



10 OF THE Best UK ROMANTIC HIDEAWAYS

Help couples cosy up with Laura French's suggestions

@laurafrench121

Romantic breaks on exotic, far-flung shores are all well and good, but there's something to be said for long weekends closer to home too. Quaint traditions, cobblestone villages, ancient castles and delightful countryside make the UK a hit for couples' hideaways, and for clients short on time and keen on history, there's a plethora of options available.

Here's a selection of the very best for romantics wanting to cosy up in front of a log fire, flop down on a beach or meander their way through verdant, peaceful landscapes without a care in the world.

1 CHEWTON GLEN, HAMPSHIRE
Breakfast in bed, anyone? Renowned country house Chewton Glen excels in the subject, bringing a daily delivery of pastries, fresh fruit and various home-baked treats straight to guests staying in one of its 12 Treehouse suites via a pulley and hatch system – no sharing the breakfast buffet table here.

It's not the only draw of these romantic rooms. Hidden away in the tree canopies, they're secluded, quiet and exceptionally cosy, with a log fire, balcony and hot tub in every one – making it nigh-on impossible to resist snuggling up as the fire burns and Jacuzzi bubbles on a crisp winter's day.

If clients can pull themselves away from that to explore the wider hotel, they'll find a

hydrotherapy spa – voted the best in Europe – nine-hole golf course, intimate restaurant and selection of tennis courts (both indoor and outdoor). Better yet is the brand-new cookery school, The Kitchen, offering a variety of classes spearheaded by celebrity chef James Martin. It's all a stone's throw from Highcliffe beach and the New Forest too, making it a good option for outdoorsy types wanting to see the best of Hampshire's landscapes.

Book it: The Treehouse Studio Suites cost from £850 per night including breakfast, based on two sharing. Garden Hotel rooms are available from £310 on the same basis.
relaischateaux.com

2 WINDERMERE HOTEL, LAKE DISTRICT
Wordsworth knew the romantic power of the Lake District and it holds its charm today – not least at the Windermere hotel, one of the most-renowned estates in the region, decked out in 19th-century decor and home to 70 rooms. Spectacular views over the shimmering lake below are a given, with boat trips, woodland trails, rock-climbing and more all popular in the area; Beatrix Potter's home and the Graythwaite Hall gardens are a short amble away too. The town it overlooks might have been designed with couples in mind, with traditional inns, alfresco bars and antiques shops colouring its

quiet, hilly streets and forming a pretty idyllic backdrop for relaxing strolls.

Book it: Two nights costs from £109 per person on a half-board basis, for stays between October and December 18.
coastandcountryhotels.com

3 KARMA ST MARTIN'S, ISLES OF SCILLY
Stunning natural beauty – characterised by verdant, bushy heathland and miles of unspoilt coastline – makes the Isles of Scilly off the coast of Cornwall an idyllic choice for a romantic stay in tranquil surroundings. And for couples as loved up with their dog as they are with their partner, suggest the award-winning, pet-friendly Karma St Martin's, built with local stone and designed to resemble a hamlet of cottages. Set right in front of a private beach, the 30-room hotel is perfectly located and quaintly decorated, with classic-meets-contemporary English design and a good spa and beachfront restaurant. Guests can snorkel with seals, visit hidden coves, dive around shipwrecks or head out on a rowing boat, before kicking back with a vino in the wine lounge or munching on seafood freshly caught by the local fishermen.

Book it: Premier Holidays offers two nights at the four-star Karma St Martin's from £359 per person including breakfast. Agents can earn up to £5 for every inclusive booking made.
trade.premierholidays.co.uk

4 THE GREENHILLS COUNTRY HOTEL, JERSEY
For those after a good-value, secluded escape from it all, suggest the Channel Islands – specifically Jersey, with its historic castles, scenic walking trails and sandy beaches. Among its smattering of romantic retreats is the four-star Greenhills Country Hotel, a historic manor house dating back to the 17th century.

"This gorgeous country hotel really shines through with romantic splendour," says Gill McCarthy, sales director for Airways Holidays. "The cosy nooks and crannies create an intimate ambience which allows for the perfect tête-à-tête."

Inside it's all traditional Jersey decor, cosy lounges and country-style rooms, and outside you'll find peaceful gardens, a charming dining area and a large, heated pool beckoning couples for swims at sunset.

Book it: A three-night package with Airways Holidays starts at £241, including Gatwick flights on March 15, and complimentary champagne for couples celebrating a honeymoon or silver or gold wedding anniversary.
airwaysholidays.com

5 THE PRINCIPAL MANCHESTER
A romantic getaway doesn't have to mean a rural escape, and for couples who'd rather spend their time getting acquainted with

→ culture than cows, Super Break recommends the Principal Manchester. This Grade II-listed Victorian hotel, home to 275 rooms, is centrally located – opposite the Palace Theatre on Oxford Street – but still feels pleasingly calm and cut off with its grand, historic decor and intimate atmosphere. Once the headquarters for The Refuge Assurance Company, which opened in 1890, it has an intriguing history and today houses an award-winning restaurant where coupled-up cultural types can relax after a day spent exploring the city's romantic hotspots, which range from art galleries and canals to steam railways and rooftop bars. **Book it:** From £80 per person per night with Super Break, based on a B&B stay on March 18, 2018. superbreak.com/agents



