. The hotel is around an hour and 20 minutes from Carlisle, and is close to the small lake of Elterwater, as well

as the much larger Windermere, and is a perfect base for exploring. Ask for some recommended walks in the area - you can also borrow a full range of outdoor clothing and accessories, including jackets, walking boots and rucksacks.

Nidd Hall, Yorkshire, north-east England

Warner Leisure Hotels operates 13 adults-only hotels across Britain. [Nidd Hall](#) is a mansion set in the beautiful Yorkshire countryside, and has just been given a £2million upgrade, with a larger restaurant, and three new historic bedrooms. There's plenty to enjoy in its 45 acres of grounds, with a range of activities from archery to tennis and bowls on offer, and the vast Yorkshire Dales National Park is



Yorkshire's Nidd Hall has just been given a £2million upgrade

only a short distance away. The hotel also offers a programme of evening entertainment, from music to comedy to dancing, and is under an hour's drive from either York or Leeds.

Six of the best: eco-friendly places to stay

From lavish spas with clifftop hot tubs to sumptuous country house hotels, when it comes to being eco-friendly in Britain there's no need to scrimp on comfort. From environmentally friendly building materials, biomass boilers and solar panels, to rainwater outdoor swimming pools, here's some of the 'greenest' places to stay across Britain.



A clifftop hot tub at the Scarlet Hotel in Cornwall, England

The Scarlet, Cornwall, south-west England

The Scarlet is a luxury, adult-only hotel idyllically located on the coast of Cornwall boasting views over Mawgan Porth Beach and to the wild Atlantic beyond. Discover a calm, warm and restorative atmosphere in this tranquil space, where clifftop hot tubs, a natural reedbed swimming pool, and an Ayurdervic-inspired spa awaits guests. As well as a relaxing spa and luxury hotel [The Scarlet](#) is an eco-friendly establishment. Its green

features include solar panels, a biomass boiler, sustainably sourced towels and robes, and a rainwater top-up system that replenishes the natural pool.

Getting there: The Scarlet is less than ten minutes by car from Cornwall Newquay Airport - a 70-minute flight from London.

Hammet House, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

This [luxury country house hotel](#) in Pembrokeshire, Wales, sits close to the River Teifi, and is surrounded by glorious landscaped gardens. Choose from one of 15 bedrooms, styled in a comfortable blend of old and new, and making the most of the hotel's light and airy Georgian architecture. Despite its age, Hammet House was the first hotel in Britain to be awarded Green Key status - an internationally-recognised mark of ecological excellence. The hotel makes the most of its three-foot thick stone walls to keep the house cool in summer and toasty in winter, has strict policies on recycling, and endeavours to limit its food miles wherever possible; considering it's surrounded by a wealth of fabulous local food producers it's not too difficult! There's also an on-site electric vehicle charging point.

Getting there: Hammet House is a drive of around one hour and 30 minutes from Swansea.

Treshnish and Haun Cottages, Scotland

Located on the quaint Isle of Mull off the west coast of Scotland, [Treshnish and Haun Cottages](#) can be found on a coastal farm near Calgary Beach. The snug cottages are carefully run to minimise their impact on the environment, while providing guests with a relaxing place to stay. Surrounded by the beautiful countryside of the island, their setting is rich in bio-diversity and boasts amazing of the surrounding landscape. Enjoy the coastal scenery as you drive to the secluded yet homey cottages, where it's just a ten-minute walk to the shore. Even better, the sustainable cottages have been awarded a gold commendation by eco-grading firm Green Tourism for their efforts.

Getting there: the cottages are best reached by a five-hour and 20-minute drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Asheton Eco Barns, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

Bursting with character, [Asheton Eco Barns](#) retain many of their original features from the converted stone farm buildings they're housed in, including the ceiling log beams and exposed stonework that gives them their rustic personality. In-keeping with their sense of place, and in harmony with the environment, the barns were built using traditional construction methods and are heated with cutting-edge onsite renewable energy



The Cart House of Asheton Eco Barns, Wales - © Drew Buckley

technologies. Expect luxurious underfloor central heating run by ground source heat pumps and solar hot water systems, rustic antique furniture, and a welcome hamper filled with seasonal and local produce from neighbouring suppliers.

Getting there: Asheton Eco Barns are a five-hour drive from London.

Duchally Country Estate Gleneagles, Auchterarder, Scotland

From superb hotel rooms to fully equipped luxury lodges, the [Duchally Country Estate](#) offers traditional Highland hospitality among the splendour of Perthshire's countryside. As well as an in-house whisky bar, stocking more than 50 different whiskies, the hotel has its own spa and massage facilities, a games room, and an award-winning restaurant. As well as a luxury hotel, the Duchally Estate strives to improve its eco-friendly policy and has carefully preserved the natural features of the 27-acre estate and parklands to protect the wildlife habitat. The estate uses its own local produce and suppliers, which actively reduce food miles, and with its own hens roaming in a pen, guests can expect fresh eggs with the famous Perthshire breakfasts. Around the estate, guests can discover several rare species of tree including the Monkey Puzzle, Purple Beech and Noble Fir, in which you might even spot an endangered red squirrel or tiny pipistrelle - both are protected species looked after by the estate.

Getting there: the estate is a 70-minute drive from Edinburgh or two and a half-hours by public transport. Edinburgh is a 70-minute flight from London.

The Traddock Hotel, Yorkshire, north England

This elegant Georgian country house is idyllically located in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and has been lovingly furnished to create a cosy and convivial atmosphere. An ideal base for walkers and seekers of peace and quiet, [The Traddock Hotel](#) is a perfect place from which to explore the charming villages and experience a slower pace of life. You can also be safe in the knowledge that this countryside retreat is also an environmental powerhouse, with a gold standard from eco-grading firm Green Tourism.

Getting there: The Traddock Hotel is a drive of around one hour 30 minutes from either Leeds or Manchester.

Enjoy some of Britain's most spectacular views

With rolling landscapes, expansive lakes and wild mountain ranges, Britain is certainly blessed with a spectacular view or two. From the ancient site of Bamburgh Castle once graced by Northumbrian kings to mysteries of Loch Ness, Britain is sprinkled with views that take your breath away.



Llyn y Fan Fawr viewed from Black Mountain, Brecon Beacons National Park, Wales © Britain on View

Llyn y Fan Fach, Brecon Beacons National Park, Powys, south Wales

In Welsh, Llyn y Fan Fach means 'lake of the big peak' - and it certainly is. This natural body of water covering approximately ten hectares lies at the foot of Fan Brycheiniog, the highest peak of the [Black Mountain range](#).

The lake can be reached via a two-mile footpath and the impressive views highlight the extent of the lake's size within the landscape. This isolated beauty spot is home to many legends - it's said to be enchanted by a fairy maiden, The Lady of the Lake, although you're more likely to spot

one of the numerous different species of bird in the area.

Getting there: Located in the Brecon Beacons, Llyn y Fan Fach is a 90-minute drive from Cardiff, which is two hours by train from London.

Loch Ness and Urquhart Castle, Scotland

This 22.5-mile loch may have made a name for itself thanks to the mythical beast that may or may not dwell in its waters, but every visitor can at least be sure they will be rewarded with stunning views. On a sunny day, [Loch Ness](#) sparkles and the shapes of Urquhart Castle and surrounding mountains are reflected onto the loch's glassy mass, making for a dreamily proportioned, Instagram-worthy shot. The large, deep freshwater loch holds more fresh

water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined, and is almost 230 metres deep, making it easy enough for any sea creature to go undetected!

Getting there: Loch Ness is just a 40-minute drive from Inverness Airport, which is connected to London by an 80-minute flight.



View across the water surface of Loch Ness, Scotland © AndrewPickettPhoto.com



Lake Vyrnwy, Powys, Wales © British Tourist Authority

Lake Vyrnwy, Powys, Wales

Situated on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park, [Lake Vyrnwy](#) is set amid the Berwyn Mountains, surrounded by lush countryside and spectacular waterfalls. Its historic stone dam was built in the 1880s and was the first of its kind in the world. Ingenuity aside, beautiful, seemingly endless views across the reservoir can be enjoyed from its stone walls, only broken by the rolling hills and the impressive tower rising out of the water in the distance like a fairy tale castle. The lake was built for the purpose of

supplying Liverpool with fresh water, and this straining tower is where the water begins its journey along an aqueduct and pipeline.

Getting there: Located in the west of Wales, Lake Vyrnwy is four hours and 15 minutes by car from London.

Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland, north-east England

The spectacular combination of an isolated ancient castle and vast stretch of dune-fringed sandy beach has made this wild coastal spot a popular film location, most recently starring in the cinema adaptation of *The BFG*. With a history that spans the centuries, the site of [Bamburgh Castle](#) was once home to the kings of ancient Northumbria, with the recent, almost haunting structure we see today being designed by Lord Armstrong in the late Victorian



Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland - © VisitBritain, Britain on View

period. The beach is also one of north-east England's top surf spots, so you might catch a view of a surfer or kite surfer out in the waves.

Getting there: Bamburgh Castle is in north-east England and is a five-hour journey by train and public transport from London, or is a six-hour drive.

Overlooking Derwentwater, Lake District National Park, Cumbria, north-west England

Picking out one view in the [Lake District](#) is a tricky task because the area is so geographically blessed with beautiful landscapes. So much so, its rugged mountains and shimmering lakes have inspired writers and poets throughout history. One of the best vistas is looking east from the top of Cat Bells hill across the lake of Derwentwater to the mountain of Skiddaw. Cat Bells is one of the most popular hills in the area; it's also a short, sharp, steep climb of 451 metres - but is worth the effort!

Getting there: Derwentwater is located in the Lake District, and is five hours and 30 minutes by car from London, or a six hour and 30-minute journey by public transport.

Loch Leven, Glencoe, Scotland

The sea loch named Loch Leven, pronounced Lee'oon in Gaelic, stretches 14km through the mountain ranges of west Scotland and opens up onto Camus a' Chois at North Ballachulish, part of Loch Linnhe at its western end. This beautifully wild landscape is mesmerising to see from the shores of the loch, and, dotted through its still waters, are nine small islands, some of which are rocky and covered with Scottish heather. Fronted by Loch Leven is [Glencoe](#), famous as one of Scotland's most scenic mountain valleys, where the pinnacles of The Three Sisters can be seen. Walking through this area of dazzling natural features has been regarded as one of the country's most rewarding hikes.

Getting there: situated in the east of Scotland, Loch Leven is less than an hour's drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.



*Loch Leven is set in a dramatic, mountainous landscape
©VisitBritain, Joe Cornish*

See Britain from above

There's plenty of countryside to explore on the ground, but for a unique experience why not go up high? Enjoy amazing aerial perspectives of Britain's greenest spaces, whether you travel by helicopter, hot-air balloon, or train.

Balloon over the England's largest national park

Enjoy a thrilling hot-air balloon ride over the breathtaking landscapes of the Lake District National Park with [Virgin Balloon Flights](#). Nestled in north-east England, the region offers a wide range of landscapes from rolling countryside and glacial lakes, to rugged Cumbrian mountains and fells. Balloon flights launch from the quaint village of Witherslack and, depending on wind direction, sights can include Morecambe Bay, the woodlands of Whitbarrow National Nature Reserve, the bubbling River Winster, and famous Lake Windermere, England's largest natural lake.



Take a hot-air balloon ride over the Lake District © Virgin Balloon Flights

Getting there: Witherslack, Cumbria is 90 minutes by road from Manchester. Trains to Manchester Piccadilly station take three hours 30 minutes from London Euston.



Take a train up Snowdon - the highest mountain in England and Wales

Take a vintage train up Wales' highest mountain

At an impressive 1,085-metres high, Mount Snowdon offers sensational views that stretch from its north Wales home on mainland Britain, right across the sea to Ireland. It's located in Snowdonia National Park, an area rich with rare plants such as the pretty Snowdon lily, yet there's no need to attempt the arduous climb. Sit back and take in the views from a Victorian carriage seat aboard the [Snowdon Mountain](#)

[Railway](#), which dates from 1896. Its one-hour journey from Llanberis station to the Snowdon Summit Visitor Centre is powered by a vintage steam or diesel locomotive.

Getting there: Llanberis village, Gwynedd is around 90 minutes by road from Chester.

Experience the high life on England's south coast

The world's first vertical cable car, tallest-moving observation tower and one of Brighton's newest attractions, the [British Airways i360](#) offers unrivalled photo opportunities of the stunning East Sussex coast. Designed by the same husband and wife team who created the London Eye, the i360's panoramic views can stretch from the seas of the English Channel, to the green hills of the South Downs National Park. The i360's UFO-shaped viewing pod takes you up and down a 138-metre column for a thrilling bird's-eye view.

Getting there: Brighton is around 55 minutes by train from London Victoria station.



Take the Mountain Gondola and enjoy a spectacular view of the mighty Ben Nevis © VisitScotland

View Ben Nevis from a gondola

Enjoy unique vistas of Britain's highest mountain from its only [Mountain Gondola](#). Situated close to the town of Fort William in the Scottish Highlands, the Nevis Range of mountains is famous for its 1,345-metre-high goliath, Ben Nevis. Now a visitor attraction in its own right, the 80 gondolas are a type of cable car originally constructed to take skiers up neighbouring Aonach Mòr, Britain's eighth tallest peak. Today, the six-seat gondolas offer unrivalled views of the Nevis Range and lush

Great Glen valley, a popular hiking trail. These spectacular landscapes change colour and texture with each passing season, and on clear days passengers can see as far as the Inner Hebrides, an archipelago of islands off the west coast of mainland Scotland.

Getting there: Overnight Caledonian Sleeper trains get from London Euston to Fort William in 12 hours, then Aonach Mòr is 15 minutes by road. Flights from London airports reach Glasgow in 70 minutes, then take the train to Fort William in three hours 50 minutes.

