

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK, ILLUSTRATION: LYNDON HAYES



Gothic stunner: the Notre-Dame cathedral of Reims

# A case of grape expectations

Have a corking time on this weekend trip to the heart of Champagne country

Do you dream of spending a couple of blissful days pootling about the French countryside? Well, you're in luck – you're just a 35-minute train ride away on Eurotunnel Le Shuttle. And with this mini break, you won't even need to take time off – though you'll certainly consider it once you're there. Just a two-and-a-half hour scoot from Calais, Reims is the capital of the Champagne region, which means you have a weekend of vineyard-hopping ahead of you, and cases of bubbles to fill your boot with. Naturally, you'll be in a hurry to get there, but try not to rush the journey. This part of France is one many tourists miss and it's worth venturing off the autoroute to wind your way through quaint villages on quiet roads. On the way there, pop into the former mining town of Lens for a wander round its offshoot of the Louvre gallery (louvre-lens.fr). Until August it's hosting a retrospective of the painter Charles Le Brun. On your return to Calais, make time for Compiègne to see the Armistice Clearing, a museum in a replica railway car which sits on the spot where, on November 11, 1918 the armistice was signed, ending the First World War.

## In Reims

**See** Take a tour of the fizz country with an expert and a sober driver. You'll visit the vineyards of the Côtes des Blancs and Grand Cru villages, sample their wares and even visit Dom Perignon's tomb in Hautvillers (france-bubbles-tours.com). Back in Reims, don't miss the spectacular monument to Gothic art that is Notre-Dame cathedral – this trip isn't all about the booze, you know.

**Eat** Go classic with snails and crème brûlée at the Brasserie le Boulgrin (boulgrin.fr; three courses £20) – the red booths and net curtains are exactly what you ordered, too. Or eat at the fish market. That might not



sound that appealing, but the cosy Le Bocal (restaurantlelocal.fr; mains about £12) serves sea-fresh sardines, clams and oysters.

**Stay** Blow the budget with a night at Chateau les Crayeres (lescraayeres.com; doubles from £300) for Michelin-starred food and a choice of 600 champagnes. Or stay in the heart of Reims at the Grand Hotel du Nord (eurotunnel.com/uk/inspiration/ideas/Grand-Hotel-du-Nord) and save 25 per cent.

For more details, call 0870 850 9548 or visit eurotunnel.com



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### Britain

# Still available — cottages, castles and luxury lodges

It's not too late to book a holiday in Britain for this summer. Ellie Ross finds the best places for couples, families and groups

### Smugglers Cottage Babbacombe Bay, Devon

The quaint Smugglers Cottage sits on one of Torbay's quieter beaches. Part of The Cary Arms, a five-star inn, it is split over three floors with three bedrooms done out in coastal style. There's a splendid sun terrace with sea views, too. If you tire of cooking, fill up on Brixham scallops, Dunterton Devon steak and Otter Ale pie at the inn. **Details** It costs £650 a night for six people, or from £3,250 for a week's stay in July and August, with good availability (01803 327110, caryarms.co.uk)

### Oriel House Lymington, New Forest

You won't be short of things to do at Oriel House, a recently refurbished Georgian townhouse in the sailing town of Lymington. The smart, red-brick property is a short drive from the New Forest National Park with its cycling tracks and riding schools. Inside the house, three light and airy floors are decorated in muted colours and there's a comfy lounge and three bedrooms. **Details** A week's stay for six in July and August costs from £1,016 (01590 679655, newforestcottages.co.uk) and there is good availability this summer

### Deben View Sutton Hoo, Suffolk

Unearth the secrets of an Anglo-Saxon king at Sutton Hoo, staying at this spacious first-floor apartment within Tranmer House. It overlooks the River Deben and has beaches and good walks near by. There are two double bedrooms, a well-equipped kitchen and cosy sitting room with period wood-panelling. **Details** Three-night stays for four cost from £728, while seven nights cost from £1,071 (0344 8002070, nationaltrustrholidays.org.uk). There is good availability (two weeks in July and three in August)

### Neville Tower Bamburgh, Northumberland

Sitting within the walls of the 6th-century Bamburgh Castle, Neville

Tower is an ideal base from which to explore Northumberland's coast. Two good-sized double rooms are stylishly decorated with colourful throws and patterned curtains, and there's a decent kitchen offering castle views. Upstairs, a top-floor living area offers views to the north and south over Bamburgh beach, the Farne Islands and Holy Island. **Details** The tower costs from £1,250 a week for four (01573 226711, crabtreeandcrabtree.com). There is some availability (two weeks in July and two weeks in August)

### Berlewen, Mousehole Cornwall

On the harbour's edge in Mousehole, this fisherman's cottage has been converted into swish accommodation with contemporary decor and fur beanbag chairs. The two double rooms have window seats with views of the harbour, while the children's room has two single beds. There are good restaurants within walking distance and the recently restored Jubilee Pool, in Penzance, is three miles away. **Details** A week's stay for six people costs from £2,553 (01872 553491, boutique-retreats.co.uk). There is good availability in July (three weeks) and limited availability in August

### Winnow Barn, Ashbourne Derbyshire

You'll be greeted by the smell of freshly baked bread when you arrive at Winnow



TRACEY BLOHM



Below: Smugglers Cottage, Babbacombe Bay, Devon



Above: Neville Tower, Bamburgh; left: Cranshaws Castle in Berwickshire; far left, Clydey Cottages, Pembrokeshire

