

By the Sea

There's nowhere quite like the British seaside – with its fresh salty air, quaint villages to wander around and rugged coastlines to explore. We visited three of the best boltholes for a sunny summer staycation.



THE BULRUSHES, CORNWALL

Down a winding little Cornish road, where birds sing and ancient trees quietly listen, you'll find The Bulrushes. Once the flour mill of the historic Trerice manor house nearby, today this property is a spacious, stylish rural retreat – and the perfect home-from-home for a long weekend. Situated just a short drive away from the quaint coastal village of Crantock and the busier beaches of Newquay, it still manages to feel like its own secluded corner of countryside.

Owners Sam and Chris, who bought the 17th-century property in 2009, have done a great job of renovating. The interiors combine an air of traditional farmhouse chic with vibrant modern accents: think designer lamps, plush navy sofas, palm-patterned curtains and fur blankets draped artfully over wooden benches. The whole thing is immaculately finished, but without feeling like a show home. Original features sit alongside rustic touches like low, white-painted beamed ceilings and a wood-burning fire (for added cosiness in case the chill of a British summer evening creeps in). The open living/dining area and large table are made for socialising, and the large kitchen for pottering and cooking – just what we needed to celebrate Liz's birthday.

The house sleeps four comfortably, and the bedrooms – a double and a twin room – are light, bright and snug.



The Bulrushes

Sunlight flooded through the windows in the morning, bathing the room in that warm, happy glow you only seem to get on holiday. Crisp bed linens and squidgy beds meant we all enjoyed a luxurious lie-in before rising to make fresh pots of tea and enjoy an alfresco breakfast from the local hamper provided (rustic farm loaf, butter and local eggs). This, and freshly cut flowers, fluffy bathrobes, homemade soaps, scented candles and board games are just some of the luxury touches you can expect here.

Our days were spent mostly by the seaside, just a short drive away – occasionally dipping our toes in the waves, but mainly walking and talking along the rugged, golden sands of Fistral Beach. Just one of the bays located on the



Newquay Harbour

630-mile South West Coast Path, you can walk virtually uninterrupted on the beaches, cliffs, and through the quaint Cornish villages of this dramatic coastline.

We stopped for lunch at The Beach Hut at Watergate Bay, where we treated ourselves to Cornish moules marinière and a glass of white wine. It wouldn't be a trip to the Cornish coast without sampling the local sea-dwelling delicacies, so we popped into E Rawle & Co fishmonger and left, arms laden with fresh seafood, ready for an evening of birthday celebrations. Our seafood feast kicked off with oysters with a French shallot vinaigrette and prawns with a bloody mary sauce, made by our very own Food Editor. Plump, juicy lobster followed, served in the best way possible – with warm lemon-garlic butter. It's worth noting that if you want to hire a private chef, Unique Home Stays also provides this service – as well as other bespoke extras, such as beauty treatments – all there to add another layer of luxury to an already wholesome stay.

The sun peeked her shy head over the clouds long enough for us to justify a BBQ on our final evening at The Bulrushes. The garden itself is a place to behold: rose bushes and blooming flowerbeds live alongside an abundance of wildlife – woodpeckers, foxes, voles and badgers. Fireflies reside there too, dancing among the reeds in the babbling River Gannel that runs through the

bottom of the garden. We sat wrapped in blankets, G&Ts in hand, tucking into halloumi and veggie kebabs, and local burgers from Trevelly Farm Shop, just up the lane. Luckily, the cottage is at the bottom of the Sylvan Valley and so enjoys its own micro-climate, away from coastal winds. It was a perfect little nook of privacy, tucked away from the world. In fact, the thing we all noticed the most about The Bulrushes was the stillness – that sense of being removed from the busy world. The only sounds were the symphony of birds and wildlife, and the occasional clip-clop of ponies – that, and the chattering of four friends! **Sleeps four. Prices from £975 for a three-night stay in mid-high season, [uniquehomestays.com](https://www.uniquehomestays.com)**



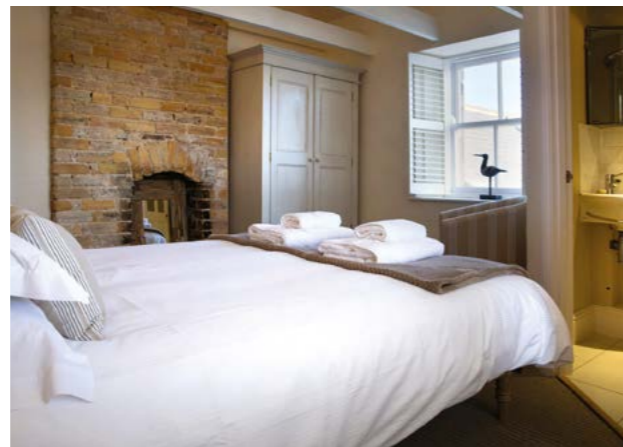
HARBOUR MASTER'S HOUSE, NORTHUMBERLAND

There's perhaps nowhere that quite captures the old charm of British coastal communities like Craster. A Northumbrian fishing village, at its heart sits a small harbour built by the Craster Family in 1906, in memory of Captain Craster. To the north looms the dramatic ruins of 14th-century Dunstanburgh Castle, a theatrical figure against the ever-changing skyscape. It's this unique, postcard-perfect view that you can enjoy from the decking of Harbour Master's House.