See Northern Ireland as giants would

Soar above Northern Ireland's best sights in a helicopter. Often called 'the eighth wonder of the world', the island's Giant's Causeway is a volcanic formation on the north-east coast of County Antrim. Declared a World Heritage Site, its unusually geometric pattern has given rise to Gaelic mythology suggesting it was built by Irish giant Finn MacCool, who wanted to build a causeway across the seas to battle with a formidable Scottish rival. Along with the lofty Mourne Mountains of County Down and remote Inishtrahull Island in County Donegal, the Causeway is one of many amazing landmarks you can take in on an aerial sightseeing tour with [Cutting Edge Helicopters](#). Tours depart from the City of Derry Airport, a 20-minute drive from Northern Ireland's second-largest city, Derry-Londonderry.

Getting there: Tours operate from the City of Derry Airport in County Londonderry - fly there from London Stansted in one hour 24 minutes.

Get an aerial perspective of the countryside around London

Lift off with [The London Helicopter](#) for unrivalled aerial panoramas of the ancient, deer-stalked woodlands of Richmond Park, the floral Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew, and the meandering River Thames. Settle back for views of London's manicured royal parks and garden squares.

Getting there: London Heliport in Battersea is a short taxi ride or ten-minute walk from south-west London's Clapham Junction station.



See the countryside around the capital with The London Helicopter

Explore Britain's parks and gardens

Did you know over ten per cent of Britain is formed of woodland and more than 95 per cent is actually natural green space? We've rounded up some of the best spots to see seemingly endless drifts of daffodils, seas of snowdrops, rows of ancient roses and a maze or two.

Explore one of the finest rose gardens in the world, Hampshire, south England

Starting life in the 13th century as a priory, [Mottisfont's](#) heritage spans more than 800 years, culminating as the grand country house that stands today. Since its secular beginnings, the estate's land has always been shaped and cultivated, but it wasn't until its Georgian landowners that the garden became the expanse of pleasure grounds, riverside walks and fine trees that it is today. Boasting garden designers from the likes of Norah Lindsay, whose commissions ranged from quiet English manor gardens to royal residences, to Geoffrey Jellicoe who planned the lime walk to the north of the house, the grounds of Mottisfont are made extra special by the gardeners who have each left their mark. The walled garden is one of the most famous rose gardens in the world. Expect a breathtaking display of more than 500 varieties, including some that may otherwise be extinct, and hybrids so ancient they are prehistoric. Look out for the creamy pink blooms of Adelaide d'Orleans smothering the wooden arches. This is rose heaven!

Getting there: Mottisfont is a two-hour drive from London.

Discover drifts of daffodils at the home of Earl Grey tea, Northumberland, north-east England

Famously known as 'the home of Earl Grey', it's not just finely blended tea that makes [Howick Hall](#) so appealing. Starting its calendar with a snowdrop festival, its gardens are crafted with the garden-lover in mind, and host events throughout the year from February until November. Stop by in spring and see the spectacular drifts of daffodils, or come when the season starts to warm up and explore the woodland garden, which is particularly lovely with its



Daffodils growing in front of Howick Hall in Alnwick, Northumberland ©VisitEngland, VisitNorthumberland.com

rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. Head to the bog garden to spot unusual herbaceous plants grown from seeds collected in the wild, and take a turn or two in the formal gardens in summer to really see them come into their own. If you just can't resist a taste of the famous tea, then head to the [Earl Grey Tea House](#) to enjoy the blend with scones and clotted cream.

Getting there: Howick Hall is a five and half-hour journey from London by public transport, or is a 75-minute flight to Newcastle Airport followed by a 50-minute drive.

Explore Colby Woodland Garden's mining past, Narberth, Wales

Today [Colby Woodland Garden](#) is enjoyed as a haven of tranquillity, but these beautiful gardens have a surprising past playing an active part in Pembrokeshire's coal industry during the late 1700s. Discover the two sides of this interesting estate, where exploring a

natural playground is teamed with uncovering Pembrokeshire's rich history. Stop by at the walled garden, or delve into the eight-acre woodland garden, and discover its wildflower meadow, meandering streams, habitat-rich ponds and towering Japanese Redwood trees. While exploring Colby keep a lookout for the Bedlam Pit - the old entrance to the mine - or follow the old tramway route which once transported coal to the coast.

Getting there: Colby Woodland Garden is a one hour 30 minute drive from Cardiff.



Drummond Castle Gardens in Perthshire, viewed from the top of the terrace © VisitScotland, Kenny Lam

Take in the outdoor splendour of Scottish-Italian Renaissance design, Scotland

The 15th-century [Drummond Castle](#) is surrounded by the largest, and arguably finest, formal gardens in Scotland and boasts a spectacular mile-long avenue in the approach to the estate, where more than 600 beech trees tower above the narrow road. Laid from 1828 to 1838, the Scottish-Italian Renaissance style garden was replanted in the 1950s, with careful attention being paid to the ancient yew hedges and copper

beech trees planted to commemorate a visit by Queen Victoria. Climb to the top of the terrace where you can fully take in the splendour of the gardens. Make sure to look out for the St Andrew's Cross with the 17th-century sundial at its centre.

Getting there: Drummond Castle is a 90-minute drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Discover Achamore Gardens on the community-owned Isle of Gigha, west Scotland

Take the short ferry journey from Scotland's west coast to the Isle of Gigha, uniquely owned by its local community, and you'll find [Achamore House and Gardens](#). Having numerous owners across the years the house certainly has a story or two to tell. The garden, however, is where the real adventure lies, and has been called the island's 'crowning jewel.' Surrounded by the beauty of Gigha - complete with white sandy beaches and coastal scenery - the garden is set in mature woodland and is full of hidden corners to explore. It culminates in a two-acre walled garden bursting with flourishing plants - all thanks for the island's Gulf Stream-influenced climate. The garden is open year-round.

Getting there: the Isle of Gigha is less than five hours by car and ferry from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.

Lose yourself in the Painswick Rococo Garden, Gloucestershire, south-west England

Designed in the 1740s as a flamboyant pleasure garden, the [Painswick Rococo Garden](#) was created in a time when outdoor spaces were moulded into theatrical sets for decadent garden parties. Imagine a stunning vegetable garden framed with views of the surrounding countryside, as well as fanciful garden buildings, lofty trees, leafy woodlands walks and a maze to top it all off. There's even a cosy cafe to try homemade cakes or have a spot of lunch. Insider tip: the garden is definitely one to visit in February, as it has one of the largest naturalistic plantings of snowdrops in the country.

Getting there: the Painswick Rococo Garden is under an hour by road from Bristol.

Rule Instagram with these picture-perfect villages

The villages that dot the countryside are an integral part of Britain's traditional charm. The quintessential British village is somewhere rich in history and lined with old-world cottages - not forgetting the requisite tea rooms, village greens and log-fire pubs. Here we've rounded up seven of the most picture-perfect, Instagram-friendly examples around the country.



Homes in Castle Combe are made out of Cotswolds stone © VisitEngland/ Visit Wiltshire/ Chris Lock

Castle Combe, Wiltshire, south-west England

Strung prettily along the banks of the Bybrook River, Castle Combe takes its name from a now-ruined medieval castle that once stood close by. The village itself, by contrast, is a flourishing vision of honey-coloured Cotswold stone, complete with floral hanging baskets, old weavers' cottages and a handsome three-arched bridge. It sits less than 40 minutes' drive from the famous city of Bath, south-west England, and its good looks have helped it appear on

the big screen, most notably in Steven Spielberg's *War Horse*. Note too that on the edge of the village is the [Castle Combe Circuit](#), a former World War Two airfield now offering track-racing experience days with cars and motorbikes.

Cushendun, Northern Ireland

Not all British villages are quite what they seem. This picturesque coastal hamlet in Northern Ireland gives the impression of having been here for centuries, but was in fact only built in the early 20th century. It was designed at the behest of Ronald MacNeill, the first Baron Cushendun, who wanted to create a village in the attractive, harbourfront style of the English county of Cornwall. He succeeded, and Cushendun today boasts a tidy square, whitewashed cottages, and a great little pub named [Mary McBride's](#). Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, is around 75 minutes away by car.



The coastal village of Cushendun

Killin, Stirling, Scotland

Sitting under two hours' drive from Glasgow or Edinburgh, both southern Scotland, this beautifully-located village lies at the western end of the mighty Loch Tay. It's perhaps best known for the scenic Falls of Dochart, which flow through the centre of the village, but it's also a fine base for heading out and exploring the adjacent national park of [Loch Lomond & The Trossachs](#). Those with an interest in prehistory can seek out the Kinnell Stone Circle just outside the village, while the area's more recent past can be appreciated at the

[Moirlanich Longhouse](#), which takes a colourful look at the life of rural dwellers - or "crofters" - from the 19th century.



Staithe was once the home of Captain James Cook © Welcome to Yorkshire

Staithe, North Yorkshire, north-east England

This gorgeous little seaside settlement was once the home of Captain James Cook, the 18th-century naval explorer who famously reached Australia. The village's sheltered harbour is protected by towering cliffs on both sides, and its mazy streets and colour-jumbled cottages still lend the place an air of storybook drama. It's also somewhere with a long artistic heritage, having played home to some well-known seascape painters, and the village still has

various galleries and craft shops. Staithe is a 90-minute drive from the one-time Viking city of York, north-east England, and is also well placed for enjoying the rolling hills of the [North York Moors National Park](#).

Grasmere, Lake District, north-west England

The stunning Lake District has wide lakes and soaring mountain ridges. The village of Grasmere, which sits right in the heart of the national park, therefore boasts a heavenly setting. The legendary Romantic poet William Wordsworth lived here for almost 15 years, describing it as "the loveliest spot that man hath ever found". His former home, [Dove Cottage](#), makes for a fascinating



Grasmere was beloved by famous poet William Wordsworth

visit, and no trip to the village is complete without also calling into [Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Gingerbread Shop](#), which uses a 160-year-old recipe. The nearest major town is Carlisle, north-west England, an hour's drive away.

Porthdinllaen, Llyn Peninsula, west Wales

Locations don't come much more spectacular than that enjoyed by Porthdinllaen. The tiny old fishing village is perched on a narrow strip of hilly land stretching into the Irish Sea, affording widescreen views along the coast. It's close to the similarly charming village of Morfa Nefyn, which is where you'll need to park before making the 20-minute walk to Porthdinllaen itself. Once you're here, the sense of seclusion is thrilling. There's a fine circular walk that can be made around the wildlife-rich headland, and a much-lauded pub, the [Ty Coch Inn](#), for post-exercise recovery. Morfa Nefyn is a 40-minute drive from the royal town of Caernarfon, or two hours 15 minutes from Liverpool, north-west England.

Alfriston, East Sussex, south-east England

As one of the oldest villages in England, leafy Alfriston has a history reaching back well over a millennium. Today, full of narrow streets, flower-filled patios and half-timbered buildings, it still retains an unrushed, stuck-in-time feel. Head to The Singing Kettle tea rooms for a resistance-slating selection of cakes and scones, or call into the 500-year-old [George Inn](#) for a local Sussex ale under oak beams. There are also churches, bookshops and heritage houses to explore, while on the village outskirts you'll find [Drusillas Park](#), a high-quality zoo with play areas. Alfriston is a 35-minute drive from Brighton, south-east England.



Alfriston is one of the oldest villages in England © VisitBritain/ Britain on View

Seven of the best: Britain's iconic countryside landmarks

From its sweeping mountain ranges and dramatic coastal formations to its giant public artworks, the British countryside is dotted with all manner of iconic landmarks - some natural, some man-made. Here are seven of the best.

Giant's Causeway, County Antrim, north coast, Northern Ireland

Resembling a set of gargantuan stepping stones, the 40,000 basalt columns of the [Giant's Causeway](#) are set on Northern Ireland's wild Atlantic coast. The extraordinary natural spectacle - designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for its outstanding universal value - is the result of a volcanic eruption some 60 million years ago, although folklore holds that it was carved from the cliffs by a mythical giant.



The Giant's Causeway is made up of 40,000 basalt columns

There's an award-winning visitor centre, and the area is also renowned for its seabirds and wildlife. It can be reached by car or coach from the city of Belfast in around 75 minutes.

Loch Ness, Scottish Highlands, northern Scotland

Eternally synonymous with "Nessie", the elusive sea monster which (possibly) inhabits its darkest depths, Loch Ness can claim to be one of the most famous bodies of water on the planet. Its sheer size, stretching some 23 miles end to end and flanked by deep green hills, makes the freshwater loch a suitably stirring sight. A pleasure cruise is the best way to appreciate its serene beauty - be sure to have those Nessie-spotting binoculars at the ready - while a visit to the loch-side [Urquhart Castle](#) gives vivid insight into the battles and power struggles that once gripped the region. The city of Inverness, northern Scotland, is less than 30 minutes' drive from the eastern end of the loch.



The Angel of the North towers above the landscape

Angel of the North, Tyne & Wear, north-east England

Since being unveiled in 1998 by the inimitable British sculptor Sir Antony Gormley, the [Angel of the North](#) has become one of the most instantly recognisable pieces of public art in the country. Made from 200 tonnes of steel and standing at a height of 20 metres - with enormous wings that span a remarkable 54 metres - it towers over the surrounding landscape, granting long views out across the countryside. A layby and dedicated footpath allows visitors to see the structure up close. It can be

reached by car in just 15 minutes from the twin cities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, north-east England.



The Needles sit off the coast of the Isle of Wight © Visit Isle of Wight

The Needles, Isle of Wight, off south coast of England

The trio of jagged chalk stacks stretching away from the Isle of Wight's west coast form one of the most distinctive natural landmarks in the country. Known as [The Needles](#), their white gleam means they can often be seen from a great distance. The stack that lies furthest from the island plays home to a famous red-and-white lighthouse, which has itself become an emblematic part of the

landmark. Activities for visitors include boat trips, open-top bus rides and a chair lift. The Isle of Wight is reachable by ferry from Southampton, Portsmouth and Lymington, all of which are on the south coast of England. The crossing can take as little as ten minutes.