Barn; the family living in the farmhouse will have set your breadmaker to have a loaf ready on arrival. The lovely stone barn on a small working farm has four bedrooms, plenty of beams and an open-plan living area with soft ivory-coloured sofas. There's a good pub near by as well as the Peak District National Park. Chatsworth House, with its stately rooms, farmyard and farm shop, is a 45-minute drive away. **Details** A week for eight people costs from £1,100 in July and from £1,200 in August (01335 310271, sawdays.co.uk). Both months have good summer availability (two weeks in July and three in August)

### Sound of Harris Isle of Harris

With views stretching over rugged cliffs and the Atlantic Ocean, Sound of Harris on the southern tip of this island in the Outer Hebrides is ideal for couples; it's not suitable for children or pets. Choose

from a pair of one-bedroom units, The Big House and The Other House, which come with vast windows, an ornate bathtub and plenty of Harris tweed. Explore white-sand beaches before settling down in the snug interiors. **Details** A three-night stay for two people costs from £492 (soundofharris.co.uk) and there is good availability (two weeks each in July and August).

### Clydey Cottages Pembrokeshire

Wooden beams, exposed stone walls and a wood-burning stove give Heather cottage character in spades. The two-bedroom bolt hole sleeps four and is part of the complex of ten Clydey Cottages, surrounded by 20 acres of lawns, fields and woodland. Facilities include an indoor pool and spa, and complimentary children's crèche. Children will enjoy Folly

**Activity holidays** PGL (pgl.co.uk) has family holidays available in Devon and Lincolnshire, with a week's holiday for a family of four (with children up to the age of 18) from £1,596, including full-board and activities from abseiling to archery. Or try coasteering and surfing with Preseli Venture in Pembrokeshire (preseliventure.co.uk), which has five-day breaks in July and August from £479 per adult and £375 per child, including activities and full-board in an eco lodge. Cycle in the New Forest on a seven-night trip with three days of cycling (12-24 miles a day) and two days of optional cycling, mostly on flat off-road trails. The price is from £895pp for adults and £575 for children, and includes bike hire and B&B in hotels and inns (the-carter-company.com).

**Island hotels** Get away from it all on an island

hotel. Go island-hopping in the Channel Islands from Guernsey to Herm and Sark on a seven-night trip that costs from £665pp B&B by sea from Poole or £715pp by air from July 1-August 31 (channel-islandsdirect.co.uk). The Star Castle Hotel (star-castle.co.uk) on the Isles of Scilly has a four-night stay from July 27 from £1,040 for two people, half-board. In Northern Ireland, stay at the Slieve Donard Resort & Spa and try everything from mountain hiking to raft building and zip-wiring, with overnight stays from £145pp B&B in July (hastings-hotels.com). Or the Trearddur Bay Hotel, just 100m from the beach on the Isle of Anglesey, has a six-night stay in July and August from £495pp, half-board (trearddur-bay-hotel.co.uk).

**Glamping** There are still plenty of glamping opportunities, including the safari tents and eco lodges at Tapnell

wood-burning fire. There are three bedrooms, including one twin room, and an open-plan kitchen and dining room. Guests have free access to Fountains Abbey with its elegant water garden and medieval deer park, which is less than a mile away. **Details** A three-night stay this summer for six people costs from £638, or a week costs from £939 (0344 8002070, nationaltrustrholidays.org.uk). There is good availability in July (three weeks) and limited availability in August (ten days)

### Gull Cottage St Agnes, Cornwall

Larger parties should head to this beautifully converted old fish store that sits on the edge of a cliff, high above St Agnes beach. The stone cottage is decorated in a bohemian beach style, with bright, funky chairs and surfboards hanging from ceilings. Surfers will love being this close to the beach and can borrow boards from the outdoor storeroom, while walkers can explore miles of coastal paths right from the doorstep. A quirky old-railway-sleeper staircase leads down to the living room. There are four bedrooms, including a children's room that sleeps four. **Details** A week's stay for ten in July and August costs from £4,375 with Avenue (020 7043 2188, avenueproperty.com). There is good availability

### The Swallows Lower Mill Estate, Cotswolds

The 550-acre Lower Mill Estate in the Cotswolds has a selection of luxury houses and lodges available in July, including the four-bedroom Swallows, overlooking one of the lakes, and an easy walk to the nearest pub. It has two balconies, three bathrooms, a TV room/ snug and Xbox 360. Kayak or paddleboard on the lakes, swim in the indoor or outdoor heated pools or go rambling or cycling. **Details** The Swallows costs from £900 for eight people staying three nights (01285 869489, habitatescapes.com). It has good availability in July

## Boating to glamping: more UK summer adventures

Farm on the Isle of Wight, where a group of seven can stay from £90pp for four nights, including return car-ferry crossings in July and August (redfunnel.co.uk). Or campsites.co.uk has many ideas, including a fairytale treehouse in Blackberry Wood, East Sussex, for £735 for three nights from August 1 for a family of four.

**Holidays afloat** Waterwaysholidays.com says it still has plenty of availability on narrowboats. For example, seven nights in the summer holidays costs from £1,102 for a family of four on the narrowboat *Bosley* based at Congleton in Cheshire. Or cruise round the UK and Ireland with Fred Olsen (fredolsencruises.com), which has a ten-night voyage on *Braemar* leaving Southampton on July 6 from £1,099pp, as well as an 11-night Great British Cruise leaving on August 8. **Jane Knight**

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