

# Best of British Getaways

Need inspiration for your next staycation? Then browse our pick of where to stay in the British Isles...



## Lancashire

TAMSIN BURNETT-HALL

This 17th-century building in a beautiful landscape is serving up food that is just as historic

As our tyres crunch up the gravel drive of Hipping Hall, we gaze at the tranquil setting that surrounds the old stone building. Lying in the Lune Valley, the hotel is on the cusp of the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District – an area rich in both history and wild, natural beauty and a key route between England and Scotland for centuries. A stream known as Broken Beck runs through the grounds with ‘hipping’ or stepping-stones to cross it – the origin of the name.

Entering via the Orangery, with the ancient well visible through a glass floor, you can see how the building has been developed over the centuries, with the most recent changes turning it into a wonderful restaurant with 15 rooms. Lancashire-born head chef Oli Martin is the star attraction here, bringing his passion for flavour and texture to play on the best of locally sourced and foraged ingredients – pickling, fermenting and preserving them for use out of season.

Our suite is in the former stable block, the beck babbling under our windows. Each room combines elements of the surrounding high fells, rivers, streams, woods and meadows, blending original stonework with natural paint pigments and linens, plus hugely luxurious touches; I simply have to indulge in a pre-dinner soak in the enormous free-standing bath.

In the galleried medieval dining hall, Oli – a *MasterChef: The Professionals* finalist – and his team deliver a nightly 12-course dinner. Ours starts with a clear savoury tea, which proves to be an intensely infused liquor of tomatoes, cucumber and mint. Bemused as to what ‘spent grain’ bread is, we learn that it is made using leftover beer-making grains from nearby Kirkby Lonsdale Brewery. Hipping Hall scores top marks for this hot crusty mini loaf with whipped, cultured butter. Fish and seafood courses follow: a cucumber cup filled with smoked eel; a tiny tartlet of lobster, dill and salty sea purslane; local trout with preserved tomatoes and tangy sea buckthorn sauce; and a sweet and smoky dish of chargrilled turbot with brown butter, leeks and soured barley hollandaise. There is just one meat course, but oh, what a delight:

seared fillet and melt-in-the-mouth short rib of beef with blackened cabbage, wild garlic oil and ramson buds that were pickled back in the spring.

We enjoy a refreshing ‘pre-dessert’ of gooseberry sorbet set on a bed of cucumber ice, then it’s on to a miniature meringue with sweet curd cheese, elderflower cordial and strawberries. It’s a testament to Oli that we have room to enjoy the extra cheese course: a local selection that comes arranged on a map, showing where they come from.

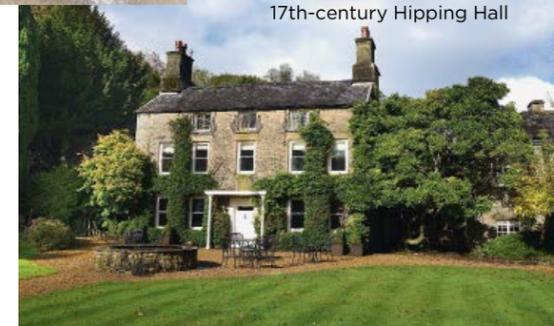
The stunning location, the beautiful room and the great service all make a trip to this corner of the UK tempting, but it’s the amazing food that makes it truly memorable. ►



### THE DETAILS

Dinner, bed and breakfast starts from £329 per night (b&b from £199); [hippinghall.com](http://hippinghall.com). If you fancy a walk during your stay, the beautiful Ingleton Falls is recommended.

From far left: Ingleton Falls Trail; melt-in-the-mouth beef short rib and fillet; the 17th-century Hipping Hall



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Yes  
to giving  
it a second  
chance



Say Yes to

LOCTITE

# Monmouthshire

CASSIE EADE

Cocktails and crafts are the focus for this girls' weekend break in Abergavenny



My favourite part of any hotel stay is breakfast, and after more than a year of lockdowns and isolation, not to mention the seven-hour drive from London the night before, I am more excited than usual as we take our table in The

Oak Room restaurant at The Angel Hotel on a bright, sunny morning in the market town of Abergavenny.

As the friendly staff pour our artisan coffees, we browse the extensive menu, with bestie Cristina choosing eggs Benedict while I pick the traditional Welsh breakfast. The portions are generous and, as we slide out from the breakfast table, I wish I'd followed my friend's lead and stopped when I felt full! That's the thing about a good hotel breakfast - you never know when to stop.

We're here because the hotel (a former 19th-century posting inn) has teamed up with Nant y Bedd, a nearby beautiful forest-garden, for some specialist arts and nature breaks. Nant y Bedd is so remote that the hotel supplies us with paper directions (along with a delicious packed lunch!) - good thing, too, as we lose connection with Google Maps the minute we hit the narrow, winding lanes. As we climb the 1,200 feet up the Black Mountains, we feel the stresses and strains of our busy lives fall away; we disconnect (literally and figuratively!) with city life and embrace the wonder around us.

The workshop we are taking at the gardens is on cyanotype, a Victorian print making process, and is run by local artist Ruth Barnes Richards. The technique involves using the splendid flora



Flora collected from Nant y Bedd gardens for the art workshop



of Nant y Bedd to create ethereal art by exposing light-sensitive paper to natural daylight. The effects are stunning. Once we understand the process, we skip off to the garden to see what delights we can find. We play like children, forgetting work, families and the world outside and focus instead on weighing up the value of this leaf over that one.

