

Great British breaks

If, like us, you've reached peak internet scroll, it's probably time to step away from the cheap Euro flights and book a simple staycay instead, guaranteed to refresh mind and mood

Goosebumps: big news for S/S 20



The lowdown Nestled in Scotland's Cairngorms (the UK's biggest National Park) and a 15-minute drive from the Queen's summer pad, Balmoral, The Fife Arms is a luxury hotel of Kanye-West's-ego-sized proportions. This 46-room Victorian pile, which sits in the village of Braemar, reopened last year after a particularly extra makeover. The walls are upholstered in green tartan, a Picasso hangs in the drawing room and antiques cram every corner. But if all that sounds a bit trad – it's not. Roll-top baths, clashing prints and bonkers murals makes this eclectic hideaway feel more "achingly cool members' club" than "your gran's living room". The guests are as fancy as the decor – Judi Dench and Princess



Eugenie have stopped by. But be warned: the weather is always cold, so wrap up.

Worth getting out of bed for...

The Charlotte Flower smoked sea salt chocolate discs, which you'll find (for free) in your room – trust us, they're as good as they sound. If you wolf them too fast, ask the hotel staff for more – they might just oblige. Then stroll down to breakfast in the uber-grand Clunie Dining Room – where drop scones come slathered in syrupy stewed plums and crème fraîche, and the eggs Florentine is To. Die. For.



a map and start the sweaty, 90-minute woodland trail up Creag Choinnich – panoramic views of Braemar await at the top, where breathing in is like drinking oxygen. If you'd like company, ask to go on a foraging tour with the hotel's very own expert, Natasha. She'll have you munching on nettles and dandelion leaves in no time. Psst... the hotel has a boot room with wellies and wet-weather gear, leaving more room in your case for essentials like, erm, jumpers. >



Totally fine to cuddle the chairs, yes?

In the know Don't miss the unpronounceable "Mousquetaire Assis" cocktail, which is designed for sharing and comes served in a huge glass contraption with taps. Like a goldfish bowl for adults, it's a lethal but delicious combination of homemade absinthe, cherry liqueur and gin. Then, blow off any cocktail-induced cobwebs with a walk (or a ski at one of two nearby slopes) – the scenery is *Game Of Thrones*-level stunning, and there are waterfalls, woods and deep, rocky gorges nearby. Grab



GET ME THERE

Rooms from £250 per night, including breakfast; Thefifearms.com. For more information on the area, go to Visitscotland.com



The lowdown Stress of modern life left you in desperate need of some R&R? Consider Tudor Farmhouse your Cosmo-prescribed remedy. Set in 14 acres of grassland, by the Royal Forest Of Dean and Wye Valley, this former working farm is tucked away on a rural road where the air's pure, the vibe's chocolate-box village and the scenery's so idyllic it's like you've stepped into a laptop screensaver. Pack something smart/casual for dinner (the restaurant's small but attracts a well-dressed crowd), jumpers, a beanie and wellies for forest walks. We stayed in The Loft, which is separate to the main hotel so feels like a real hideaway. It's decked out like a country home, with the comfiest bed you'll possibly ever sleep in, ultra-modern, massive bathroom and even a mini lounge (hi, movie night).

Worth getting out of bed for...

The bath alone, tbh. Lie in The Loft's free-standing tub, lather up with the Bramley

products provided and gaze at the stunning views around you through the skylights. Just switch on the Marshall radio and switch off from the world. Missed breakfast? No problem. Order the Wye Valley honey glazed ham, wholegrain mustard mayonnaise and heritage tomato sandwich to go – but be prepared for every packed lunch you subsequently make for work to feel like a cheap imitation – and head five minutes down the road to Puzzlewood. It's an ancient woodland that's so magical and unique-looking, it's been used as a filming location for *Doctor Who* and *Star Wars*. Prepare to get snap-happy.

In the know All that exploring and taking photos with your hood around your head pretending to be Baby Yoda (just us?) got you ready for dinner? Perfect! Book a table at the award-winning restaurant. Pre-dinner drinks are best taken in The Lounge, where the wood-burner crackles, the sofas are sink-into-able (totally a word) and the lighting's like golden hour every hour. For dinner, order the pig's cheek to start, stone bass for main and end with the

chocolate delice, dulce de leche, hazelnut praline tuille and milk ice cream – no, we don't know what all those dessert descriptions mean, but yes, we can confirm every element was glorious. Wash it all down with the locally produced Tintern Parva Rosé, and lots of it – you deserve it after that tough day of basking in the beauty of mother nature.



