

10 OF THE BEST UK B&Bs

The bed and breakfast has evolved. Top-end design, the finest linen and food to rival restaurants have replaced the chintz of old. Try these for a standout staycation

THE READING ROOMS MARGATE

There are boutique B&Bs and then there's The Reading Rooms, a rustic-luxe dream that sits on a tree-lined Georgian square in the centre of on-the-up Margate. The property was originally a guesthouse for Londoners who frequented Kent's coastal playground in its Victorian heyday. Inspired by its illustrious past, owners Louise Oldfield and Liam Nabb took two years to restore the property to its former glory. The three bedrooms cover an entire floor each, meaning privacy is guaranteed, while

the stripped-back design is quietly stylish: think soft antique colour palette, three lofty windows that flood rooms with light, plus distressed walls and parquet flooring. Breakfast is served direct to your door – just name the time, you can never be too early nor too late here. Louise will deliver a tray elegantly laden with fresh juices, perfectly cooked eggs and all manner of fruit and pastries. Plan your visit early, this place gets booked up well in advance. Doubles from £170. thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk



THE SALUTATION INN TOPSHAM

If you pause outside The Salutation Inn it will look as if very little has changed since it opened in 1720. The scarred wooden door stands in the shadow of the original carriage porch and the name of sailor John Collins is still scratched into the window of the top-floor suite, as visible as the day he penned it in 1774. Inside, it has been transformed into a classy retreat with a restaurant worth travelling for. The six bedrooms are the definition of understated elegance. Light bounces between the windows and white walls, coming to rest on king-size beds, crisp with snowy cotton. Breakfast is served in the leafy conservatory and includes a selection of local fish, such as whole smoked kippers. If you're adding a dinner to your B&B experience, it's definitely worth leaving room for pudding. Everything pastry chef Sylvain Peltier touches turns to magic. Heavy pub classics are replaced by delicate pastry puffs filled with cream and crowned in sugar-work learned from French master Stéphane Klein himself. Doubles from £135. salutationtopsham.co.uk

HANNAH'S WINCHESTER

The eponymous Hannah created this B&B in her own image and her personal touch is at play throughout. She took over the high-ceilinged building, once a livery, gutting out the interiors to create three unique rooms with design touches such as sliding reclaimed doors, fresh flowers and power showers made of copper pipes. Climb carved wooden steps to reach each room's mezzanine level, with a skylight and roll-top bath big enough for two. There's much to explore in Winchester's winding streets, but you'll want to spend time in your room, especially with Netflix and Spotify accounts logged into the Smart TV. Pop down to the Library for baked goods (try the rhubarb cake and Earl Grey loaf) and a nightcap from the honesty bar before bed. Sash windows draw in light from the terrace, shelves are filled with books and an old piano sits on a raised platform for the musically inclined. Round off your stay with a breakfast of homemade granola, eggs and weekly specials such as spinach waffles. Doubles from £155. hannahsbedandbreakfast.co.uk



Clockwise, from left: Room Three at The Reading Rooms; breakfast; the front hall



BLAISDON HOUSE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

When this house was originally built in the 13th century, the Forest of Dean was a royal stomping ground, steeped in legend and roamed by outlaws. This five-star B&B uses its surrounds to create the crème de la crème of local accommodation. Owners Chris and Sue are blessed with a combination of easy charm and impeccable taste. Antiques such as the grandfather clock in the hall and gilded portraits are balanced by Farrow & Ball paints in contemporary hues. All three bedrooms feel light and airy. For views over the Severn Estuary try the Superior Room, or fantasise that you are living in Victorian times in the Four Poster Room. The mahogany bed is hand carved and hung with silk drapes that block out the light from the generous window, while extras such as vintage binoculars keep the fantasy alive. Prepare to be awed by the simply enormous yolks of the freshly laid eggs from the house's hens at breakfast, while afternoon tea in the walled garden is a genteel affair of crumbly scones, quality cream and fresh jam. Doubles from £90. blaisdonhouse.com

CUIL-AN-DUIN PERTHSHIRE

Stay in one of Cuil-an-Duin's three chic bedrooms and you'll be rewarded with a 24-hour live nature programme direct from your window. Red squirrels searching for nuts dart up silver birch trees, deer graze in the open and a tawny owl scans the horizon for her next meal. This Edwardian country pile in central Scotland is home to David Royce and Sally Keay, who left their busy London lives to open a boutique B&B with a real country edge. The welcoming couple will greet you with tea and scones in the drawing room, complete with cosy armchairs and a Bechstein piano. All rooms feature Hypnos mattresses and muted colours such as duck-egg blue and pale green. Room Two is the pick with its king-size oak sleigh bed. Later, when you explore the 8ha of private gardens and woodland, you'll spot buzzards, woodpeckers and horses. The grounds also offer two self-catering cottages if you want something more private, but you'll miss out on breakfast in the main house: bacon, sausages, Stornoway black pudding and tomatoes. Doubles from £130. cuil-an-duin.com