Lake Windermere, Lake District, north-west England

The largest natural lake in England is also - many would say - its most beautiful. Ringed by the mountain peaks of the Lake District, north-west England, Windermere has inspired writers and painters for centuries. It measures one mile across by almost 11 miles in length, and on a fine day, when its sparkling waters stir with steamers and wooden launches, there's no more heavenly sight. The nearest major town is Kendal, north-west England, which sits under an hour's drive away.



Lake Windermere in the beautiful Lake District

Eden Project, Cornwall, south-west England

A disused quarry might not be the most obvious location for a world-famous attraction, but then the [Eden Project](#) has proved itself anything but ordinary since opening in 2000. A "global garden" made up of two enormous tropical biomes and year-round plant displays, the complex has garnered praise for everything from its revolutionary design to its eco-friendly ethos. Step inside the Rainforest Biome - billed as the



The iconic bubbles of the Eden Project © Adam Burton

world's largest greenhouse - to experience the authentic sights and smells of the jungle from a canopy walkway, then visit the similarly impressive Mediterranean Biome, where lemon trees and olive groves thrive. There's much more to enjoy besides, from zip wires to seasonal festivals, and the attraction is a half-hour drive from Penzance, Cornwall, south-west England.

The Snowdon Massif, Snowdonia, north Wales

A hefty fortress of soaring mountains, the Snowdon group of mountains (known as the Snowdon Massif) makes for one of the most glorious natural sights in Britain. Its ridges and overhangs are widely renowned among hikers and climbers - so much so that Sir Edmund Hillary trained here before summiting Mount Everest in the 1950s - and Mount Snowdon itself, the centrepiece of the range, is the tallest mountain in Wales. Its 1,085-metre summit can be reached with relative ease by walkers of good fitness, while a [mountain railway](#) leading all the way to the top provides a less taxing alternative. It can be reached by car from Liverpool, north-west England, in roughly two hours.

Go island-hopping around Britain

Around the coast of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland lie more than 6,000 islands. Tropical (yes, you read that right!), historical, or abundant with wildlife, each island is unique in its own way. Here are some of the best to visit, and the reasons why.

For a tropical paradise...

Isles of Scilly, south-west England

You might be surprised to hear that Britain has its very own tropical islands! Nestled in The Gulf Stream, 28 miles south of Cornwall, the five inhabited islands and countless uninhabited islands in the archipelago of the [Isles of Scilly](#) enjoy a balmy climate, resulting in a stunning array of thriving flora and fauna. Treco - the second largest island - is home to beautiful white sandy beaches and the exotic, outdoor sup-tropical [Abbey Garden](#),



The sandy beaches, azure waters, and lush greenery of Treco

where you can stroll among palm trees and a sea of bright tropical flowers. As well as diverse tropical vegetation, the largest of the Scilly Isles, [St Mary's](#), is also home to ancient monuments ranging from Neolithic chamber tombs to Civil War fortifications.

Getting there: Passenger ferries leave from Penzance in Cornwall on a regular basis, or you can experience a bird's eye view of the island by taking the Skybus to the islands from Land's End, Newquay and Exeter airports.



Discover dinosaur bones and fossils on the Isle of Wight

For fossils and festivals...

Isle of Wight, southern England

If you're a fan of dinosaurs, festivals, regattas - or all of the above - the [Isle of Wight](#) is the place to go. Anyone with a passing interest in palaeontology will be excited to learn that it's the 'dinosaur capital of Britain', as it's one of the richest areas of dinosaur fossil discovery in Europe. Visit the [Dinosaur Isle](#) museum, go on a footprint tour, or

fossil hunt at Brook Bay, where a fossilised forest of trees magically appears from beneath the waves at low tide.

The Isle of Wight is also a popular festival island. June sees thousands of people flock by ferry to attend the [Isle of Wight Festival](#), which hosts an impressive line-up of bands, with previous headliners including the likes of Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Calvin Harris. This year the festival will take place from 8 - 11 June.

The summer months are also a great time to visit, especially during [Cowes Week](#) (29 July - 5 August 2017), a famous sailing regatta that has been a major event in Britain's sporting summer calendar since 1826, staging up to 40 daily races for around 1,000 boats.

Getting there: Ferry services to the island leave from Portsmouth, Southampton and Lymington. Travel time from London to the ports is just under two hours.



Find yourself in puffin paradise on Skomer Island © Laura Smith

For wildlife...

Skomer, Wales

[Skomer](#) is puffin paradise. Thousands of these colourful little birds make their home on this small scenic island, as well as many other bird species. May is a lovely time to visit, when the island is blanketed in springtime bluebells and pink campion. It's not just feathery friends though - along with its sister island, Skokholm, the waters around Skomer are rich in marine wildlife sheltering in the bays and inlets, all which can be spotted on guided safaris.

Getting there: Take a ferry from Martin's Haven on the Pembrokeshire coast, around a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Cardiff, Wales.

For wild, rugged landscapes...

Isle of Skye, The Inner Hebrides, west coast of Scotland

There's a real sense that you've entered another world on [Skye](#), the largest of Scotland's Inner Hebrides islands. There are sights here that you'll see nowhere else in Britain, with landscapes like something out of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* - so dramatic that they've featured as a natural film set for various blockbuster movies. The island abounds with lochs, moors and 'Munros' (mountains over 3,000ft / 914.4m), so it's heaven for walkers and climbers. Take the extraordinary boat trip from Elgol to the fjord-like chasm of Loch Coruisk, described by Lord Tennyson as "the wildest scene in the Highlands". Other sights not to miss include the sea cliff of Kilt Rock, the spiky Old Man of Storr rock formations, the cliffs of The Quiraing and the Black Cuillins - the most unruly range of mountain peaks in Britain.

Getting there: There's no railway on Skye, but two train stations on the mainland - at Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh - that are very close and connect to the island via local bus routes. It's a two-hour train journey from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh. There are also passenger ferries to Skye from the mainland Scotland ports of Oban and Kennacraig in Argyll, or Mallaig and Ullapool in the Highlands.



Conquering Isle of Skye's Old Man of Storr © Andrew Pickett



Beautiful Shell Beach on heavenly Herm @ VisitGuernsey

For pristine sandy beaches...

Herm, the Channel Islands

Just off the coast of France are the charming Channel Islands: Jersey, Guernsey, Sark, Herm and Alderney. The warm Gulf of St Malo enriches this cluster of islands with subtropical plants, excellent local seafood and varied wildlife.

The larger islands of Guernsey and Jersey are fantastic destinations for foodies and water-sports fans, but if you're looking for total

tranquillity, head to heavenly [Herm](#) - the smallest of the Channel Islands. Step away from the modern world and slow into the leisurely pace of this tiny, car-free island. Herm has one shop, one pub, and one hotel - The White House - which has no televisions, telephones or clocks, so guests really are encouraged to 'get away from it all'.

Despite being just half a mile wide and a mile and a half long, Herm has six sandy beaches. The longest and arguably most beautiful is Shell Beach - its fine white sand and turquoise waters could be mistaken for the Caribbean. Fisherman's Beach on the other side of the island is blessed with the same pristine sand, as well as hundreds of rock pools at low tide - perfect for inquisitive young visitors.

Getting there: Guernsey and Jersey are the main entry points, with regular flights and ferries from England. The smaller islands are connected via frequent ferries. To get to Herm, take the 20-minute ferry from Guernsey, which is a 45-minute flight from Southampton, England. Tourist entry requirements to the Channel Islands are the same as the rest of Britain.

The Outer Hebrides, Scotland

These rugged islands off the west coast of Scotland are known and loved by wildlife enthusiasts for the variety of species you can spot in their natural habitat - from whales, seals, dolphins and basking sharks, to seabird colonies.

But the [Outer Hebrides](#)' beaches are as beautiful as the wildlife. We're talking mile-long stretches of white sand flanked by turquoise waters to the front and 'machair' to the back - a Gaelic word for rare grassy coastal plains abundant with wildflowers and birdlife which only occur on exposed western coasts of Scotland and Ireland.



Picture perfect Traigh Eais beach on the Isle of Barra @ VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins

Two of the best beaches in the Outer Hebrides are Traigh Eais on the [Isle of Barra](#) and [Luskentyre Sands](#) on the west coast of the [Lewis and Harris](#), which make up the largest island of the chain.

Facing the Atlantic, the stunning beach at Traigh Eais has some of the highest sand dunes in Britain. It can be reached by a walk across the machair from the Barra airport terminal. Over on the Isle of Harris, home to some of the most brooding, isolated landscapes in the Outer Hebrides, is Luskentyre Sands. Its azure-green waters are clear as crystal, and join an expanse of pristine white coastline. If you're lucky, you might spot a wild pony or two grazing along the dunes.

Getting there: There are flights to the Outer Hebrides from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness, or passenger ferries from ports on islands in the Inner Hebrides.

For history and heritage...

Anglesey, north coast of Wales

With plenty of things to do but equally typified by peace and quiet, [Anglesey](#) is a special place. Its varied landscapes have witnessed a colourful history of legends, romance, and its regal heritage spans centuries. Remains of what is believed to be Llys Rhosyr, the royal court of the powerful medieval Prince of Gwynedd, lie near the village of Newborough. Moving on to modern royalty, the



Llanddwyn Island - a remote and romantic retreat.

island welcomed the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge as residents for three years prior to becoming parents, where they enjoyed the beautiful coastal walks and privacy of Anglesey's calm, stark beauty. The island's romantic air is also rooted in history. Beautiful Llanddwyn Island off the tip of Anglesey (attached to the mainland apart from at the highest tides), was the home of St Dwynwen, the Welsh patron saint of love who lived during the fifth century. The ruins of St Dwynwen's chapel can still be seen today. Another popular photo spot on Anglesey is standing next to the train station sign of the village with the longest name in Britain: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch. Try pronouncing that!

Getting there: The town of Holyhead on Anglesey can be reached in four hours by train from London Euston, changing at Chester.

For the food...

Jersey, Channel Islands, England

One hundred miles south of mainland Britain, [Jersey](#) - the largest of the Channel Islands - is the most southerly island of the British Isles. While the island is packed with heritage attractions, including Mont Orgueil Castle and the War Tunnels (the Channel Islands were occupied during World War Two), Jersey is also famed for its delicious food. It's amazing natural larder including renowned Jersey Royal potatoes, Jersey Jewel tomatoes, Jersey black butter, and seafood fresh from the fishermen.

Getting there: Flights to the Channel Islands operate from many British airports. Regular ferry services operate from Portsmouth, Poole and Weymouth on the south coast of England (all within two- to three-hours' drive from London) to Jersey and Guernsey; journey times vary.



Night shot of Mont Orgueil Castle, Gorey Harbour, Jersey, Channel Islands

See the sights on Britain's scenic journeys

Britain's countryside is a great place to explore, whatever your mode of transport. Get behind the wheel, take to the water or tracks, or even to the sky, and enjoy one of the scenic journeys below.

Car



The extraordinary Giant's Causeway © VisitBritain/ Ben Selway

Explore Belfast and the Causeway coast

Two days gives you plenty of time to explore Northern Ireland's breathtaking Causeway Coast from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry. The fine vistas begin just outside the former with the soothing Belfast Lough shoreline at the mouth of the River Lagan.

Half an hour away, stop off at the pretty seaside town of Carrickfergus, dominated by its 12th-century Norman castle, then head 15 minutes inland to the dramatic Glenoe

waterfall, a torrent flowing down from the majestic Glens of Antrim. Northern Ireland's famous Ulster Fry breakfast will set you up for the next day, so stay at a B&B, such as the beautifully restored [Shola Coach House](#) on the edge of Portrush, just over an hour away.

You will be a few minutes from the village of Bushmills that gives its name to the whiskey still made at the [world's oldest distillery](#) - well worth a tour. Then it is a giant's stone-throw to the unforgettable [Giant's Causeway](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Legend has it that the astonishing basalt columns leading out to sea were built by a giant who wanted to walk to Scotland without his feet getting wet.

Only ten minutes' west lies the romantic ruin of [Dunluce Castle](#), accessible only by stone bridge and offering its own sweeping views. For a visual feast and exquisite food, it is 20 minutes to [Harry's Shack](#) at Portstewart, which offers fresh, local food right on the beach.

See scenic south Wales

Wales boasts three stunning national parks, all with natural, unspoilt wonders, yet easily accessible from major cities - Wales' capital Cardiff to the south, and Liverpool, England, to the north.

Discover the Brecon Beacons national park - it features picturesque villages nestling amid green valleys, rushing waterfalls, and grassy, heather-clad mountains, and is under an hour's drive from Cardiff. There are also sights to be



The beautiful landscape of the Brecon Beacons © VisitBritain/ Joe Cornish

seen underground - take a visit to the [National Showcaves Centre for Wales](#), and see the awe-inspiring Cathedral Cave.

Abergavenny, on the edge of the park, is Wales' foodie capital, boasting the relaxed, yet Michelin-starred [Walnut Tree Inn](#) - stay in a cottage next door, or book a room at its sister property, the [Angel Hotel](#).

On your way back to Cardiff, the atmospheric [Raglan Castle](#) is well worth a visit. Built in the 1430s to showcase its owner's wealth, it was dismantled by parliamentarian forces during the English Civil War, but its ruins still dominate the area.



The magnificent arch of Durdle Door

Tour the New Forest and Jurassic Coast

A long weekend or three-day jaunt that offers unmatched variety is easily accessible from London. Within a couple of hours, heading south-west takes you into the New Forest with its eponymous ponies that roam freely among heaths and ancient woodlands.