A family-owned cottage that sleeps six, the property boasts a prime position above the harbour, removed enough to observe the activity below, but close enough to feel part of it all. Inside, owners Storm and Nicky have renovated and decorated to the highest standard – with natural wood and linen interiors, plantation shutters and a lovely open space for entertaining. It feels both homely and elegant, with exposed stonework, blankets and open fires ready for friends and family to gather. There's a double bedroom, cute twin room (perfect for children), and a huge, light-filled master bedroom with ensuite.

Mornings at Harbour Master's House are best kicked off with a pot of fresh coffee on the upper deck – the

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Harbour Master's House



Craster Harbour

perfect spot on which to while away a few hours people-and-weather watching. When we were staying, Craster Coastal Rowing Club were there with their skiffs, getting ready for a race. Before long though, the castle calls. The best way to blow away any cobwebs is with a refreshing, salty-aired walk (or run) along the grassy path towards the ruins. With the waves crashing into the rocky shores to your right, and friendly sheep to your left, there's something so wild and free about being out among the sounds and smells of the sea.

Craster is also home to the world-famous Craster kipper. This smoked delicacy has been produced by family business L Robson & Sons for almost 100 years, who to this day still use the traditional oak-smoked barrel technique. In fact, Harbour Master's House used to be the old Robson's smokehouse. These days, the smokehouse shop is forever bustling with locals and tourists alike, all keen to stock up on their array of smoked fishes and Northumberland cheeses.

For a small village (with a population barely over 300), there's plenty for a visitor to fill their days with, if simply sitting and enjoying the view with a book on the terrace doesn't suffice. The Mick Oxley Gallery, with his evocative seascapes, is a wonderful pit stop for the creatively curious, and the Shoreline Cafe makes delicious homemade cakes. If you're after a fresh fish lunch, then Craster Seafood Restaurant (part of the smokehouse) is a great option, or the Jolly Fisherman does a cracking crab sandwich,

which is what we found ourselves tucking into on our final afternoon. We then set off on a rosy-cheeked jaunt towards Howick, passing by 2nd Earl Grey's 19th-century cliff-edge bathing house (now a holiday cottage) along the way. So engrossed were we in each other's stories that we carried on walking just under six miles to Boulmer, where we enjoyed a well-deserved pint at the Fishing Boat Inn.

Those who know Northumberland will want to keep its ancient, castle-lined coastline a secret, and it's easy to understand why. From Craster's bright wooden boats and charming fishermen's cottages, to the surrounding heritage AONB coast's rocky inlets, passionate seas and cosy pubs, it feels like a yet-unspoiled hidden treasure.

Sleeps six. Prices from £715 for a three-night stay, coastalretreats.co.uk



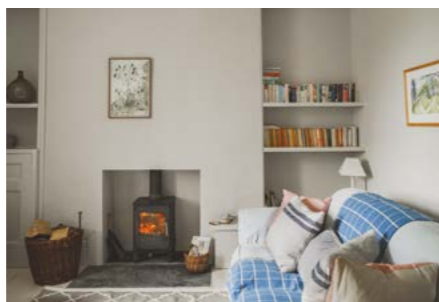
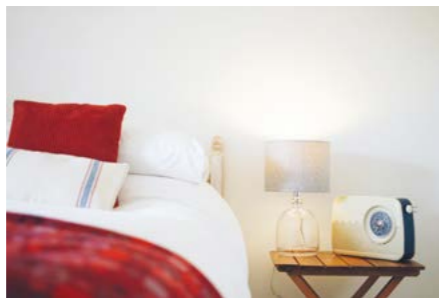


THE SCHOOLROOM COTTAGE, PEMBROKESHIRE

Cliffs, golden beaches and limestone stacks make up the textured landscape of this corner of Wales. It's here, in the picturesque village of Bosherton, that you'll find the self-catered sanctuary that is The Schoolroom Cottage. Located just a hop, skip and amble from the National Trust's famous Bosherton Lily Lakes, this small and perfectly formed Georgian-built cottage was once the schoolroom for the adjoining Old Rectory.

Today, the cottage is a two-person, dog-friendly holiday home – perfect for couples or friends looking for a dose of fresh sea air and Mother Nature. Its interiors are rustic, modern vintage and feel like an ode to quiet coastal life: shelves are lined with books – old and new. And the lovely desk and snug sofas are purpose-made for writing sea-inspired poems and reading classic literature – in between long walks and homemade cake at Ye Olde World Cafe. The sense of 'local living' is everywhere – eggs from the family hens sit in the kitchen, fresh flowers from the garden are dotted around the house, and there are salad leaves from the veg patch.

The cottage sits within the UK's only coastal national park – Pembrokeshire Coast – so you don't have to go far to enjoy nature at her most enchanting. The lily lakes, just minutes from the cottage, are a real-life Monet-esque watercolour painting. Set among wooded valleys



and in a Special Area of Conservation, these freshwater lily ponds come to life with flora and fauna in May and June. The blooming carpets of floating waterlily pads provide a safe home for a cornucopia of wildlife – from bats, otters, swallows and 'robbing robins' (known for their mischief!), to over 20 species of fireflies.

Just spending time surrounded by so much rich wildlife and vegetation is good for the soul. But if you want to venture a little further and clock up some miles, the footpath winds its way over the hill to Broad Haven Beach, with its blustery and dramatic cliff-top walks, and the 16th-century St Govan's Chapel, tucked into the cliff-face. Barafundle Bay, often described as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, is also a short walk away. And that's the best bit about this cosy bolthole: everything you'd possibly need for a restorative, feel-good weekend by the sea is within walking distance.

Sleeps two. Prices from £325 for a three-night stay, schoolroomcottage.co.uk

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