

British Isles

Bed, board and roars: five great zoo stays

Fancy kipping next to lions and eating with apes? **Ellie Ross** knows where to go

Gir Lion Lodge, London Zoo

Hear the lions roar as you bed down in one of the nine new wooden cabins at ZSL London Zoo. Start with an after-hours tour of the zoo at sunset, as well as a torchlit walk when night falls. After a night in the brightly painted en suite lodges for two adults and two children, there's time for a morning tour before the crowds arrive. It's not cheap, though, with one night costing from £378 a couple and £50 a child — more expensive than many hotels in the capital. However, it includes two days'

zoo entry, a drink on arrival, a two-course dinner and breakfast (0344 2251826, zsl.org/girlionlodge).

Treehouses at Port Lympne Reserve, Kent

Watch African animals roam the Kent countryside from the luxury of your own treehouse. Port Lympne is one of the UK's largest animal parks and home to 700 animals, from meerkats to Amur tigers. There's a choice of accommodation, from eco-pods and safari tents to boutique rooms within the original Edwardian manor house. The park's latest additions — ten smart treehouses — come with kitchens, balconies and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the plains. They also come with a golf buggy, in which you can explore the park outside official opening hours. Eco-pods sleeping four cost from £99 a pod a night and self-catering treehouses sleeping four cost from £300 a night, including access to Port Lympne



Reserve and nearby Howletts Reserve, safari trips and animal talks (01303 234112, aspinallfoundation.org).

The Lodge, Bristol Zoo

How about eating your breakfast with gorillas before the zoo opens? At Bristol Zoo you can do just that when you stay in the lodge that was once the zookeeper's quarters. You will be within earshot of the Asiatic lions and raucous gibbons, and there's a private tour of the zoo with a curator when everyone else has gone home. A four-course dinner, prepared by your own chef, is included. The two-bedroom lodge, which sleeps up to four adults and two children, costs from

The Gir Lion Lodges at London Zoo, and below, one of the lions



£750 a night, including the after-hours private tour, animal feeding, four-course meal with wine, breakfast with the gorillas and two-day entrance to Bristol Zoo and Wild Place Project (01179 747328, bristolzoo.org.uk).

Durrell Wildlife Park, Jersey

If you're a fan of ITV's *The Durrells*, you can visit the wildlife park in Jersey set up by the author Gerald Durrell. See about 120 species of exotic animals, many of which are critically threatened, including a family of western lowland gorillas. As well as a hostel, the park has a family-friendly camp where you can sleep in comfy pods. Each one sleeps two adults and two children on proper beds and has a separate bathroom pod and a kitchen. A three-night stay costs from £480 for four (01534 860097, durrell.org).

Paradise Wildlife Park, Hertfordshire

Book into the stripy-themed Zebra Suite here and you will enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the park that ends in a meet-and-greet session with some of the smaller animals, including the bearded dragon. It's worth upgrading to a VIP package so that you can eat breakfast the next day in a treetop café above the tiger enclosure. Snooze at the Zoo costs from £199 for a family of four (£299 for a VIP package), including breakfast, two days' entrance to the Wildlife Park and free crazy golf (01992 470490, pwpark.com).

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