 **GET ME THERE**

Rooms from £129 per night based on two sharing a Hatchling Double, including breakfast; tudorfarmhousehotel.co.uk

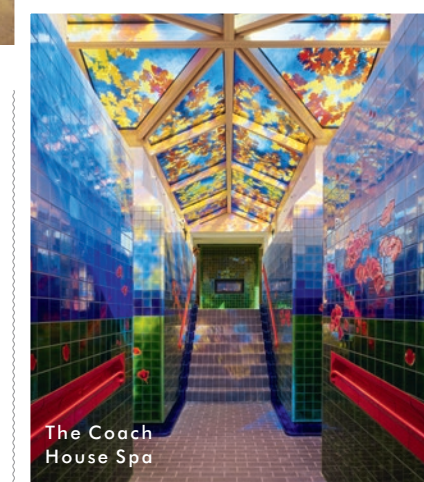


The lowdown Beaverbrook is the UK's best-kept secret so keep this just between us, yeah? It would be most appropriate to sweep up the driveway past lakes and woodland on a *Pride And Prejudice*-esque horse, if you have one lying around, until a very impressive country house appears out of nowhere with a backdrop of Versailles-style gardens and rolling Surrey hills. The house belonged to Lord Beaverbrook, a media magnate with very boujee pals, including Winston Churchill and Lady Diana Cooper (a famously glamorous socialite, not *Princess Di*). Make sure you pack your swimsuit and gym stuff as the pool is beautiful, and there are complimentary Pilates and yoga classes each morning; if you forget some of your kit they thoughtfully provide spares. And don't worry about bringing wellies as they have an array to choose from if you fancy

tackling the walking paths that wind through the grounds. Guests are casually dressed, but you could put on a fancy frock and not stand out. Our hotel-mates were an eclectic mix: two older ladies who were SO chic and styled like Audrey Hepburn, and young heart-emoji-eyed couples whispering sweet nothings.

Worth getting out of bed for...

The holistic, ultra-luxurious Coach House Spa is reason enough. We spent the day swimming, flitting between the sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi and using all of the Bamford products at once. We also had a deep-tissue massage with a magical woman called Carrie, who was petite in stature but stronger than an Iron Man champion. She listened earnestly to our catalogue of aches and pains and lovingly worked the knots out. If you want to go



deeper, combine it with a consultation with Beaverbrook's naturopath and even get realigned by the in-house osteopath.

In the know There are two restaurants – we opted for the Japanese Grill, feasting on a 10-course tasting menu of yellowtail tiradito and popcorn shrimp with a dipping sauce made of liquid butter that we will dream about forever. Sit in the romantically lit bar for a pre-dinner sharpener – the best seat in the house is the enormous velvet sofa ideal for people-watching other guests. Afternoon tea is served in the lounge, where you can lie back on the vast sofas and plan your next manoeuvre. Ours was to stay where we were with a trashy book and eat homemade banana and chocolate cake filled with fresh whipped cream. >



 **GET ME THERE**

From £385 per night (room only); Beaverbrook.co.uk



The Forest Of Dean (not Gaffney)

THE SWAN
COTSWOLDS

The lowdown If you look up the word “cosy” in the dictionary, don’t be surprised to find a picture of this dinky Cotswolds hideaway, in the village of Ascott-Under-Wychwood. This is a kind of fantasy country pub for anyone secretly praying that *The Holiday* is actually a very glossy documentary. And in a rare instance of reality being better than Hollywood, you can also dine like a queen here, then stumble up to one of the eight highly desirable bedrooms and dream sweet dreams of the breakfast menu.

This 16th-century former coaching inn was taken over last year and given a slick makeover, with a palette of sage and forest green, petrol blue and fuchsia, warm, dark wood, and the printed wallpaper and textiles of your Pinterest-pinning reveries. Downstairs, framed by exposed beams and an open fireplace, the humming bar and dining room play host to both rosy-cheeked locals and mini-breakers with laid-back conviviality. Upstairs, meanwhile, you’ll find all the trappings of a boutique hotel – capacious, lounge-able baths, snuggly robes, a jar



of homemade cookies and spa-worthy 100 Acres products that make you feel 87% calmer just by sniffing an open bottle. Calling the individually designed bedrooms welcoming is like saying Beyoncé “can sing a bit”.