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GOTHIC HOUSE NORWICH

You'll have two hosts when you lay your head at Gothic House: proprietor Clive Harvey and his friendly black cat, Khmer. Both are brilliant characters who help to give the Grade-II townhouse a homely feel. Watch Khmer as he slinks around the breakfast table or listen to Harvey's stories of the building's past. Legend goes that when it was first built in the 1800s, it was frequented by the mistress of a wealthy local merchant. More recently Harvey saved the building from disrepair, restoring and filling it with framed prints, silver coffee pots and Portmeirion china. These all lend a distinct period feel to the house and its two floral-wallpapered guest rooms. Freshly squeezed orange juice at breakfast goes down a treat with smoked haddock Florentine. Doubles from £95. gothic-house-norwich.com

'Breakfast is best in the summer when you can sit out on the terrace or in the conservatory with the doors wide open. Start with granola and fruits before ordering from the menu'



HEADLAND HOUSE ST IVES

You stay at Headland House for the location. At the top of a hill overlooking Carbis Bay with a long sandy beach on its doorstep, the B&B is a 30-minute stroll from St Ives. The welcoming experience from owners Mark and Fenella Thomas, combined with crisp interiors, will keep you coming back for more. Most rooms feature nautical vibes (shades of navy blue, white and cream) with huge picture-frame windows. The decor is similarly boaty with porthole mirrors, hurricane lanterns and bright seascapes. Our favourite room is The Net Loft for its claw-foot tub placed under a skylight for stargazing. Expect homemade cakes each afternoon and a complimentary glass of sherry before bed. Breakfast is best in the summer when you can sit out on the terrace or in the conservatory with the doors wide open. Start with granola and fruits from the breakfast table before ordering something from the menu. The yoghurt and homemade lavender syrup is divine, as are the sweet waffles with summer berries. Doubles from £95. headlandhousehotel.co.uk



No33 THORNHAM

There are few things more enjoyable than returning home windswept after a bracing yomp along Norfolk's expansive coastline. Close to trendy Burnham Market with its great pubs and design-led shops, the location of No33 makes planning a long weekend a breeze. You'll find its two double suites above the traditional-style Thornham Deli – a worthy stopping point in its own right – while across the road, two stylish cottages (sleeping two or six) are what really stand out. You're just a short trundle from glorious beaches and a quietly coastal theme pervades the interiors. Don't expect crashing ripples of Breton stripes; do expect whitewashed wood, grey and dusky blues offset by stylish prints and copper finishing. A breakfast and well-stocked fridge come courtesy of the deli, which serves top-notch seasonal produce that's proven a hit with locals and guests alike. Order Simon Letzer's grilled kippers served with parsley butter and bread from the village baker, it's guaranteed to set you up for a day exploring the area. Doubles from £130. 33hunstanton.co.uk

Photos by Finn Beales and Chris Terry



This page:
Room One at
Westbrook Court.
Below, from left:
the B&B's Wye Valley
surrounds; Room Two;
touches of quirky decor;
and airy terraces

WESTBROOK COURT NR HAY-ON-WYE

Hay-on-Wye may be short on telephone signal, but it isn't lacking in world-class attractions. The gateway to the bucolic Brecon Beacons, it also hosts the Hay Festival (25 May–4 June), which draws literary types from across the globe. Ten minutes away, Westbrook Court offers cosmopolitan luxury that wouldn't look out of place in London's most exclusive postcodes. Indeed, one of the five suites has a contemporary four poster and chairs bought from The Dorchester hotel. Think Conran pendant lamps, upcycled furniture and extras such as champagne and artisan cheese boards delivered to your door. Timber beams and balconies overlooking the Wye Valley firmly ground you in the Welsh borders, as do hearty breakfasts served in owners Kari and Chris Morgan's 17th-century farmhouse. Doubles from £95. westbrookcourtbandb.co.uk



NUMBER THIRTY EIGHT CLIFTON

Think of Clifton as Bristol's well-dressed little brother. A villagey vibe flows through its quaint streets, full of tempting restaurants, pretty flower shops and beautiful Georgian architecture. The Suspension Bridge is one of its biggest draws but the ten on-trend bedrooms at Number Thirty Eight follow in close pursuit – fortunately they're on the bridge's doorstep. Rooms sprawl across four floors of an old merchant's townhouse, which will fast become the *piéd-à-terre* you wish you had. The classy interiors are a gutsy mix of dark greens, duck-egg blue and colour splash

accents in the plush textiles. Our pick of the rooms is the West Loft Suite – a dark, brooding den clad in velvet, which has city and park vistas. Easy reception rooms and a sheltered rooftop terrace are made for lounging, so spread out with the papers one afternoon before moving languidly into cocktail hour. The next day, West Country breakfasts hit the mark. Choose from a full English with poached eggs and a range of fresh fruits, yoghurts and granola. Book a room at the front of the property for views of Clifton Down. Doubles from £115. number38clifton.com