In under an hour's scenic drive from there, you'll find yourself in the rolling Dorset hills of Thomas Hardy country, named after the novelist inspired to write his Wessex series of books about this gorgeous region (well-

known titles include *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*). Among the many quaint thatched cottages, you can visit the one where [Hardy himself was born](#). Drive on for a further hour through Dorset's beautiful countryside before crossing into Devon. Unwind in style at the [Salutation Inn](#) - a venerable hostelry with contemporary features and elegant dining at Topsham on the River Exe.

Devon is home to more rugged vistas, including the brooding expanse of Dartmoor. Head south for half an hour through rolling farmland to the county's major foodie destination, Dartmouth. Its stunning estuary location is home to many fine restaurants, none more stellar than top chef Mitch Tonks' [The Seahorse](#).

Head back along the winding Jurassic Coast roads that link east Devon and Dorset, perhaps one of England's most scenic routes, with natural features such as the phenomenal shingle bank known as Chesil Beach and the limestone arch of Durdle Door. A full day with stops to take in all the views.

Train

Enjoy the coast by train

It's not just specialist train companies which offer memorable rail trips - some stretches of normal train line in Britain offer wonderful views, all for the price of a standard train ticket. The '[Riviera Line](#)' runs from Exeter Central to Paignton in south-west England, running along the coast for more than 20 miles with wonderful sea views - on some stretches the sea is literally right beside the track. The route takes in some of Devon's prettiest seaside resorts, including Torquay, a must-stop for Agatha Christie fans. The author was born and spent much of her life in the town; there is Agatha Christie-themed walking route from the station itself. Exeter Central is three hours by train from London Waterloo.

See Scotland in luxury

Scotland boasts some of the most varied and beautiful landscapes in Britain, with towering mountains, shimmering lochs and vast swathes of untouched countryside. Travelling by train is one of the best ways to discover Scotland's majestic beauty, and the [Royal Scotsman](#), which accommodates just 36 guests, offers two, three or four-night itineraries, with excursions including world-famous whisky distilleries and historic sites and castles. Journeys begin and end in Edinburgh, Scotland's capital, which has its own international airport.

See north Wales by railway

The world's oldest narrow gauge railway with almost 200 years of history, the [Ffestiniog Railway](#) in north Wales is also one of the most scenic, climbing more than 700 feet on its 13.5 mile journey. The route runs from the harbour town of Porthmadog to the town of Bleinau Ffestiniog, travelling past crashing waterfalls, swathes of forest and slowly looping its way across mountain slopes. The journey lasts for 75 minutes and the three trains are the original locomotives - now 150 years old - with all the original carriages. Porthmadog is around six hours by train from London Euston.



*Take a trip on the Ffestiniog Railway © VisitBritain/
Britain on View*

Boat



*A ship with style: the Hebridean Princess ©
VisitBritain/ Britain on View*

See Scotland on the Hebridean Princess

There is a country house party atmosphere aboard charming small ship [Hebridean Princess](#) with drinks before dinner in the lounge, chintzy bedrooms and impeccable service. The Queen has enjoyed family holidays on board twice. Leisurely itineraries sailing the beautiful Hebrides and Highland coast in western Scotland include bird watching on remote islands, visits to great castles and gardens, and bikes to borrow for independent exploration. Hebridean Princess sails from Oban, a three hour drive from Glasgow.

Explore a dramatic island off the coast of Wales

[Ramsey Island](#) is nestled off the coast of Wales, and is a haven for wildlife. Its 120 metre-high cliffs are the perfect nesting place for breeding seabirds, including razorbills and rare choughs. The site is managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and visitor access is restricted to protect this special area. The only way to get there is by boat, and

[Thousand Islands Expeditions](#) is the only company permitted to land there, with trips running between April and October. You'll also have the option to extend your visit with a boat trip around the island, giving you the chance to spot seals, and perhaps even dolphins. Trips depart from St Davids on Wales' west coast, the smallest city in Britain. St Davids is around two hours by car from Cardiff.

Go boating on the Norfolk Broads

Norfolk in eastern England is famous for [its broads](#) - a series of man-made waterways that are now a national park. The area has more miles of waterway than Venice, and the best way to explore is by boat. Firm [Norfolk Broads Direct](#) offers a range of cruisers, sleeping from two to 11 people. Go at your own pace and moor up at places that interest you - whether you want to see some wildlife, hire a bike and go for a cycle ride, or just have lunch at a traditional British pub. The boatyard is in Wroxham, around 20 minutes from Norwich either by road or rail.

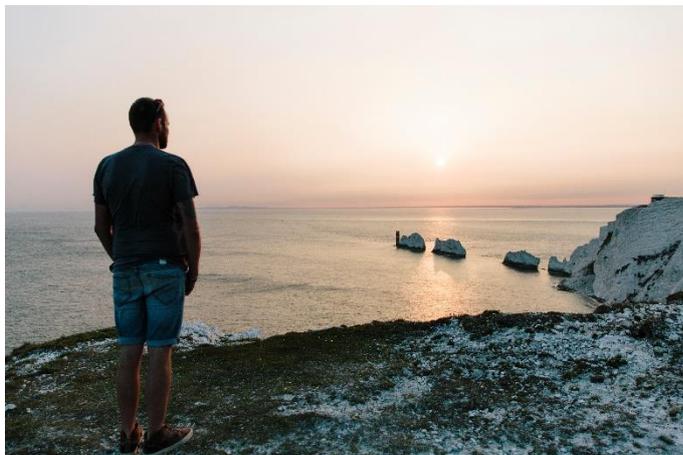


Go at your own pace on the Norfolk Broads © Tom Mackie

Plane

Fly like a celebrity in a seaplane

Exploring the magnificent Scottish west coast by iconic seaplane is one of the world's greatest journeys and one enjoyed by celebrities including film actor Ben Stiller, explorer Bear Grylls and *Outlander* star Sam Heughans. Book a seat with [Loch Lomond Seaplanes](#) or charter the whole plane, and explore more than 100 miles of countryside while sipping champagne. Special trips can be organised to inaccessible lochs, with flights departing from the five-star Cameron House Hotel on the banks of Loch Lomond - under an hour's drive from Glasgow.



Admire the Needles - England's famous chalk stacks © VisitBritain/ Ben Selway

Take to the sky in a Spitfire

Take to the skies in a bit of living history - a Spitfire. The plane was first manufactured in 1936, and played a crucial role in World War Two, giving the Royal Air Force a vital advantage in the battle fought in the skies. A small number of the original single-seater aircraft were adapted to seat two, and now offer a unique opportunity for passengers to get airborne. Firm [Boulton Flight Academy](#) in West Sussex, south-east England, offers a 50-minute flight experience (of which around 40 are

in the air). Soar over Britain's coast and out to the Needles - three famous chalk stacks off

the coast of the Isle of Wight. Or you can choose the same flight, but in formation with another Spitfire, giving you the chance to admire it from all angles in the air. The airfield used is around two hours' drive from London.

Float above the beautiful Peak District

The Peak District is Britain's oldest national park, and is a great place to explore by bike or on foot. To get a true overview of the area, however, take to the air and soar above the park in a [hot air balloon](#). Float over the rolling landscape, seeing a patchwork of fields, trees and winding rivers drift by below you as you're carried by the wind. Flights take off from one of three launch sites, dependent on wind direction. The Peak District is around an hour from Manchester, either by road or rail.

Explore Britain's long-distance walking trails

It might be a relatively small country, but Britain's beautiful and often-wild countryside contains a series of challenging multi-day trails for serious walkers. Lace up your walking boots and tackle one of the following.



The Kilpatrick Hills form a stretch of the John Muir Way © Becky Duncan photography for Central Scotland Green Network Trust

John Muir Way, southern Scotland 134 miles (216 kilometres)

This relatively easy coast-to-coast route is more about culture than physicality. Scotland's ancient, industrial and urban landscapes all feature in the shapes of the Roman-built Antonine Wall barrier, once-abandoned canals and a stretch in Edinburgh, as do battlegrounds. Most walkers journey west-east in [ten stages](#), from coastal Helensburgh to Dunbar, where Muir himself (known for championing the USA's Yosemite National Park) grew up.

Getting there: Direct trains link Helensburgh with Glasgow, and Dunbar with Edinburgh, which both have plane and train links to London.

Glyndwr's Way, mid-Wales 135 miles (217 kilometres)

Welsh prince Owain Glyndwr defied England's kings in a longstanding guerrilla revolt during the 15th century. This strenuous [nine-day route](#), far quieter than Wales' Coast and Offa's Dyke Paths, traverses the sheep-sprinkled Cambrian mountains, lakes, forests and far-flung battle sites where he once operated. Halfway along is pretty Machynlleth - site of Glyndwr's parliament in the 1400s, and now home to Wales' [Museum of Modern Art](#).



Walk in the footsteps of a Welsh prince on Glyndwr's Way © National Trails

Getting there: The towns at either end, Knighton and Welshpool, each boast direct trains to Shrewsbury, from which you can go on to London Euston, Cardiff or Birmingham.

The Ridgeway, southern England 87 miles (140 kilometres)

Britain's oldest road, the Greater Ridgeway extends 362 miles (583 kilometres) from Dorset right across to Norfolk, on the east coast. This [six-day path](#) traces about a quarter of the 5,000-year-old trail, linking Neolithic stone circles at Avebury with the River Thames, then following parts of the similarly-aged Icknield Way to isolated Ivinghoe Beacon. Along the way you'll get a vintage dose of southern England's chalk hills and tree-lined lanes.

Getting there: Both Avebury and Ivinghoe Beacon are accessible by train and bus in about one hour 30 minutes from London.

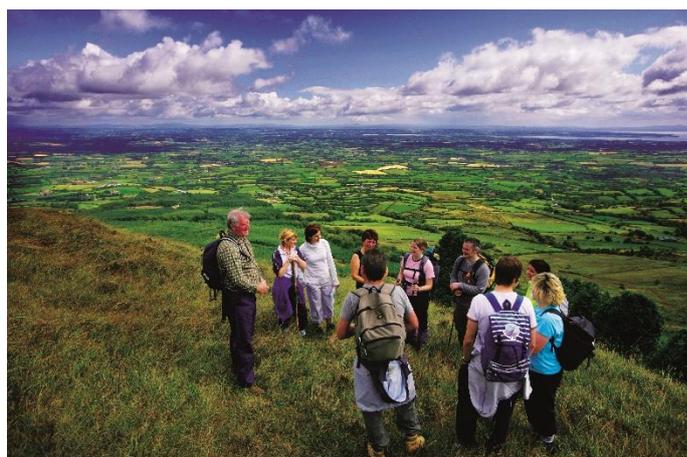
North Downs Way, southern England *153 miles (246 kilometres)*

While the rival South Downs Way may be more picturesque, this still-stupendous route wins for pubs - many excellent inns dot its route - and handy proximity to London, just north. Those stately White Cliffs of Dover make a fitting crescendo, but really the [North Downs Way](#) is one long highlight: an 11-stage pastoral dream of birds, butterflies, oast houses, woods, hedgerows and hills.

Getting there: The walk starts in Farnham in Surrey and ends in Dover, Kent. Both towns have direct train services to London.



The North Downs Way starts in Surrey and ends in Kent © National Trails



The Ulster Way hugs the perimeter of Northern Ireland

Ulster Way, Northern Ireland *625 miles (1,000 kilometres)*

Hugging Northern Ireland's perimeter, the epic [Ulster Way](#) includes 'link' sections beside roads - where public transport is advised - but many segments are beyond motorists' reach. It takes in capital Belfast, the amazing Giant's Causeway formation and an outcrop said to resemble Napoleon's nose. The longest non-link chunk navigates the Sperrin Mountains: a vigorous 111-mile (177-kilometre) stretch from Lough Bradan

to Castlerock, on the northern coast, punctuated by millennia-old forests.

Getting there: Pick the route up in Belfast. Otherwise, Lough Bradan's a three-hour drive east, and Castlerock about an hour by train.

The South West Coast Path, south-west England *630 miles (1,013 kilometres)*

The [South-West Coast Path](#) is Britain's longest national trail, running from Minehead in Somerset, along the dramatic coasts of Cornwall and Devon, and finishing in Poole, Dorset. The epic undertaking of hiking the whole thing takes around 30 days for speedy walkers, or between seven and eight weeks at a slower speed, but the rewards are endless - stunning scenery, unique heritage and geology, and varied wildlife await. It's also easy to shorten the walk by starting or finishing at different way-points - go to the beach anywhere in the very south-west of England, turn left or right, and you'll be on the path starting your adventure!

Getting there: The path can be walked in either direction - Minehead is around a two hour drive from Bristol, while Poole is under an hour by road from Southampton.

Hadrian's Wall Path, northern England

84 miles (135 kilometres)

A fort-ridden Roman defensive barrier erected to keep out the Picts (modern-day Scots), much of Hadrian's Wall still stands today. Linking the shipbuilding eastern town of Wallsend with the west-coast Solway Firth, its mostly-flat [Hadrian's Wall Path](#) specialises in barren and beautiful scenery, despite including the cities of Carlisle and Newcastle at either end.

Getting there: Newcastle and Carlisle both have direct trains to London and Edinburgh. The Tyne Valley Line runs between them.



Hadrian's Wall Path is in northern England © National Trails



Dare you tackle the Cape Wrath Trail?

Cape Wrath Trail, Scotland

200 miles (322 kilometres)

Meet Britain's toughest trail. Linking Fort William to Scotland's north-westernmost point - Cape Wrath, and its lonely lighthouse - [this route](#) is unmarked and, during the final section after Sandwood Bay, there's not even a path: you just keep the sea on your left and pick your way north. The landscapes are wild and windswept, with mammoth rock stacks, seals and sensational beaches. Nights in bothies (stone huts) are required, and it'll take two-three weeks to conquer.

