

10 BEST UK weekend breaks - from £49

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20 places to get away THIS WEEKEND

It's a great time to book a last-minute UK break: We've picked 20 of the best: in the city, in the country, by the sea or at a spa, from £49



w&h
FAVOURITE



You want a weekend break...
IN THE COUNTRY

Wilderness Reserve, Suffolk

WHY? The historic East Anglian countryside has everything from stately homes (such as the 15th-century manor house Otley Hall) to steam railways, nature reserves and gardens (such as Ickworth). The lovely town of Aldeburgh hosts an annual Festival of the Music and the Arts in June, and Southwold is a charming coastal town (dubbed London-on-Sea), with fishermen's cottages, Georgian houses, a lighthouse you can visit and a pier dating from 1900. It was restored in 2001 and is now lined with cafés and

small boutiques. Art lovers should head to Flatford Mill, once owned by the painter Constable's father – walk around Dedham Vale to see some of the iconic places Constable painted. **STAY** At Wilderness Reserve, a collection of fully serviced luxury cottages and manors (available for weekends or longer stays) on the 4,500-acre Sibton Park Estate, including the largest house, Sibton Park (above), which sleeps 24 in 12 bedrooms. w&h stayed at The Farmhouse (above right), which has six

bedrooms and sleeps 12 so is perfect for six couples, and is elegantly decorated in raspberry pinks, turquoise greens and primrose yellows. Its oak frames date from the 17th century and it boasts a vast family-style country kitchen and a cosy sitting room. In the grounds there's a tennis court, pool and hot tub. At the heart of the reserve is conservation, with over 100 different bird

species to spot. Should you be able to tear yourself away, book into The Anchor Inn at nearby Walberswick for fresh crab, squid or oysters. **COST** A stay at The Farmhouse costs from £1,050 per night (£87.50 each) with a two-night minimum stay at weekends; wildernessreserve.com

UK travel special

Dartmoor, Devon

WHY? It's the largest and wildest area of open country in Southern England, covering 368 square miles. For the adventurous there's horse riding, climbing and kayaking, as well as gentle hikes and bike routes. Drake's Trail (named for the area's famous former resident, Sir Francis Drake) is a 21-mile cycling and walking route linking Tavistock with Plymouth,

which runs through superb countryside along the western edge of Dartmoor. **STAY** Set in nine acres of tranquil gardens on the western edge of Dartmoor National Park, the Moorland Garden Hotel makes a perfect base for exploring South West Devon, Dartmoor and the Tamar Valley. **COST** Rooms from £69 for two sharing on a B&B basis; moorlandgardenhotel.co.uk



2 Scottish Borders

WHY? Think sweeping emerald forests and heather-clad moorlands and be seduced by spectacular scenery. Perfect for outdoor activities, it's peppered with old castles, plus there's the beautiful Berwickshire coastline and plenty of country parks. **STAY** Be queen of your own castle at Cranshaws, which

sleeps eight. Dating back to 1350, it's an exceptional private castle set amid the breathtaking beauty of the Lammermuir Hills in the north Berwickshire countryside. **COST** From £1,000 per night (£125 each, minimum two-night stay); cranshawscastle.co.uk, 01738 472110.



4 North Yorkshire

WHY? Channel Heathcliff and Cathy in the setting for *Wuthering Heights* by spending time near the North Yorkshire Moors. One of the UK's 15 national parks, you can experience woodland, forest, rivers, coastline and open skies depending on which part you visit. **STAY** At The Black Swan hotel, which is just on the boundary

of the Moors in the market town of Helmsley. It offers home-from-home country comfort, roaring fires, exceptional cuisine and the lure of a traditional Yorkshire tea room. It also has an award-winning restaurant. **COST** A one-night stay for two, including a six-course tasting menu, costs from £235; blackswan-helmsley.co.uk