Ascott-Under-Wychwood is tiny, so if you want to explore, you’ll need a car to truly take in the swooping hills and picturesque neighbouring villages that convinced Kate Moss the Cotswolds were good-looking enough to make her home outside the capital.

Worth getting out of bed for... Two words: the food. Elevated, comforting classics are the order of the day – the burger comes with toffee-apple sauce and a cheese you’ve never heard of; the bread basket comes with goat’s butter and bacon crumbs. Or try the hearty sharing platters (sure, have one to yourself, we’d never judge) – there’s baked potatoes with chilli, guac and all the trimmings, or The Swan Mixed Grill (more meat

than a *Magic Mike* audition queue). Room for some afters? Then a) we salute you and b) how about Jaffa Cake chocolate pudding with pistachio ice cream?

In the know If you’re planning a visit in summer, there’s an expansive terrace outside that’s all impeccable rustic-chic styling and trailing bowers – ideal for a spot of balmy outdoor drinking. If you’re made of sterner stuff and want to embrace it earlier in the year, the hot-chocolate section of the menu is quite something...

GET ME THERE
Rooms from £90 a night, including continental breakfast; Countrycreatures.com/the-swan



GRANTLEY HALL
YORKSHIRE

The lowdown Tucked away in the Yorkshire Dales, this Grade II-listed mansion dates back to the 17th century but is fresh from an extensive renovation project. The bedrooms feature perfect white linen, huge squishy pillows, fresh flowers, standalone bathtubs surrounded by marble and a beige-gold colour scheme that looks like it’s straight out of the Hollywood Hills. Pack your swimming costume and best leggings because there’s a huge pool and lots of wellness activities, but don’t forget some glam

clothes for the evening. Grantley Hall has SIX restaurants!

Worth getting out of bed for... The Three Graces Spa, which boasts a steam room, sauna, snow room, outdoor hot tub, tropical rain shower (complete with sound effects) and even a cryotherapy chamber – basically a massive freezer that you spend up to three minutes in, to help with everything from depression to skin conditions. Swimming between the indoor-to-outdoor hydrotherapy pool is uplifting

THE STANDARD
LONDON

The lowdown Question: what do you get if you cross a ‘70s style icon (let’s say Bianca Jagger) with a very modern trend-setter (eg Dua Lipa) and reimagine it in hotel form? You get The Standard, the UK outpost of the cult chain that’s become a byword for cool celebrity glamour. The rooms are all warm polished wood and shades of yellow, brown and beige (much better than they sound, promise) with views that stretch across the entire city. But it’s the common areas you go for: be it breakfast and people-watching in Isla on the ground floor, or Mexican-inspired low-lit glamour at the 10th-floor restaurant, Decimo. Book well in advance, even as a guest, or you won’t get a table.

Worth getting out of bed for... Breakfast. It might have been our imagination, but we swear we could smell the waft of artisanal coffee all the way up



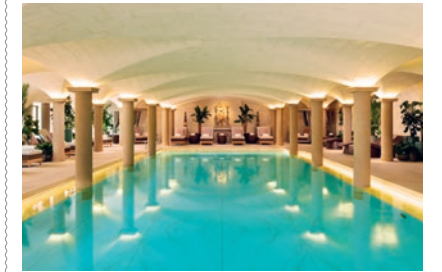
Isla: where breakfast dreams come true

to our room on the seventh floor. Follow the smell downstairs to Isla, and you’ll find an open bakery counter with fresh cinnamon rolls and raspberry pastries, and so many ways with eggs you’ll want to make it a two-course affair.

In the know To be honest, just to step foot in this place is to be “in the know”. But if you’re going to try one thing, make

even in winter weather, as you feel the refreshing air on your face while your body stays deliciously warm in the water.

In the know Book the Chef’s Table at in-house Shaun Rankin restaurant for intimate dining, and head to nearby Fountains Abbey for a medieval history lesson. Oh, and ask the hotel employees to tell you the hall’s ghost story... if you dare.



GET ME THERE
Rooms from £300 per night, including breakfast; Grantleyhall.co.uk

GET ME THERE
Rooms from £229, Standardhotels.com

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