At Ashford Castle, couples can enjoy tea in the Connaught Room, a tradition that began there in 1868

the locale in mind – think wooden interiors, and an olde-worlde bar specialising in Scotch whiskies – and a recent renovation means all 239 of its rooms and suites have been upgraded. Romantics wanting to indulge will find plenty to satisfy – from a Savoy Afternoon Tea to local steak and seafood at the St Andrews Bar & Grill, and it's an ideal option for couples with kids in tow thanks to babysitting services, a kids' game room and a herd of deer on site. Those wanting to venture beyond its confines will find a plethora of attractions in St Andrews, from the scenic Fife Coastal Path to botanical gardens, a 13th-century castle and dungeon and the remains of a 12th-century cathedral. **Book it:** A Spa Escape package, including one night's accommodation, a 35-minute spa

6 FAIRMONT ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

This five-star, 520-acre resort is every bit as lavish and kitted-out as you'd expect from a Fairmont, with two championship golf courses and a comprehensive, Scottish-themed spa offering ample opportunity for hand-in-hand relaxation. It's all designed with



PICTURE: AERVISIONS

treatment, dinner in La Cucina or St Andrews Bar & Grill and a full Scottish breakfast, costs from £142 per person. fairmont.com/standrews

7 BALLYGALLY CASTLE, NORTHERN IRELAND

Got *Game of Thrones* fans on your hands? Suggest the 17th-century Ballygally Castle, where guests can embark on a tour themed around the series – much of which was filmed in the area – indulge in a *Game of Thrones* Afternoon Tea, and check out the 'Game of Thrones door', carved from trees which fell from the iconic Dark Hedges. Beyond that there's plenty to explore, including Carrickfergus Castle, Bushmills Distillery, Carnfunnock Country Park and the gold-sand Ballygally Bay, all of which are a stone's throw away. Best of all is the hotel's history: it houses a selection of Tower Rooms which lay claim to being the oldest continuously inhabited rooms in

Northern Ireland, complete with exposed beams, tiny windows and three-foot-thick walls, and reachable via an old-fashioned stone spiral staircase. **Book it:** Hastings Hotels offers nightly rates at Ballygally Castle from £75 per night on a bed and breakfast basis, based on two sharing. hastingshotels.com/ballygally-castle

8 ANGLESEY LAKESIDE LODGES, WALES

If you've got clients on more of a budget and wanting to explore the great outdoors, a holiday park is an excellent option – and it's not only for families. Hoseasons' Autograph Lodge Holidays collection specialises in all things romance, with 38 spots across the UK targeted at couple-only breaks, all with an outdoor hot tub; some even throw in extras such as pamper packs.

For an especially tranquil setting, suggest Anglesey

Lakeside Lodges, on the Isle of Anglesey in North Wales. Lodges sit right on the edge of the water and offer an open-plan living area, log burner, king-sized bed and hot tub. They're surrounded by nine acres of landscaped lakes, criss-crossed by a network of cycling and walking trails, and there's also horse riding, sailing and more available for those wanting to explore its serene bays and beaches

in a slightly different way. **Book it:** Three nights at Anglesey Lakeside Lodges in 2018 costs from £385 for two people; a week starts at £635 (room-only). hoseasons.co.uk/agents

9 ASHFORD CASTLE, IRELAND

Backdrops don't get much more romantic than Ireland's rugged landscapes, rolling hills and craggy cliffs.



ABOVE: Dormy House, Cotswolds
LEFT: Ashford Castle, Republic of Ireland
BELOW: Ballygally Castle, Northern Ireland

Throw in this remote, 13th-century castle overlooking Lough Corrib in County Mayo – once home to the iconic Guinness family – and you have coupled-up perfection. There's a cinema room, award-winning spa and array of activities on hand to keep guests entertained – from tennis and golf to archery and cycling – alongside atmospheric wine cellars, bars and restaurants, including the elegant George V Dining Room, where the former king (then the Prince of Wales) dined in 1905. Couples can enjoy an Afternoon Tea in the Connaught Room, honouring a tradition that began here in 1868, or cruise along the lake for idyllic views of the castle and its lush surroundings.

Book it: Ashford Castle offers a Sense of Occasion package – including a five-course dinner in the George V Dining Room, champagne, rose petal turndown service and an archery lesson – from £428 per room per night. ashfordcastle.com

10 DORMY HOUSE, COTSWOLDS

With its iconic grey stone architecture and cluster of charming villages, the Cotswolds is a go-to for secluded hideaways and among the cream of the crop is Dormy House. Specialising in farmhouse chic, and sitting atop a hill in the village of Broadway, it offers spectacular views. Rooms span the range from rustic Rose Cottage to ultra-stylish hot-tub suites, and there are three dog-friendly abodes for couples wanting a third companion. Hampers are available for a romantic picnic and the House Spa features a terrace Jacuzzi, Scandi-style thermal suite and double treatment room. **Book it:** Dormy House offers a romantic retreat package from £418 including a half-bottle of champagne, chocolates, a Temple Spa Romance gift box, a full English breakfast and a five-course tasting dinner for two. dormyhouse.co.uk



PICTURE: TIM WINTER

LEFT: The Principal Manchester