The Cotswolds

WHY? Possibly one of the most picturesque parts of England, this rural area is distinguished by its rolling hills, thatched medieval villages and stately homes built from local yellow Cotswold limestone. Standout towns include Bourton-on-the-Water (often referred to as the "Venice of the Cotswolds" because of the River Windrush, which cuts through its centre), Burford – great for antiques shopping, or elegant Moreton-in-Marsh. **STAY** Base yourself in the market town of Cirencester at The Kings Head, a historic property that blends original

medieval architecture with contemporary style to create a light, airy and welcoming hotel. From here you can explore the many quaint towns in the area or just stroll through the countryside. **COST** A two-night Cotswold Escape, including breakfast and one dinner, costs from £149.50pp; kingshead-hotel.co.uk, 01285 700900. >>



You want a weekend break...
BY THE SEA



FROM
£49



Thornham, North Norfolk

WHY? Was there ever anywhere as pretty as the charming little coastal village of Thornham? Early spring is a perfect time to visit – it has fewer than 400 residents yet in the summer the population swells because people flock to its beautiful sandy beach. The picturesque All Saints Church, which originally dates from Norman times, is central to the village, which also boasts two top-notch restaurants, including the Lifeboat Inn, serving up freshly caught fish and seafood, and The Orange Tree, which has

been awarded Norfolk Dining Pub of the Year several years running. The bigger seaside town of Cromer is only an hour's drive away, where you can taste the famous, locally caught Cromer crab. Good for shopping is Burnham Market, and the best sand dunes are at Winterton-on-Sea.

STAY The Coast House by the village green in Thornham is the perfect place to bring the family or stay with a party of friends. It has four bedrooms (sleeping up to nine), three bathrooms and a stylish, airy interior. On warm, sunny days you

can fold back the glass doors in the dining area and let the light in. If you plan to cook at home, the modern kitchen has everything you need to prepare a fantastic dinner which can be served on the outdoor decked area. It's managed by The Blakeney Cottage Company,

which operates several exclusive properties in the area, including the charmingly named The Goose's Getaway in the coastal town of Wells-next-the-Sea. **COST** A three-night break at The Coast House costs from £645 (£24pp per night); blakeneycottagecompany.co.uk

Whitsand Bay, Cornwall

WHY? The Rame Peninsula remains one of Cornwall's most unspoilt pockets, and Whitsand Bay Beach offers three miles of stunning sands, characterised by sheer, high cliffs and dramatic scenery. At low tide, the long stretch of sand provides great walking or jogging and the constant swell attracts surfers.

STAY The Tempest is a stylish holiday property sleeping four, right on Tregonhawke Cliff, from Unique Home Stays. With two sea-view bedrooms and a beautiful deck to dine out on, it's a piece of beachfront heaven. **COST** From £1,230 for a three-night stay (£307.50 each); uniquehomestays.com



Rye, East Sussex

WHY? This picturesque fortified hilltop town is one of the Sussex coast's true gems. Lined with cobbled streets and secret passages, Rye brings a lot of history from its days of smugglers and highwaymen.

STAY The Gallivant is a small yet stylish restaurant with 20

rooms, by the rolling dunes of Camber Sands, with fantastic food from prestigious chefs.

COST A two-night Beachcomber Escape costs from £270, based on two sharing, and includes a three-course dinner, breakfast and afternoon tea; thegallivant.co.uk

Aberystwyth, Cardigan Bay

WHY? This elegant, cultural town is the gateway to Cardigan Bay. There's a pier and promenade, cafés, bars and restaurants, plus the ruins of the 13th-century Aberystwyth Castle. Make sure you take the Cliff Railway to the summit of Constitution Hill.

STAY In the Cliff Railway Apartment above the Cliff Railway's ticket office. Sleeping four, it makes a perfect base for the area. **COST** Short breaks start from £365 for three nights (£91.25 each); wales-cottages.info



Alnmouth, Northumberland

WHY? Alnmouth Bay features six miles of pristine white sands. The village of Alnmouth is nestled along the north bank of the River Aln estuary, which has dozens of pubs, restaurants, galleries and independent shops. There are also some lovely heritage trails, riding stables and Alnmouth Golf Club at Foxton Hall.

STAY At Grey Barns, a lovely coastal hideaway that's ideal for large groups. Sleeping up to 19 in nine bedrooms, it has a log fire in the sitting room, an Aga in the kitchen and a spacious garden. **COST** From £1,050 for seven nights (£55 each or less than £10 a night), with short breaks available in low season; crabtreeandcrabtree.com >>