Getting there: Daily trains serve Fort William from Glasgow. From Cape Wrath, get the minibus and ferry to Durness, then a bus onto Inverness or Lairg stations.

Cotswold Way, western England

102 miles (164 kilometres)

Few areas of Britain are as quintessentially English as the Cotswolds. Striking out across the Cotswold Edge escarpment, [this National Trail](#) majors in fantastic views - of the Severn Estuary, Forest of Dean, Wales' brooding Black Mountains and, most hauntingly, Gloucester Cathedral - while also throwing in castles and quarries. Expect to be a Cotswold convert by the time you descend into the market town of Chipping Campden.



The Cotswold Way stretches for 102 miles © National Trails

Getting there: Trains run from London Paddington to the start-point Bath; buses link Chipping Campden with Cheltenham railway station, which also connects to Paddington.

Britain's best pub walks

Whether you're striding along vast beaches or trotting up former pilgrims' paths, Britain's countryside is a walking paradise. That includes numerous options for the more casual hiker: short or easy rambles which, in true British style, break for lunch in a cosy pub.

Porthdinllaen circular, north-west Wales

Five miles (eight kilometres)

The [Ty Coch](#) ranks among Britain's more remote pubs. It abuts a sandy beach - one which doubles as its terrace - in fishing hamlet Porthdinllaen, and is inaccessible by road for non-residents. Not that this prevents hosts of hikers, divers and golfers from sampling its craft beers and pies. Do so yourself on [this easy walk](#), but only after scanning for grey seals and dolphins off the headland of Carreg Ddu.

Getting there: Start from the village of Morfa Nefyn, a three-hour drive from Cardiff or Liverpool.



Enjoy a wander around Padstow's pretty harbour

Little Petherick Creek and the Camel Trail, Cornwall, south-west England

Five-and-a-half miles (nine kilometres)

What poet John Betjeman once described as "the most beautiful train journey" is now one of the prettiest walks imaginable. Following an 18-mile disused railway line from Bodmin to Padstow, south-west England's Camel Trail is also lengthy, however, so just undertake the final riverside stretch - [combining it](#) with Little Petherick Creek's waterside meadows and a gothic church. Finish with fish-and-

chips at Padstow's 14th-century [Golden Lion](#).

Getting there: Padstow is five hours from London Paddington by rail.

Portballintrae Causeway Loop, Antrim, Northern Ireland

Five-and-a-half miles (eight-and-a-half kilometres)

Beaches also star on this [rugged loop](#), before giving way to Northern Ireland's stand-out natural attraction: The Giant's Causeway. After you've admired its 40,000 interlocking, sea-sprayed rock columns and turf-roofed Visitor Centre, retreat to the [Causeway Hotel](#) and order Irish Stew at its snoozy lounge bar, accompanied by some local Bushmills whiskey. Not too much, though: you still have to climb the steep Shepherd's Path.

Getting there: Portballintrae is an hour from Belfast by car.



The Portballintrae Causeway Loop takes in the famous Giant's Causeway

Craster to Low Newton Coastal Walk, Northumberland, north-east England

Six miles (nine-and-a-half kilometres)

There are three reasons to tackle [this seaside sortie](#). Firstly, you start in the spiritual home of kippers (cold-smoked herrings), a classic British breakfast. Then there's the chance to relish some of north-eastern England's finest coast, including flower-mottled dunes and the lonely ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle, originally built by rebels seven centuries ago to repel King Edward II. The final incentive is Low Newton's attractive [Ship Inn](#), beloved for its microbrewery and handpicked-crab sandwiches.

Getting there: Craster is a 30-minute drive north of Newcastle.



Have a well-earned pint at the Ship Inn

Brig o'Turk Loop, Stirling, Scotland

Three-and-a-half miles (five-and-a-half kilometres)

Red squirrels and golden eagles are among the colourful rarities you might spy amid this pretty yomp along Glen Finglas in Scotland. [The route](#) includes some gentle climbs up to 140 metres (460 feet) through silent birch woods, but the Loch Venachar flanks and raised wooden boardwalk sections provide ample compensation. Ditto the stone-built [Byre Inn](#), where homemade venison hotpots and log fires await.

Getting there: Glen Finglas is a 90-minute drive northwest from Edinburgh.



Great Missenden was home to children's author Roald Dahl

Great Missenden Circular Walk, Buckinghamshire, south-east England

Four miles (six-and-a-half kilometres)

A quaint village straight out of the English textbook, Great Missenden was home to Roald Dahl for 36 years, and is home to a terrific museum about the author. Yet Dahl himself would have struggled to create a word - spectacular? beautiful? - which adequately lauds the vistas from nearby Misbourne Valley on [Great Missenden's circular](#). The 190-metre (630-foot) perch reveals a panorama of gently-rolling Chiltern Hills and farmland. You'll be still be talking about it over brandy-flambéed veal

kidneys in the [Nag's Head](#) - Dahl's red-tiled former local.

Getting there: Direct trains connect Great Missenden with London Marylebone in 40 minutes.

Stony Cove Pike from Kirkstone Pass, Cumbria, north-west England

Four-and-a-half miles (seven kilometres)

High-altitude pubs work well on an effort-and-reward basis: climb the big hill and a hearty

feed is all yours. This [undulating odyssey](#) starts and triumphantly finishes at Britain's third-highest boozier, the wood-beamed [Kirkstone Pass Inn](#), which supposedly occupies a former monastery and serves Sunday roasts. In between, scree-ridden moorland, dark green hills, glinting lakes and isolated slate-roof crofts unfold either side of Stony Cove Pike's windblown summit.

Getting there: The inn is a 90-minute drive north from Manchester in western England.

Wells-next-the-Sea and Holkham Park, Norfolk, eastern England

Eight miles (13 kilometres)

Space. That's the most overwhelming quality of Holkham Beach, a horizon-less hinterland of sand and sea in eastern England. Behind it are tufty dunes, pine woods and, eventually Lady Anne's Drive, where [this circuit](#) begins. Later comes the quaint Georgian harbour town of Wells-next-the-Sea, where crayfish linguine is recommended at its chichi [Globe Inn](#), before a walk back via Holkham Park's large, deer-ridden estate.

Getting there: London is a three-hour drive away.

Seven of the best: cycling trails in Britain

Exploring the British countryside on two wheels can be a joy. Whether you're pedalling down rural lanes, meandering along a forest trail or taking in the views from a coastal cycle path, the great British outdoors is often seen at its best from the saddle. Here are seven top ideas for bike-hire adventure.



Taking a break on the Camel Trail © Visit Cornwall/ Matt Jessop

Camel Trail, Cornwall, south-west England

It might sound like a Saharan expedition, but the reality is a little less daunting. The gorgeous [Camel Trail](#) follows the route of a disused railway line as it snakes through 18 miles of prime Cornish countryside, hugging the wide Camel Estuary for much of its length. The route begins in the classy little port town of Padstow - famed for its seafood restaurants and also home to two bike hire shops - and runs as far as the hamlet of Wenford Bridge, where

the eco-friendly [Snail's Pace Café](#) serves sandwiches, soups and the obligatory cream teas. Padstow can be reached in one hour 15 minutes from Penzance, south-west England.

Loch Lomond, Dunbartonshire, south-west Scotland

Scotland has no shortage of majestic freshwater lochs, but where cyclists are concerned, the breathtaking Loch Lomond is the pick of them. Under an hour's drive away from Glasgow, southern Scotland, the vast loch stretches for 24 miles, making it the largest freshwater body in Britain. It's undoubtedly one of the most attractive, too - join the 17-mile [West Loch Lomond Cycle Path](#) for uninterrupted views across the water as you travel between the charming village of Luss and the lakeside town of Balloch. It's a level, linear route that passes plenty of beaches and picnic spots, with bike hire at both ends.

Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, central England

An ancient oak forest once used as a royal hunting ground, the Forest of Dean is an atmospheric swathe of woodland covering some 42 square miles - it's said that JRR Tolkien drew inspiration for the wilds of Middle Earth from his many visits here. Today (and happily orc-free) the forest is laced with different cycle trails and has a number of different hire facilities. The nine-and-a-half mile [Forest of Dean Family Cycle Trail](#) follows scenic traffic-free paths for its entire route, while for something a bit more adrenaline-charged, the [Freeminer Trail](#) is a four-and-a-half mile singletrack option for mountain bikers. The forest is a 30-minute drive from the city of Gloucester, central England.



Explore Middle Earth in the Forest of Dean

Peak District National Park, northern England

Less than an hour's drive from both Manchester and Sheffield, northern England, the sprawling hills of the Peak District are one of the great jewels of the British countryside. Walkers and pleasure-trippers are drawn by its stone villages, stately homes and rocky outcrops, and there are also superb options for cyclists. The [Tissington Trail](#) is a pretty, traffic-free route stretching for 13 miles, while the slightly longer but no less fetching [High Peak Trail](#) runs for 17.5 miles - both follow the track-beds of former railway lines as they snake through the national park. Bike hire is available close to both trails.



Strangford Lough is renowned for its marine and bird life

Strangford Lough Trail, County Down, Northern Ireland

Officially designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the sublime Strangford Lough is a large sea inlet renowned for its diverse marine and bird life. Cycling its perimeter makes for an unforgettable experience, with stunning views across the Irish Sea from the Ards Peninsula. On a clear day, Scotland can be seen. The [82-mile circular route](#) is a long one - you might prefer to cycle just part of it -

but the trail itself is relatively easy, and even encompasses a short ferry ride. The town of Newtownards, on the northern shore, is the most logical place to begin and end a ride. It sits half an hour's drive from Belfast, and has bike hire facilities.

Brunel Trail, Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales

Named after Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the ground-breaking engineer whose Great Western Railway once ran along part of the trail, [this nine-mile, purpose-built cycle path](#) gives wide views and a good chance of spotting wildlife. Beginning in Haverfordwest, south-west Wales, where a ruined castle still overlooks the town, it winds south through a nature reserve and broadleaf woodland before finishing at a colourful quayside. The wider region is renowned for its magnificent coastal scenery, and other nearby areas can also be enjoyed by bike - there are various local hire options. Haverfordwest is 85 minutes by rail from Swansea, south Wales, or two hours 30 minutes from Cardiff, south Wales.

Great Cumbrae Island Loop, Isle of Great Cumbrae, west Scotland

Great Cumbrae is often referred to as Scotland's most accessible island. It takes an hour by train from Glasgow, southern Scotland, to reach the harbour town of Largs, from where a 10-minute ferry crosses to the island itself. The destination has also become a haven for outdoor activity. Travelling on two wheels is the most natural way to explore, and the island's signature route is a [nine-mile loop](#) that leads right around its shoreline. When the weather's fine, the views back across to the mainland and other nearby islands are excellent - there's even a resident seal colony to look out for. Bike hire is available in Millport.

Get your adrenaline pumping with Britain's adventure sports

Britain's countryside may conjure up images of thatched cottages, green pastures and picturesque tranquillity - but it's also home to some seriously thrilling adventure activities and adrenaline sports. So take a deep breath of fresh country air and get ready to hop, skip, jump, whoosh and soar into something extreme and exciting.

Bungee jumping, Scotland

Take a 50mph leap from Britain's first static bungee jump platform, the [Highland Fling](#), located on the edge of the Cairngorms National Park. Perched above a dramatic gorge and surrounded by ancient trees, this purpose-built permanent bungee jump platform is suspended below the Garry Bridge, and set 40m above the wild whitewaters of the River Garry. The only bungee experience of its kind in Britain, it's open all year round, and offers adrenalin-junkies aged 14 and older the ability to see the iconic scenery of Scotland's Perthshire Highlands from a whole new perspective.

Getting there: Garry Bridge stands by the village of Killiecrankie in Scotland, one hour 45 minutes north of Edinburgh by car.



Reach speeds of up to 100 miles per hour on a zipline in Wales © VisitWales

Zip-wire thrills, Wales

Conceived by a former Royal Marine commando whose idea was to create an adventure playground for adults, the old slate mines, slate caverns and forests of north Wales are now home to a host of zip-wire attractions - making this the largest zip zone in the world. Located across several sites in and around beautiful Snowdonia National Park, the [Zipworld](#) family allows you to zip through treetops, or in deep underground caves, or bounce on massive trampolines and

cargo nets in a vast cavern, or ride the world's fastest zipwire - soaring over a disused quarry reaching speeds in excess of 100mph, it's like skydiving without a plane!

Getting there: The Zipworld attractions are in north Wales, four hours north of Cardiff by car, or two hours west of English cities Manchester and Liverpool by car.

White-knuckle rally car rides, Gloucestershire, south-west England

Famous for its lovely villages in honey-hued stone, the Cotswolds region of south-west England is also home to the [Gloucestershire Rally School](#). Take a white-knuckle passenger ride with an experienced rally driver, or learn rally driving skills of your own, mastering techniques such as skids and powerslides. You can also experience the thrills and spills of near-vertical ascents and descents in a 4x4 on the school's off-road driving course.

Getting there: The school is near Cirencester, two hours west of London by car.

Burn rubber on an iconic race circuit, Wiltshire, south-west England

Open since 1950 close to the pretty Cotswold village of Castle Combe, [Castle Combe Circuit](#) is one of Britain's most iconic race circuits. As well as a full racing calendar, there's

a variety of driving experiences on offer. Hear that engine roar, watch that speedometer soar, and smell that burning rubber as you follow in the tyre tracks of racing legends such as Stirling Moss, Nigel Mansell and Ayrton Senna - all of whom raced to victory here.

Getting there: The circuit is near the Cotswold town of Chippenham, two hours west of London by car.

