

THE TIMES

The Times guide to spring



15 spring breaks in Britain

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Whether you want beaches, new-born lambs or a cosy cottage with an open fire, there is a property that will fit the bill

1 Morelaggan House, Loch Long, Argyll

This pretty cottage, within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park north of Glasgow, sleeps eight. As the days get longer there's more time to walk or cycle and enjoy the views of Loch Long and the Arrochar Alps. If things turn inclement, you can huddle around the open fire. In the landscaped garden you'll find a barbecue as well as swings and toys for children.

Details: 07933 320299 07933 320299 , morelagganhouse.com. Three-nights in low season are from £415, otherwise weekly rentals start from £595.

2 Field Cottage, Kington, Herefordshire

This cottage on the Herefordshire-Wales border, between Hay-on-Wye and Ludlow, is surrounded by orchards and — no doubt to the chagrin of local farmers — plenty of bunnies. It sleeps four adults. There's a south-facing deck if the weather is good and an open fire

inside if it isn't. You can self-cater or the owner can drop off meals: £10 each for a large breakfast; £22 gets you an evening meal. It's also dog-friendly.

Details: 01544 340241 01544 340241 , whiteheronproperties.com. *Three-night weekends cost from £360.*

3 Airhouses, Lauder, Borders

There are four wooden self-catering lodges here set on 630 acres of farmland. Each has an en suite bathroom and outdoor hot tub — what better way to celebrate the end of winter than spending time with a loved one in the Scottish countryside? There's plenty to do, whether it is exploring the border towns of Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose and Selkirk, or fishing, cycling, walking and riding.

Details: 01578 750642 01578 750642 , airhouses.com. *Three night weekends are from £350.*

4 Shepherd Hut, L Chipping Warden, Oxfordshire

What could be more springlike than staying in a shepherd's hut, looking out over meadows that stretch down to the River Cherwell? Inside you'll find a double bed, a wood burner, gas-powered shower and compost loo, but no telly or phone. Cook breakfast on the barbecue and walk to a pub for lunch.

Details: 01295 660066 01295 660066 , shepherdhutholiday.co.uk. *B&B doubles from £60.*

5 Little Paddock, New Forest

These Scandinavian-style wooden cottages may have various mod-cons, but there's one thing they don't have — kids. The adults-only complex has hot tubs and a tennis court and is in a good position to explore the New Forest, which is lovely at this time of year. Each lodge is fully-equipped, there's a farm shop on site or you can order breakfast hampers.

Details: 01425 470889 01425 470889 , little-paddock.com. *From £80, room only.*

6 The Bell at Skenfrith, Monmouthshire

"In the middle of nowhere but not too far from anywhere" say the owners of this 17th-century pub with 11 en suite bedrooms, from where you can hear the baaing of new-born lambs as you slumber. Enjoy a hearty hike — seven circular walks start and finish there — then tuck into a meal on your return.

Details: 01600 750235 01600 750235 , skenfrith.co.uk. *B&B doubles from £90 if you take dinner in the restaurant (Sunday to Thursday) otherwise from £110.*

7 Dovecote Barns, Kelfield, Yorkshire

Manor Farm is a working, 450-acre arable farm north of Selby where the owners have converted three 18th-century barns into self-catering accommodation, one of which is just for two. There's a cycle path to York (12 miles) or, for those less energetic, the City's park-and-ride is ten minutes away. In the fields you might see badgers, bats and deer or meander along the River Ouse.

Details: 01757 249332 01757 249332 , dovecotebarnsyork.co.uk. *Three-night weekends for two are from £286.*

8 Cley Windmill, Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk

There's nothing more fun for children (and adults who are kids at heart) than staying in a windmill. The one at Cley dates back to the early 18th century and has views over the salt marshes to Blakeney Point. It is a good base from which to walk the north Norfolk coastline.

There are ten bedrooms, some of which are in converted stables and boathouses.

Details: 01285 750713 01285 750713 , oneoffplaces.co.uk. B&B doubles from £80.

9 Ston Easton Park, Farrington Gurney, Somerset

If you are green-fingered, you can enjoy a few days in the Mendip Hills next month on a garden-history break hosted by horticultural historian Janette Merilion. Ston Easton is a Grade I-listed Palladian mansion surrounded by 36 acres of parkland. The four-day course includes tea on arrival, three nights' dinner, bed and breakfast, two lunches, talks and visits to local gardens.

Details: 01761 241631 01761 241631 , yonessenhotels.com. The first course takes place from April 26 and costs £450 (based on two sharing).

10 South Sands, Salcombe, Devon

The sun reappearing in our skies is a perfect excuse to head to the beach. The South Sands hotel is a chic bolthole with 22 nautical-themed rooms and a stunning terraced seafront restaurant serving the freshest local produce. It's a beautiful area for walks along sandy beaches and water sports.

Details: 01548 859 000 01548 859 000 , southsands.com. B&B doubles from £135.

11 Fishmore Hall, Ludlow, Shropshire

Want a room with views of the Shropshire countryside as it starts to bloom? Then head to Fishmore Hall, a handsome Georgian boutique hotel overlooking lush green woodland, rolling hills and the village of Ludlow, home to fabulous foodie shops. This hotel has a fine-dining restaurant (with two AA rosettes) and 15 contemporary rooms (with a bespoke bedding menu). Immerse yourself in the countryside or the pretty market towns.

Details 01584 875148 01584 875148 , fishmorehall.co.uk. B&B doubles from £130.

12 McCoys at the Tontine, North Yorkshire

Head North to a Georgian hotel with spectacular views of the Cleveland Hills in North Yorkshire. McCoys at The Tontine is a seven-room hotel and bistro on the edge of the North York Moors National Park, perfect for long wild springtime walks. It's run by the award-winning restaurateur Eugene McCoy, and its refurbished rooms mix antique and modern elements.

Details: 01609 882671 01609 882671 , mccoystontine.co.uk. Dinner, B&B doubles from £210, until April 30.

13 Lake Vyrnwy Hotel, Powys

Spring means new-born lambs and during a break at the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel and Spa in mid-Wales you can watch them being born by visiting the RSPB lambing sheds. Lake Vyrnwy is between a mountain and a lake on a 24,000-acre estate, laced with footpaths running through forest and moorland.

Details: 01691 870692 01691 870692 , lakevyrnwy.com. A two-night break between March 25 and April 17 costs £183pp, including breakfast, one five-course dinner and a visit to the lambing sheds.

14 Sharrow Bay, Ullswater

Who could resist Sharrow Bay, the original idyllic country house hotel by Lake Ullswater?

Spring is the best time to visit, when the hotel's 12 acres of private gardens are in blossom. Sharrow Bay has a Michelin-star restaurant (it invented sticky toffee pudding).

Details: 0871 222 3055 0871 222 3055 , superbreak.com. From £100pp in March and April through Superbreak.

15 The King's Head Inn, Cotswolds

The Cotswolds are particularly seductive in spring when its colours come to life, and at The King's Head, not far from Stow-on-the-Wold, in the village of Bledington, you'll find the chocolate-box dream come true. This is a converted cider house dating back to the 1500s overlooking a classic English village green with a brook running through it.

Details: 01608 658365 01608 658365 , greatinns.co.uk. B&B doubles from £75.