

Home from home

Prefer to stay closer to home for your holiday? From cosy village pubs and inns brimming with character, to centrally located city hotels from which to sample the best in local arts, culture and nightlife, Britain has so much to offer the curious traveller. Here are some of our top picks

Hampshire: for rural bliss

A rural grade II country house hotel that is easily accessible by car or train sounds like a dream, but Tylney Hall Hotel, dating from 1898 (elitehotels.co.uk) is just that. Set in 66 acres, this magnificent Hampshire hotel offers a getaway with a difference. Not only is the house itself spectacular and steeped in history, but it is also set in the most stunning RHS Partner gardens. Explore the Italian garden, with its restored fountain, and the water garden. Designed by the illustrious Gertrude Jekyll, it includes two water courses and a collection of pools and waterfalls. There is also a Victorian orchard, a boathouse lake and impressive giant redwood trees. Doubles from £250 B&B. *Carolyn Bailey*

Edinburgh: for a sense of history

There's lots to make you stop and stare in Edinburgh – the iconic hilltop castle and Royal residence, Holyrood Palace; botanical gardens and fabulous art galleries; its higgledy-piggledy medieval Old Town and the grand Georgian New Town. It's in this 250-year-old quarter that you'll find the Principal (phcompany.com), a city hotel with a difference. Formerly five listed townhouses (and a hotel since 1881) each room has home comforts, such as good pillows, a widescreen TV, fresh milk in the mini bar, a tuck box and a proper hairdryer.

Edinburgh

Enjoy spectacular views of the city from Calton Hill



Centrally located in this walkable city, it also has a great restaurant, The Printing Press Bar & Kitchen, in what was once Scottish novelist Susan Ferrier's house. Doubles from £159 room only. *Eve Cameron*

The Cotswolds: for a perfect pub

The Howard Arms (howdarms.com), set in the honey-stone village of Ilmington on the northern, less touristy fringes of the Cotswolds, ticks all those classic pubby boxes: cosy bar with beams and cavernous log fire; real ales including the local brew, Hooky; good food; eight recently renovated rooms and a prime position on the village green. Ilmington is on the Centenary Way and the

National Cycle Network, and there are good walks around and above the village with grand views across the Warwickshire countryside. Doubles from £110 B&B.

Bath: for an urban oasis

The Bath Priory Hotel (thebathpriory.co.uk) offers abundant tranquility, yet stands just a short walk through the delightful Royal Victoria Park from the city centre. It's further cushioned by three acres of gorgeous gardens, while other indulgences include fab food drawing on the skills of chef Michael Nizzero, contemporarily styled rooms, a new spa, an indoor and outdoor heated pool and a terrace for al fresco meals. Doubles from £195 B&B.

Lewes: for a cultural treat

Besides the delights of Lewes and the outdoor highs of walking in the South Downs National Park, a stay at Pelham House (pelhamhouse.com), a Georgian townhouse in the heart of town, previously the local council chambers, puts you in easy reach of the world-renowned Glyndebourne (glyndebourne.com). Even if you've never been to an opera, the utterly distinctive atmosphere of the Summer festival – with those long evening intervals when the audience, dressed in their finery, can enjoy a grand picnic on the swathes of lawn – makes the uniquely British experience unforgettable.