

OUR HOLIDAYS: *Farm stays*

Coldharbour Cottage Stone-in-Oxney, Kent coldharbourcottage.co.uk

Built way back in the 1760s and recently restored to its former glory by local craftsmen, Coldharbour Cottage sits at the heart of a Kentish farm populated by sheep, pigs and chickens.

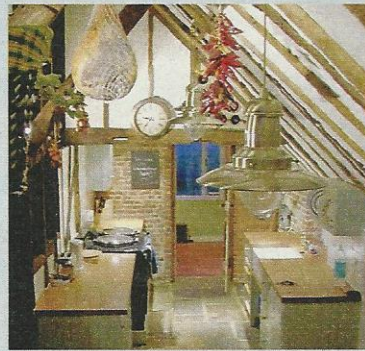
Full of history and interest, the house features a huge inglenook fireplace, ancient oak timbers and a grand AGA oven, plus a lovely Garden Room with inspiring views across Romney Marsh towards the English Channel — just the sort of place to linger over a good book or cosy up with the family.

But what makes Coldharbour Cottage really stand out is the fact that your visit can be combined with a host of fascinating

learning experiences.

Led by Andrew, the cottage's enterprising owner, you can visit a local windmill and discover how wheat is milled, cook up a meal with rabbit and pheasant freshly caught by the local gamekeeper, or learn the art of bushcraft in the great outdoors.

On this last one Andrew is an expert. He was personally taught by TV presenter Ray Mears!



Learn to cook freshly-caught game



You can stay in one of Chark Farm's comfortable self-catering cottages

Chark Farm Bodmin, Cornwall charkfarm.co.uk

Local legend may have it that Bodmin is home to a beast which roams the moor at night, but down on Chark Farm the only wildlife you'll find is of the soft and furry kind.

Set in an idyllic location just a



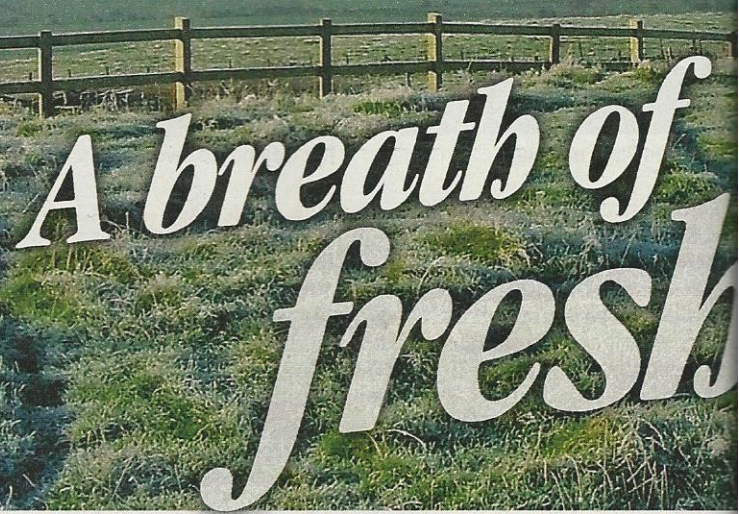
Fluffy the pig is the star attraction

few miles from Bodmin town, star attractions here are Bert and Ernie the goats, Billy the miniature horse and Fluffy the pig. Over in the pets' paddock, youngsters can join in the morning routine of feeding the hens, collecting eggs and tending to the ducks and geese while Mum and Dad relax over the papers in one of the comfortable self-catering cottages.

There's a lovely play area too, with ride-on tractors and a massive trampoline, plus a trail through ancient woods where you'll discover badger setts.

And if that isn't enough nature for you, the Eden Project with its vast domes full of exotic plants is just a short drive away, along with the magnificent Lost Gardens of Heligan.

No hosing off the mud at a chilly outside tap here — today the buzzword is luxury, with farm stays offering everything from hot tubs to roll-top baths!