River bugging, Scotland

One of Britain's oldest outdoor adventure providers, [Splash White Water Rafting](#) offers some of the best white water rafting and canyoning in Scotland. Pioneers of all things wet and wild, in 2003 it introduced river bugging, and currently has Britain's largest fleet of river bugs. For the uninitiated, river bugging is basically white water rafting in a one-person craft that resembles a huge inflatable armchair. Wearing a wetsuit and thick webbed gloves to protect you from the rocky riverbed, you whoosh down the rapids of River Tummel and River Tay in a thrilling solo ride.

Getting there: The company is based near Aberfeldy, one hour 45 minutes north of Edinburgh by car.



Why not try river bugging in Scotland?

Blokarting, Northern Ireland

Also known as land sailing or sand yachting, Blokarting is a brilliant way to experience some of Britain's most beautiful and desolate beaches. On-board a landsailer - a hand-steered, three-wheeled kart with a sail attached - the power of the wind sends you sailing across wide expanses of sand. The leading blokart school in Northern Ireland, [Blokart World](#) is run by a three-time British champion, and utilises broad stretches of the stunning Benone beach.

Getting there: Benone beach is on the north coast of Northern Ireland, 90 minutes north-west of Belfast by car.



Kite surfing through the waves with Edge Watersports © Martin Allen Photography

Kitesurfing, Devon, south-west England

With its striking cliffs forming the oldest section of the World Heritage Jurassic Coast, the town of Exmouth on England's south coast is considered one of Britain's best kitesurfing locations. This adrenaline-packed sport is remarkably accessible, only needing a 10mph wind to allow you to lift off and ride waves, do technical spins, or simply cruise through the sky. Owned by Britain's best female kite-surfer, five-

time kitesurfing world champion Steph Bridge, and her husband Eric, [Edge Watersports](#) offers lessons for beginners plus supervised sessions for those wanting to improve their skills.

Getting there: Exmouth is on the south coast of England, three hours 50 minutes west of London by train.

Canyoning, Cumbria, north-west England

The beautiful landscape of the Lake District in Cumbria, north-west England, is ideal natural terrain for canyoning. A favourite activity with adrenalin junkies, the idea is to descend a stone gorge following the path of a waterfall using a variety of techniques such as climbing and abseiling. Having a fast-flowing waterfall to contend with makes it extra-thrilling - and on occasion you have to let yourself go and simply slide down wild-flowing rapids. Numerous providers including [Craggs Adventures](#) and [Joint Adventures](#) offer canyoning around Keswick, Windermere and Coniston - and your guide can make it as tame or as extreme as you wish.

Getting there: The Lake District is four hours 30 minutes north-west of London by car.

Bouldering, Northern Ireland

Perhaps you'd prefer to head up rather than down? Then try bouldering in the Mourne Mountains of Northern Ireland with [East Coast Adventure](#). Led by an experienced instructor, climb through canyons, scramble along rocks and swim through pools of crystal clear water that originates high in these mountains. As you ascend you'll need to crawl and clamber past any obstacles that block your path - but once you reach the top it's exhilarating.

Getting there: The Mourne Mountains are one hour south of Belfast by car - Belfast has its own airport.

Mountain biking and dirt jumping, Gloucestershire, south-west England

Britain's biggest privately-owned mountain bike facility, the [Flyup 417 Project](#) opened in 2016 on a 100 acre site in the heart of the Cotswolds countryside. There's a bike park including World Cup standard downhill mountain biking tracks, one-acre dirt jump arena, and even a jump airbag, where you can practice aerial skills safely. The site also has two enormous indoor riding barns, as well as a café and bike shop.



Taking to the skies at Flyup 417

Getting there: The facility is in the Cotswold town of Cheltenham, two hours west of London by train.

Hovercraft racing, Dorset, south-west England

Based on a 200-acre family farm in the heart of the Dorset countryside in southern England, just a few hills away from the famous and ancient Cerne Abbas Giant (a naked figure carved in to the chalk hillside), [Henley Hillbillies](#) offers visitors an array of fast-paced

off-road activities. For the ultimate off-road challenge, take the wheel of a single seat Formula 2 Eagle Hovercraft. It might be tricky to steer, with no brakes, but with advice from an instructor you'll soon fly around its oval track six inches above ground.

Getting there: The track is in south-west England, three hours from London by car.



*Coasteering is a mixture of climbing, swimming and jumping
© NTPL/Ben Selway*

Coasteering, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Pioneered on the coastline of Pembrokeshire in west Wales, [coasteering](#) is an adrenalin-fuelled recreational activity that involves traversing the foreshore of a rocky coastline. The very nature of this dramatic landscape means that you must scramble along rocks, and either climb over hurdles or jump into the sea to swim around them. Led by an experienced guide, it's a blend of rock-hopping, swell-riding, cave-exploring and cliff-jumping - and its increasing appeal means that it's

spread to other parts of Britain that possess a rugged coastline, including Northern Ireland, Scotland and Cornwall.

Getting there: Pembrokeshire is in west Wales, two hours from Cardiff by car.

Rock climbing, the Peak District, northern England

The [Peak District](#) National Park in northern England is recognised as having some of the best rock climbing in Britain, with the number of recorded climbs exceeding 10,000. Many world-class climbers live in and around this breathtaking region, sharpening their skills on its challenging terrain. Famous rock formations at Dovedale, the gritstone crags of The Roaches and Windgather Rocks, and the moor-topped crest of Stanage Edge are places of pilgrimage for climbers from across the world. There are also plenty of crags for beginners to discover.



*The Peak District is a great place for rock climbing
© British Tourist Authority*

Getting there: The Peak District is in the north of England, three hours north of London by car.

Discover heroes, high ropes and history in Britain's forests

Forests and woodland have forever been entwined with British folklore, myths and legends. Rather than spying magical creatures such as elves, fairies and unicorns, visitors to Britain's forests are today more likely to be enchanted by unique treehouse accommodation or thrilled by the likes of treetop zip-wires or foraging and bushcraft courses. They're also beautiful spots for picnicking and birdwatching. But do keep an eye out for fairies, just in case!

Legendary forests

Located in Nottinghamshire in the north of England, [Sherwood Forest](#) is best known for its association with the legend of Robin Hood, the heroic outlaw who's famous for robbing the rich to feed the poor. The tale of this bow-and-arrow wielding hero is so popular that it's inspired countless film and TV adaptations, starring actors including Errol Flynn, Kevin Costner and Russell Crowe. Legend asserts that Robin and his band of Merry Men would use an enormous oak tree known as Major Oak as their hideout from adversaries including the Sheriff Of Nottingham.



The legendary Sherwood Forest © VisitEngland/ Experience Nottinghamshire

Standing in the heart of Sherwood Forest, this huge tree is estimated to be between 800 and 1,000 years old, and is so massive that since Victorian times its branches have needed the support of scaffolding. The forest is especially animated during the annual [Robin Hood Festival](#). Held each August, live-action re-enactments bring Robin Hood's exploits to life, along with medieval jousting, comical jesters, falconry and storytelling.

Getting there: Sherwood Forest is in the north of England, three hours from London by car.



The New Forest in autumn © VisitEngland/ New Forest District Council

Proclaimed a royal forest in 1079 by William the Conqueror, the [New Forest](#) in southern England first appeared in historic manuscript the Domesday Book in 1086 as 'Nova Foresta'. Now England's largest royal forest, it's associated with many myths and legends. Two of William's sons, Prince Richard and King William II died in mysterious hunting accidents here - with local folklore alleging this was his punishment for evicting peasants and destroying hamlets and farmsteads in order to create a forest where royalty could

hunt deer. A designated national park since 2005, visitors today can enjoy its many miles of cycle paths, picnic areas, and other attractions such as the [New Forest Wildlife Park](#), which specialises in Britain's native wildlife, including endangered species such as Scottish wildcats and water voles. The area is also home to the iconic New Forest ponies.

Getting there: The New Forest National Park is in southern England, one hour 40 minutes south-west of London by car.

One of the largest remaining and least-disturbed woodlands in Britain, [Banagher Glen](#) in Northern Ireland is set upon a steep ravine. The patron saint of Ireland, St Patrick is credited with driving all the snakes from Ireland - but legend has it that he failed to expel one large serpent, and so he trapped it forever in these woods. Now a Nature Reserve and Special Area of Conservation, visitors can enjoy a circular walk through this ancient woodland, which includes mature oak, ash, rowan, hazel and hawthorn trees.

Getting there: Banagher Glen is 70 minutes north-west of Belfast by car - Belfast has its own airport.

Forest-based adventures

Britain's first tree-top ropes course was opened in 2002 by [Go Ape](#) in **Thetford Forest** in Suffolk, eastern England. The company now operates at 30 breathtaking woodland sites throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Each course is unique, and comprises rope ladders, bridges, and challenging treetop obstacles including Tarzan swings and zip wires. Located within Queen Elizabeth Forest Park in Scotland, the [Aberfoyle course](#) is a mecca for Go Ape devotees because it boasts two of Britain's longest zip-lines.



Playing among the trees at Go Ape © VisitBritain/ Simon Jarratt

Getting there: Aberfoyle is in Scotland, one hour north of Glasgow by car.

The woods of **Brentwood in Essex** are home to another exhilarating woodland experience. [WildForestGym](#) is Britain's first obstacle training centre and natural movement gymnasium. This forest-sized site includes an obstacle training course with 68 race-size obstacles and a natural movement outdoor gym where you can monkey around and develop natural movement techniques.

Getting there: Brentwood is in south-east England, one hour north-east of London by car.

Part of a designated Dark Sky Discovery Site in recognition of its clear night skies and minimal light pollution, **Kielder Forest** in Northumberland, northern England is ideal for stargazing. Within Kielder Water & Forest Park is [Kielder Observatory](#). Designed by award-winning architects to be in harmony with its forest setting, the observatory is powered by solar panels and a wind turbine. On a clear night visitors can gaze deep into space and see comets, distant galaxies and nebulae. The forest also claims to be Britain's largest [art gallery](#) with more than 20 artworks hidden among the trees. One magical example is

'Silvas Capitalis', a giant timber head - enter via its open mouth then gaze at the forest through its eyes.

Getting there: Kielder Forest is in northern England, close to the border with Scotland. It's two hours south of Edinburgh by car.

For a truly wild experience, take a bushcraft course and learn how to light a fire by friction, eat wild food fresh from the hedgerows, or make a watertight shelter for the night using sticks and leaves. Hone these and other survivalist skills on a course run by [Woodland Ways](#). Led by experienced instructors, these award-winning courses take place at woodland locations across England and Scotland. Options include the one-day bushcraft fundamentals course as well as more specialist courses such as foraging, basketry and hedgerow medicine.



Learning how to forage for food with Woodland Ways

Getting there: Courses run throughout England and Scotland.

Amazing arboreal accommodation

If you think a treehouse is a haphazard cluster of floorboards nailed together by someone's dad and accessed via a bit of knotted rope, think again! Britain boasts an array of amazing treehouses, ranging from Tolkein-esque retreats to boutique-style boltholes. Some are available to rent as self-catering holiday homes via websites such as AirBnB and [Sawday's Canopy & Stars](#).



Living Room Treehouses are set deep in the woods in north Wales

Set deep in the woods of north Wales, close to **Snowdonia National Park**, are [Living Room Treehouses](#). Perfect for an isolated, off-the-grid experience, these six curvaceous treehouse pods resemble the Ewok village in Star Wars. Set in the treetops, each one is designed for a couple or family of four, and feature rustic details such as a cosy wood-burner and an outdoor shower that uses heated spring water.

Getting there: The Living Room

Treehouses are in north Wales, two hours 40 minutes north-west of Cardiff by car.

Co-owned by the Forestry Commission, [Forest Holidays](#) currently operates at nine stunning woodland locations in England and Scotland. Each site has between 35 and 120 luxury cabins and treehouses. There's a programme of forest ranger activities, ranging from gentle woodland walks to more active adventures such as pony trekking and kayaking

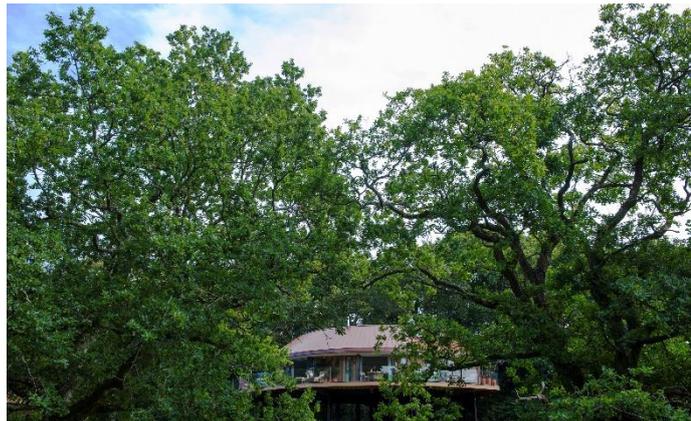
- although guests may prefer to enjoy the comfort of cabin living! Each one has a private hot tub, while in-cabin spa treatments and a private chef service can also be requested.

Getting there: It's in forests throughout England and Scotland, specifically North Yorkshire, Cornwall, Norfolk, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Argyll and Stirlingshire. Set in woodlands in Norfolk, [West Lexham](#) is a 21-acre private estate with agri-chic accommodation options including glamping. There are also four enchanting treehouses, each one magically decorated with fairy lights and bunting.

Getting there: The estate is in Norfolk in eastern England, two hours 20 minutes north-east of London by car.

An even more ambitious and expansive option is found in the trees surrounding [Chewton Glen Hotel & Spa](#), a five-star country house hotel in the New Forest in southern England. Positioned high in a verdant forest canopy are luxury hotel suites with amenities such as private deck with hot tub and bespoke marble bathrooms - all suspended 35 feet above ground. A first for any British hotel, guests staying in these opulent treehouses enjoy indulgencies such as a breakfast hamper delivered daily, while being just a minute's walk from the hotel's gourmet restaurant and cookery school.