We reluctantly leave the wild cocoon of Nant y Bedd and head back to the hotel for dinner. The Angel's menu is every bit as relaxed and elegant as the hotel itself. We dine on meaty scallops with oriental dressing and dressed crab on toasted long-fermented sourdough (freshly baked at The Angel Bakery). To follow, Cristina opts for the fish pie, while I enjoy a huge tender, buttery, melt-in-the-mouth steak. Then when Cristina orders the strawberry and elderflower pavlova for dessert, I ask for two spoons. After all, best friends share, don't they?

We end our evening in the glamorous, cosy Foxhunter bar, knocking back amaretto sours and espresso martinis and chatting jovially with the delightful bar staff.

I know I had thought that my favourite part of a hotel stay was breakfast, but the day spent in nature and the splendid dinner that followed certainly gave the start to this glorious day the stiffest competition. ➤

## THE DETAILS

Art and nature breaks at The Angel Hotel start from £349 and include an overnight stay, three-course meal and breakfast, plus the course of your choice. Visit [angelabergavenny.com/special-offers](http://angelabergavenny.com/special-offers) for more information.

Clockwise from top: The Angel Hotel; cyanotype prints at Nant y Bedd; the cosy Foxhunter bar

# Norfolk

SHARON PARSONS

A stylish country retreat plays a vital part in discovering the enduring charms of north Norfolk



'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there...' I quoted aloud as we drove through a labyrinth of country lanes tucked deep in rural Norfolk. That famous first line from LP Hartley's novel *The*

*Go-Between* is set in this eastern county during a golden Edwardian summer, and somehow seemed appropriate as we continued through a landscape that appeared to be caught in a time capsule.

Beyond the poppy-studded hedgerows, we might glimpse the ruins of a barn crouched low in a field of ripe barley or an old chap wearing a worn tweed jacket cycling slowly and purposefully down a bumpy track. Occasionally, our route took us through quiet, film-set-worthy villages with neat red brick and flint cottages, their gardens crammed with nodding hollyhocks, sitting alongside a stately manor house, low-ceilinged pub, and invariably, a flint church (the county has 650 churches altogether – the highest concentration in the world!).

Nearby, of course, signs of the 21st century were very much in evidence, but here on a hot, soporific afternoon, it was as if the pace had dipped to another time.

Our home-from-home also has its roots in the past. The 100-acre Godwick estate, settled between Swaffham and Fakenham, is steeped in history. It's the site of an ancient lost village and a noted medieval Great Barn, and within the grounds, guests can choose to stay in the elegant Georgian Old Hall, one of three shepherd's huts, or – like us joined by good friends – in the newly renovated stables.

Despite the name, Godwick's Old Stables have been designed with a clean, modern aesthetic: white vaulted ceilings, pale floors, and sparkling luxury en suites and stylish boutique-hotel touches – crisp white linen, slippers, fluffy towels and gorgeous toiletries. The big kitchen became our social hub (the wine fridge, Nespresso machine and hamper of Norfolk goodies were especially welcome!), while a patio area overlooking the pretty



walled garden, complete with barbecue and outdoor seating, proved perfect for sundowners.

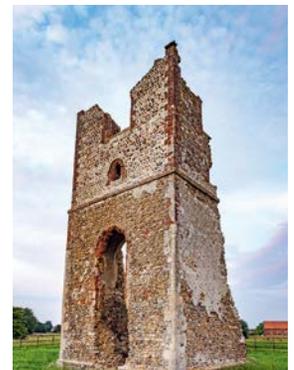
Should you want to eat out, the 18th-century Dun Cow in the nearby village of Salhouse is excellent, but self-catering at the Old Stables is easy. We picked up fresh salad leaves and fragrant Norfolk strawberries from the charming Stiffkey Stores and then went on to Burnham Market: set around a village green, this classic market town has undoubtedly gentrified in recent years but is nevertheless delightful. After quenching our thirst in the lovely Hoste Arms, we stopped by the Humble Pie delicatessen, perched above Gurneys Fish Shop, and were quickly seduced by all the delights on offer: local cheeses (Mrs Temple's Binham Blue is especially good), olives and a deep, just-made quiche proved irresistible...

After our delicious al fresco supper, we wandered across the field to the lost village of Godwick, as a solitary red kite soared high above us. This is one of the best preserved medieval sites in Norfolk, with the ruins of the church tower standing tall on the ancient land. Maybe it was the twilight and the silence – save for the odd plaintive baa of the sheep – but the atmosphere was almost otherworldly. By the time we'd walked slowly back, the moon had emerged, suspended above the trees in a vast, purple-tinged sky – the perfect finale to a lovely stay.

The past may well be a foreign country, but after so many turbulent months of uncertainty, the opportunity to escape somewhere so different for a few days could not have put things back in better perspective. We fully intend to time travel there again soon... ■

## THE DETAILS

The Old Stables sleeps six in three bedrooms. Prices start at £1,150 for a three-night weekend and rise to £1,800 for a seven-night break. Visit [godwickhall.co.uk/the-old-stables](http://godwickhall.co.uk/the-old-stables) for further information.



Clockwise from top left: The modern rooms at Godwick's Old Stables; Gurneys Fish Shop; the church tower ruins; the Old Stables entrance