Llwyndyrus Farm Spa Holidays

Pwllheli, Gwynedd
farmspaholidays.co.uk

This might be a 200-acre sheep and cattle farm, but stays at Llwyndyrus Farm are about as relaxing and luxurious as they get. How many other working farms let you watch the sunset from a hot tub or enjoy a full body hot stone massage at their very own spa?

On a mission to provide 21st-century standards while being eco-friendly, owner Kathryn Ellis's charmingly-furnished cottages have been

fashioned from 18th-century converted barns and cowsheds and offer rustic features like original stone walls and oak beams. There's even a beautifully-converted pigsty with wondrous views over rolling farmland to the Snowdonia mountains beyond.

And while adults are well catered for, the farm is also great for kids, with miniature tractors and trailers, plus local attractions such as Glasfryn Parc, with its archery and go-karting.

And no trip to this part of North Wales would be complete without a visit to the wonderful Italianate fantasy village of Portmeirion.



Unwind in a hot tub



The 200-acre Llwyndyrus Farm is as relaxing and luxurious as it gets



Gullingham Cottage dates from the 18th century

air



Hearty farmhouse breakfasts are served on the terrace

Dairy Barns Hickling, Norfolk dairybarns.co.uk

Nestling between the Norfolk Broads and the unspoilt Norfolk coast, the picturesque village of Hickling is home to a B&B of distinction.

Part of a 360-acre family-run estate, Dairy Barns is a stylish and friendly accommodation offering a real escape from the city with its elegant cottages and cosy rooms, hearty farmhouse breakfasts and a taste of life on a real working arable farm.

Meander down farm tracks and through lush meadows and you can watch farmer Ian at work, sowing peas and harvesting potatoes. If your kids thought vegetables were grown in supermarkets they'll

find it quite a revelation. And there's a plethora of wildlife to be spotted too, with red deer, barn owls and pink-footed geese all regular visitors.

What's more, Dairy Barns makes a wonderful base from which to explore the area. With water, water everywhere, you can go seal spotting at Blakeney Point, take the kids crabbing on Cromer Pier and enjoy boat rides through the richly scenic Broads.



Dairy Barns is stylish and friendly



Humble Bee Farm has a wonderful collection of wooden wigwams



Soak up the beautiful surroundings

Humble Bee Farm Scarborough, North Yorkshire humblebeefarm.co.uk

Looking for something a little bit different? At Humble Bee Farm in the picturesque Yorkshire Wolds you can stay in your very own wooden wigwam.

A cross between a traditional wigwam and a contemporary camping pod, the eight spacious wigwams are fully heated and come with all mod cons including a microwave, fridge and gas barbecue. Go for the glamping package and they'll throw in a bottle of sparkling wine and chocolates too.

Spend your days relaxing while the kids get to know the menagerie of hens, goats, ducks and sheep, or check out Humble Bee's exciting calendar of events, with everything from stargazing to owl and bat watching.

Further afield you can explore the glorious Yorkshire coast with its family-friendly resorts like Scarborough and Filey. Or chug through the heart of the moors on the delightful North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

The Dandelion Hideaway

Osbaston, Leicestershire
thedandelionhideaway.co.uk

Fancy a farm stay with a touch of romance? Then glamp it up in a five-star 'canvas cottage' at the award-winning Dandelion Hideaway.

Oozing vintage chic, cottages feature a butler's sink, a wood-burning stove and deliciously snug duvets. And each one even has an en-suite bathroom with a roll-top bath! The only thing you won't find is electricity, so you'll have to make do with gently-flickering tea lights, church candles and pretty lanterns.

With each cottage peacefully tucked beside woodland and hedgerows, you'll wake to the gentle twitter of birdsong while looking out over a patchwork of fields. But don't think this is only a place for couples. Children can watch goats being milked, help round up chickens and make friends with Shetland ponies. Could anything be more perfect?

David Jacobson



Children can help feed the goats



The Dandelion Hideaway's cottages are located close to the woodland

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