Getting there: Chewton Glen is in south-west England, two hours 15 minutes south-west of London by car.



A treehouse among the trees at Chewton Glen

Explore Britain's countryside by boat

Make a splash by holidaying on Britain's beautiful lakes, canals, waterways and seas, surrounded by some of the most the most impressive scenery in the country.



Take a boat trip along the famous River Thames

Cruise along the River Thames

Take a historic boat trip along the River Thames. [French Brothers'](#) riverboats cruise as far west as Windsor and Maidenhead. One of the most popular trips is from Hampton Court in south-west London, to Runnymede near Windsor, south-east England. It links the site of Henry VIII's 16th-century royal palace, and the spot where King John's peace treaty the Magna Carta was sealed in 1215. The four-hour French Brothers voyage navigates a number of locks, woods, lakes and tiny islands for sensational views including riverside

Hampton Court Palace and its parklands and the wildflower meadows known as Chertsey Meads. On arrival at Runnymede, you might want to disembark to enjoy its signposted country trails or visit the nearby Ankerwycke Yew, the National Trust's oldest tree at 2,500 years-old. King Henry VIII is reputed to have proposed to his ill-fated queen, Anne Boleyn under its branches.

Getting there: Hampton Court station in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames is 35 minutes by train from London Waterloo. Runnymede in Surrey is 20-minutes by road from Windsor & Eton Central station - 45 minutes by train from London Paddington.

Navigate the Norfolk Broads by boat

Britain's largest protected wetland, The Norfolk Broads is a series of connected rivers and lakes flanked by spectacular English countryside, villages and towns that a wealth of rare wildlife and plants call home. Situated in the east England region of East Anglia, The Broads link the medieval city of Norwich inland with the seaside town of Great Yarmouth on the east coast, offering a leisurely way to explore a variety of landscapes and habitats. Operator [Waterways Holidays](#) has a range of easy-to-drive boats from modern motor cruisers to wooden yachts, and 10 locations to collect them from including Norwich itself.

Getting there: Trains to Norwich take around 50 minutes from London Liverpool Street station.



Cruise through Norfolk at your own pace © Waterways Holidays

Learn to water-ski in The Cotswolds

Enjoy the stunning English countryside views as you enjoy thrilling aquatic sports in the [Cotswold Water Park](#). The Cotswolds is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in

southern England that's famous for its valleys, rivers, meadows, woodlands and the hills where its distinctive honey-coloured limestone was quarried. Many of the region's picture-perfect villages are built from the stone. The Cotswolds straddle several English counties including Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, and parts of Wiltshire, Somerset, Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The region boasts a number of important nature reserves as well as its 100 kilometre (62-mile) water park made up of 150 lakes. Among other activities here, thrill-seeking visitors can also enjoy windsurfing, wakeboarding, boating, sailing, snorkeling and kayaking.

Getting there: The nearest station is Kemble in Gloucestershire, one hour 15 minutes by rail or road from Oxford. Oxford is reached in an hour by rail or road from London.



Take a leap of faith with Celtic Quester Coasteering

Jump from Welsh cliffs into the Celtic Sea

Experience the raw beauty of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park in south-west Wales by jumping off its cliffs into the sea. Named as Best Visitor Experience by the National Tourism Awards Wales, [Celtic Quester Coasteering](#) is a specialist in the extreme sport of 'coasteering', which involves swimming, jumping and climbing around tidal seas and coastal cliffs. Based around Abereddy Bay, a gorgeous north Pembrokeshire region famous for its black sand and rugged landscapes, the company will kit you out in

protective clothing and guide your group to ensure it's as safe as its wild. Your unforgettable Welsh adventure can be tailored to suit all abilities, making it suitable for adults and families alike.

Getting there: Abereddy is around three hours by road from Cardiff.

Hunt for monsters as you cruise Loch Ness

The world-famous waters of Loch Ness are as mysterious as they are beautiful, entrenched as they are with the legend of the Loch Ness Monster, more fondly known as 'Nessie'. 'Loch' is the Gaelic word for a lake or sea inlet. Scotland's most famous loch is also its second deepest and second largest and contains more fresh water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined. Several companies offer



Hunt for monsters on Loch Ness with Jacobite

sightseeing cruises across its glacial waters, so you can drink in the natural beauty of its hilly Scottish Highlands setting and the medieval ruins of Urquhart Castle. However, it's hard to beat the range of [Loch Ness by Jacobite](#) combined coach and cruise tours, which conveniently collect visitors from Inverness bus station.

Getting there: Inverness, north Scotland is less than four hours by road from Edinburgh.



Visit locations made famous by Game of Thrones

Visit Game of Thrones filming locations by sea

Embark on the unofficial [Games of Thrones Location Tour](#) to see some of the impressive Northern Ireland scenery featured in TV's hit series and other impressive landmarks. Depart from the harbours of Portstewart or Ballycastle in County Antrim, aboard the same local boat used by the series' crew members. The tour takes visitors on a four-hour cruise visiting places recognizable from the show.

Featured filming locations include Ballintoy harbor, which starred as the fictional

Lordsport harbour, and the secluded Murlough Bay, part of Murlough National Nature Reserve, where Davis Seaworth was shipwrecked after the Battle of the Blackwater.

Getting there: Portstewart and Ballycastle are both about an hour from Belfast by road.

Get up-close views of Britain's wildlife

Britain's countryside is home to a host of wildlife, from species that are here all year round such as deer, eagles, and red squirrels, to special visitors such as minke whales, osprey and puffins. Here are some of the best spots for some wildlife spotting.



Bottlenose dolphins can be seen off the coast of Wales © A Bay to Remember

Whales, dolphins, and seals

Scotland, and the Isle of Mull, are also great places for a bit of whale spotting. Minke whales, which can reach 10 metres in length, can be seen off Mull's coast in the summer months when they gather to feed. There are a number of [boat-tour operators](#) offering trips from the island. Off the tip of Scotland, the more remote [Shetland](#) offers a chance to see orca, also known as killer whales, between May and August - although as with any wildlife spotting, you have to have patience

and luck! Mull is a 45 minute ferry ride from Oban, on Scotland's west coast, which is a two hour 30 minute drive from Glasgow. Shetland is an overnight ferry ride away from mainland Scotland, or you can fly from airports including Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The seas off Wales are also a great habitat for marine life. Take a boat trip from [St Davids](#), Britain's smallest city, and you'll see a range of bird life, with the chance to see porpoise and seals. Slightly north of St Davids are the waters of Cardigan Bay, home to Britain's largest pod of bottlenose dolphins - [board a boat](#) run by A Bay to Remember and watch them play in the waves. Driving to both St Davids and Cardigan from Cardiff takes around two hours and 30 minutes.

A great spot for seals is the four-mile long shingle spit of [Blakeney Point](#) - a nature reserve off the coast of Norfolk in eastern England, an hour's drive from Norwich. Grey seals have their pups here, easily identifiable by their fuzzy white coats. You can see them by boat.



Britain is home to the magnificent red deer © Danny Green/2020 Vision

Deer

Britain is home to six species of deer - ranging in size from the imposing red deer to the small muntjac. A great place to see a range of species is the New Forest in southern England, an historic royal forest which is now a national park, where ponies, cattle and donkeys roam freely. Look out for deer peering out between the trees, or visit [Bolderwood](#) in the heart of the national park. It has a platform from which deer are fed, with rangers providing food daily between April and September. In the village of

Burley, a short drive away, you can go on a [deer safari](#). Board a trailer being towed by a tractor and see the deer, which graze close to the vehicle. Burley is around a two hour drive from Brighton.



*Spot eagles soaring in Scotland © VisitScotland/
Paul Tomkins*

Birds of prey

Some of Britain's birds of prey, including buzzards and golden eagles, live here all year round - others are visitors at certain times of year.

A summer visitor to Britain's shores is the osprey, which travels all the way from Africa to nest and raise its young. An established nesting site is in Rutland, home to the imposing Rutland Water - one of the largest reservoirs in Europe. Ospreys eat fish, so a great way to see them is [on a boat](#) while they're trying to catch their dinner. Board the Rutland Belle for a dawn or afternoon cruise with local wildlife experts - if you're lucky an osprey may

choose to dive for a fish very close-by. Rutland is in central England, less than two hours by car from Birmingham.

A year-round resident is the red kite - saved from extinction, its population is now spreading across Britain. A great place to get up close and personal with the birds is in the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales - it features picturesque villages nestling amid green valleys, rushing waterfalls, and grassy, heather-clad mountains. The [Llanddeusant Red Kite Feeding Centre](#) has a special hide where you can sit and watch as food is put out for the birds - with up to 50 kites feeding at any one time, it's a spectacle not to be missed. The feeding centre is a drive of around one hour 30 minutes from Cardiff.

Scotland is the land of the eagles. It has resident golden and white-tailed eagles - the latter is Britain's biggest bird of prey, and you may hear spotters refer to it as a 'flying barn door' due to its immense size! A great place to see both species is the Isle of Mull off Scotland's west coast. There's a [host of wildlife-spotting tour operators](#) on the island - on a trip you may also see otters, and a range of other birds and animals.

Other species

Pine martens are elusive members of the weasel family, and have a stronghold in Scotland. A great place to spot them and another indigenous British mammal - the distinctive black-and-white **badger** - is in the Cairngorms National Park, about three hours north of Edinburgh by car. Book a



*Pine Martens are part of the weasel family © Speyside
Wildlife/ Mark Hamblin*

dusk watch with [Speyside Wildlife](#) - as night falls you'll be taken to a hide in the heart of a forest, and (fingers crossed) will get some great up-close views of the wildlife.

Another animal native to Britain is the **red squirrel**, which has been threatened due to the introduction and success of its cousin, the American grey squirrel. Work is underway, however, to protect and expand red squirrel habitats and you might catch a glimpse of them in the Cairngorms, Lake District or Northumberland national parks, among other locations. Another great spot is the Isle of Wight off Britain's south coast, and you don't have to venture too far off the beaten track to find them - settle down for a meal at the island's [garlic farm restaurant](#) and you may see one scampering past outside. The Isle of Wight is a 45 minute ferry trip from Portsmouth, which is around one hour 45 minutes on the train from London.



Red squirrels are native to Britain © Laura Smith



Puffins have brightly-coloured beaks © VisitEngland/ Visit Hull and East Yorkshire

A summer visitor to Britain's shores is the black and white **puffin**, known for its brightly-coloured bill. Puffins nest together in breeding colonies, and the best time to see them is between April and mid-August. Try the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve at [Bempton Cliffs](#) in Yorkshire, northern England, which is also home to thousands of other seabirds - expect scores of gannets, kittiwakes and razorbills. The reserve is around an hour's drive from York.

The RSPB has reserves around Britain, offering the chance to see a host of bird species and other wildlife. [Portmore Lough](#) in Northern Ireland is open all year round - in the summer you can see scores of butterflies and dragonflies, while in the winter there's the chance to spot thousands of ducks, greylag geese and whooper swans.

Live the high-life in Britain's mountains

From paragliding to train-riding, Britain's mountains offer an extraordinary range of adventure potential. Live the high-life on one of the following peaks.



Overlooking Ben Crom in the magnificent Mourne Mountains

Walking the Mourne Mountains, Northern Ireland

Many of Britain's biggest peaks can be surmounted by strong-thighed walkers during the warmer months - usually May-September - including those in Northern Ireland's [Mournes](#), where russet-coloured, heathery flanks give way to crystalline lakes. Especially popular is the Mourne Mountain walk, which rises from woodland to the lengthy Mourne Wall, where views extend over glens to the Irish Sea, while 526m-high (1,726 feet) Ben Crom offers a more straightforward ascent alternative.

Getting there: The Mournes' gateway town is Newcastle, in County Down: a one-hour drive or 90-minute bus-ride (aboard Ulsterbus #18) south from Belfast.

Rock or ice-climbing in the Cairngorms

Rock-climbing is possible across the land, but nowhere tops north-east Scotland's Cairngorm Mountains. The combination of gritty granite cracks and slippery schist corners offer a considerable challenge. Shelterstone Crag and its ten pitch climbs above Loch Avon are most impressive, but consult [UK Climbing](#) for a comprehensive list of climbs. The nearby Ben Nevis area is, meanwhile, one of the Britain's prime outdoor ice-climb playgrounds. Aonach Mor is a good multi-level option. [Ice Factor](#) offers guided trips.

Getting there: The Cairngorms are a two-hour drive north from Edinburgh. Glencoe village is further south-west, but a slightly longer journey.

Paragliding over the Brecon Beacons

Commonly surmounted by day-walkers, mountaintops in mid-Wales also make for excellent take-off and landing sites for paragliders. Setting off from [Brecon Beacons'](#) crests like Talybont or Fan Gyrich, pilots have been known to undertake 300-mile (485-kilometre) cross-country flights, sometimes as much as four miles (seven kilometres) high. What's below? A green and brown patchwork, dotted with woods, small towns and rivers.

Getting there: Brecon and

Abergavenny are the main Beacons towns: Brecon is an hour's drive north from Cardiff, while Abergavenny is on the Cardiff-Manchester train line.



Get a bird's eye view of the Brecon Beacons © Crown copyright (2016) Visit Wales

Scrambling in the Lake District

Loosely defined as crossing rough ground on all fours, scrambling has long been a popular British pastime. In north-western England's knobbly Lake District, multiple scrambles are possible in one day. Join hikers on the busy path up to [Helvellyn via Striding Edge](#), an easy Grade 1 scramble which doesn't require special kit. The similar Swirral Edge is close by, while it's only a few miles to Grade 3-rated Pinnacle Ridge and its spiky fin. For guided scrambling trips, consider [Mountain Adventures](#).

Getting there: The best village base is Glenridding, located beside Ullswater lake and a two-hour drive north from Manchester.



Take part in the Original Mountain Marathon

Run loops or sign up for a mystery race

Prefer to let your legs take all the strain? The [Wild Running book](#) lists potential runs across Britain, from a seven kilometre circuit of Scotland's Holy Isle to Cadair Idris peak in Snowdonia, north Wales.

Alternatively, you could join a race. Held in a new, mystery location every 12 months - and now replicated in four other countries - the [Original Mountain Marathon](#) is an extreme two-day race held in late-October.

This year's event is the 50th-anniversary edition. There are also orienteering elements, and it involves overnight wild camping. Ready, steady...

Mountain-biking in the Pennines

What goes up must come down - but getting up sure can be taxing! Among Britain's best mountain-bike rides is the 14-mile (22-kilometre) [route along Cross Fell](#) in the North Pennines, a chain of hills and peaks in northern England. You'll be rushing along bumpy bridleways; half the route is spent climbing but most of it is gradual, and the - wheeeeeee - rapid downhills more than compensate, as do wild moorland views.

Getting there: The village start-point, Garrigill, is an hour's drive from Carlisle, which has direct trains from London Euston.

Skiing and snowboarding at Glenshee

Britain has more than 50 indoor slopes, but the only natural ski and snowboard resorts are [found in Scotland](#). Five of them, in fact, all rivalling the standards of many European resorts. The biggest is [Glenshee Ski Centre](#), also in the Cairngorms, its 36 runs served by 21 lifts and tows. Its one-and-a-quarter mile long (two-kilometre) headline act Glas Maol offers a smooth ascent down from Scotland's highest road while an affordable [ski school](#) operates and equipment is readily available for hire.

Getting there: Glenshee is a two-hour drive from Edinburgh.

Chug up Snowdon

There are various hiking paths up Snowdon, Wales' highest peak at 1,085 metres (3,560 feet), but you don't necessarily need to walk at all between March and October. The narrow-gauge [Snowdon Mountain Railway](#) is a lazy and lovely way to reach this rooftop, and all in

just an hour! The summit affords vistas - on clear days - of the Lake District, and wider Snowdonia National Park's jagged crests.

Getting there: Snowdon is situated in north-west Wales. The railway departs from Llanberis. Its tracks link to Bangor - from there, trains serve Cardiff, Birmingham and London Euston.

Go stargazing in Britain's dark sky reserves

If you know your Ursa Minor from your Ursa Major, your stars from your planets, or are just intrigued by the beauty of the night sky, head to one of the scores of sites across Britain perfect for stargazing even with the naked eye, including four of the world's 11 International Dark Sky Reserves. Take a trip to the Milky Way from the depths of the countryside, enjoy pristine views of constellations older than planet Earth from Britain's darkest corners, and even witness the Northern Lights from one of the World's Dark Sky Islands.



A star gazer at Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park, Scotland © VisitScotland

See the moons of Jupiter at Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park, west Scotland

Spanning 777 km² of forested glens, lochs and the highest hills in southern Scotland, [Galloway Forest Park](#) has very few buildings and low levels of light pollution; unsurprisingly so, it was the very first national park to be awarded 'Dark Sky Park' status. Grab your coat and binoculars, wrap up warm, and head to the Galloway Forest Park to experience some of the finest views off the planet, including the moons of Jupiter and the cliffs on our own moon. Make your way to any of the three visitor centres, in particular, Clatteringshaws which overlooks the unlit heart of the Forest Park, where information points help you identify constellations and planets.

Getting there: Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park is a seven-hour drive from London, or seven hours by public transport. It's only a two-hour drive from Edinburgh.

Become a stargazing expert at Northumberland International Dark Sky Park, north-east England

For pristine views of the Milky Way and skies full of endless stars, head to [Northumberland's International Dark Sky Park](#), Europe's largest area of protected night sky. It's an ideal location to see shooting stars and the Andromeda Galaxy, and is also home to the [Kielder Observatory](#); a public astronomical observatory that hosts events throughout the year.

Enjoy a magical drive up to the observatory through the national park, before discovering other worlds as you perch 1,200 feet above the forest and moorland.

Getting there: Northumberland International Dark Sky Park is a 90-minute drive from Edinburgh, which is a 70-minute flight from London.



Cawfield in Northumberland Dark Sky Park © Northumberland Dark Sky Park

Reach for the sky at Exmoor Dark Sky Reserve, south-west England

Experience views once enjoyed by our ancestors before electricity lit up the night skies at [Exmoor National Park](#), and be immersed in myths and legends that began with the stars themselves. Located near the coast in the counties of Somerset and Devon, the park is delightfully dark for stargazers and boasts spots like Holdstone Hill, County Gate, Webbers Post, Haddon Hill and Wimbleball Lake, which offer some of the best astronomical views. Bring some binoculars on a clear night and rediscover your sense of wonder.

Getting there: Exmoor National Park is a three-hour journey by train from London.



Trentishoe, Exmoor National Park, Devon © VisitBritain, Visit Devon, Neville Stannik



Cribbyn and the landscape of the Brecon Beacons © VisitBritain, Joe Cornish

Pack a picnic and stargaze by reservoirs in the Brecon Beacons, Wales

Granted 'International Dark Sky Reserve' status in 2013, the [Brecon Beacons](#) in Wales offer a plethora of dark sky spots to get your astronomer juices flowing. From the beauty of Usk Reservoir, protected from the light pollution of the industrial South Wales Valleys, to the serene Pontsticill Reservoir, accessed from Merthyr Tydfil and boasting idyllic viewing spots along the banks of the water, there are plenty of opportunities to gaze at the stars.

Getting there: the Brecon Beacons in

Wales are less than four hours by car from London.

Discover other worlds in the Lake District, north-west England

Situated in the north-west of England within the beauty of the Lake District National Park, [Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre](#) is an official Dark Sky Discovery Site that runs special stargazing events through the year. If an evening of stargazing isn't enough, visitors can also stay over thanks to on-site accommodation. Transformed from 17th-century farm buildings, it's an ideal base for walking, climbing, canoeing and, of course, stargazing.



Lake in Buttermere Valley, Lake District National Park, England © VisitEngland, Cumbria Tourism, Brian Sherwen

Getting there: the Lake District is less than five hours' drive from London.



Isle of Coll, Inner Hebrides, Scotland © VisitScotland, Paul Tomkins

Learn about the cosmos on a Dark Sky Island, Scotland

One of only two international Dark Sky Islands, the [Isle of Coll](#) is located off the coast of Mull in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland and is a whopping 32km from the nearest lamp post. Its light pollution is almost non-existent, winning the island its Dark-Sky Community status in 2013. From the island's dark shores, stargazers can look up in glee at deeper sky objects not normally visible due to light pollution, including star clusters like the Beehive and Double Cluster, nebulae like the Great

Orion Nebula and the Andromeda Galaxy. The bright band of the Milky Way can also be easily spotted stretching across the night sky at certain times of the year, as well as the Northern Lights. If you're a novice stargazer, the island hosts '[Coll & The Cosmos](#)' events; using fun and interactive teaching techniques, and state-of-the-art technology, the weekend breaks are perfect for beginners who want to learn more.

Getting there: The Isle of Coll is less than two hours by car and ferry from Tiree, which is a three and a half-hour flight from London.

Enjoy countryside fun with the whole family

Britain's countryside is a huge and verdant playground with many attractions and activities that are ideal for the whole family. With everything from inflatable aqua parks, to storytelling, to monster hunts, there's something for children of all ages and interests to enjoy - while parents can either join in the fun or sit back and relax.

Inflatable aqua park, the New Forest, southern England

Open since 2015, [New Forest Water Park](#) is open through the summer. This floating aqua park is suitable for anyone aged six and over, and includes inflatable slides, monkey bars, flippers, see-saws, trampolines, and an overhanging climbing wall. Visitors to the park can also enjoy other activities such as cable wakeboarding, kayaking and stand up paddleboarding, all situated in 50 acres of lovely New Forest countryside.

Getting there: The New Forest is two hours south-west of London by car.

Visit a wildlife haven, Wales

The [Llanelli Wetland Centre](#) in south Wales is a haven for wildlife. With hundreds of birds to spot and feed across the 450 acre site, including ducks, swans, herons and kingfishers, there's plenty of nature to see and interact with. Other ways to keep the kids entertained and enjoy the great outdoors here include cycling, canoeing, bug hunting and pond dipping. There's even a flamingo-themed outdoor play area, inspired by the exotic Caribbean flamingos that call the centre their home.



The Llanelli Wetland Centre is a haven for wildlife

Getting there: The centre is in south Wales, one hour west of Cardiff by car.

Find swimming paradise and more, locations across England

With five locations in England, all nestled in beautiful and secluded woodland, [Center Parcs](#) is a brilliant provider of holidays and short-breaks for all the family. Each location is anchored by a subtropical swimming paradise - vast indoor and outdoor heated pools with slides, flumes, rapids and waves. There's a choice of on-site accommodation, from standard hotel rooms to exclusive private lodges with their own sauna, steamroom, hot tub and a games room. A massive range of around 200 indoor and outdoor activities will ensure no-one gets bored, from adrenaline-fuelled thrills to relaxing spa treatments, including special activities designed for toddlers and preschoolers.

Getting here: There are five Centre Parcs locations across England: Whinfell Forest in Cumbria, Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire, Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire, and Elveden Forest in Suffolk.

Storytelling in Eden, Cornwall, south-west England

The massive, bubble-like Biomes of the [Eden Project](#) in Cornwall, south-west England, house the world's largest indoor rainforest. They're also the backdrop to exhibitions, summer concerts and year-round family events - and have welcomed everything from life-size moving dinosaurs to ice skating rinks. Throughout the summer, the Mediterranean

Biome is home to twice daily storytelling sessions. Seated amid the flora and fauna, enthusiastic storytellers delight all ages with tales ranging from local Cornish folk stories to fables about the exotic rainforest brought all the way from the Amazon jungle.

Getting there: The Eden Project is in Cornwall, four hours 30 minutes south-west of London by car.



Play in the waves at Surf Snowdonia © VisitBritain/ Ben Selway

Rural surfing, Wales

The picturesque north Wales region is home to [Surf Snowdonia](#) - a revolutionary inland surf lagoon. The first of its kind in the world, specially engineered machinery generates a perfect surfing wave every 90 seconds. This lozenge-shaped man-made lagoon is also home to a wet and wild assault course called the Crash & Splash Lagoon, with obstacles including giant spinning balls, monkey bars, and a huge catapult known as 'the blob', plus kayaking and stand-up paddle-

boarding sessions. There's also a kiddies' soft play area for little ones. It's even possible to stay here, in purpose-built timber camping pods set by the water's edge.

Getting there: Surf Snowdonia is in Snowdonia National Park in north Wales, four hours north of Cardiff by car. It's also close to English cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, both around one hour 45 minutes away by car.

Theme park fun in the New Forest, southern England

[Paultons Park](#) is set within 140 acres of beautiful parkland on the edge of the New Forest National Park in south-west England. With over 60 rides and attractions for all ages, this family favourite is home to Peppa Pig World - seven fun rides inspired by the popular preschool television series.

Getting there: Paultons is in southern England, two hours south-west of London by car.



Paultons Park's Peppa Pig World is great for families

Discover a magical corner of Britain, Yorkshire, northern England

A four-acre garden in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, [The Forbidden Corner](#) is a unique labyrinth of tunnels, follies and hidden chambers all waiting to be explored. Originally built as a private folly, it's now open to the public and is billed as 'the strangest place in the world'. Instead of a door, its entrance is a gaping wide mouth set into a castle-like tower. Once inside this garden, wonders include a huge pyramid made of translucent glass, a

curious temple of the underworld, extraordinary statues, and paths that seem to lead nowhere - so there's plenty to delight and feed the imagination.

Getting here: The garden is a drive of around one hour 20 minutes from Leeds.

Country park biking, Essex, south-east England

A mixture of woodland, pasture, hay meadow and marsh, [Hadleigh Park](#) in Essex, south-east England was home to the London 2012 Olympic mountain biking competition. Designed to challenge the world's best athletes, the Olympic mountain bike course has since been adapted, and in 2015 it reopened for everyone to try. Split into blue, red and black trails (blue being easiest and black being the most difficult), the network of paths and bike trails are now suitable for riders and walkers of all abilities. The park also boasts a bike hire shop and a café as well as more than 500 acres of natural beauty.

Getting here: The park is in south-east England, one hour 15 minutes east of London by train.



Go monster-hunting on Loch Ness © AndrewPickettPhoto.com

Go monster-hunting, Scotland

Scotland boasts many castles and landmarks that'll inspire kids with vivid imaginations, but one thing sure to thrill every child is an epic boat trip to spot the Loch Ness Monster. Nicknamed 'Nessie', the famous three-humped creature is said to lurk beneath the surface of Loch Ness. Take a boat from Fort Augustus with [Cruise Loch Ness](#) - it offers scenic cruises as well as thrilling high-speed trips, including the 30-minute 'monster blast' or the hour-long 'finding Nessie'. Enthusiastic guides

help bring to life the fascinating story behind Scotland's biggest legend to life.

Getting here: Fort Augustus is in the Scottish Highlands, three hours 20 minutes north of Edinburgh or Glasgow by car.

Discover Narnia, Northern Ireland

The Mourne Mountains of Northern Ireland are said to have inspired the magical world of Narnia - writer CS Lewis was born in Belfast, and spent his formative years in the region. Located within Kilbroney Forest Park, [The Narnia Trail](#) brings the story of Narnia to life. This enchanting forest path begins by stepping through a timber arch resembling a wardrobe door - just as the four Pevensie children entered Narnia via a magical



Find Narnia in the Mourne Mountains © VisitBritain/ Britain on View

wardrobe. There are references to the world of Narnia throughout the walk, including mentions of wild tree people, citadels, and Mr and Mrs Beaver's house.

Getting here: The forest park is in Northern Ireland, one hour south of Belfast by car.