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# PORTER

## 9 OF THE BEST *ENGLISH* *COUNTRY HOTELS*



For an idyllic, atmospheric break, nothing quite hits the spot like a weekend in the bracing English countryside

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### THE PIG AT COMBE, *Devon*

It may be a honey-colored gem of an Elizabethan manor on a 3,500-acre estate, but for all its grandeur, the atmosphere at The Pig at Combe is fun and welcoming. Part of a hotel group that sells its country stays as 'restaurants with rooms', this foodie hideaway's sustainable approach is legendary, sourcing all ingredients within a 23-mile radius or growing them across the hotel's three walled gardens. The restaurant is fabulously inviting, where platters of piggie bits like crackling and the signature tomahawk chop are piled high at scrubbed tables, but be sure to seek out the magical Folly, too: an enticingly rustic affair where you can enjoy wood-fired pizzas and local cider overlooking the rolling hills of Otter valley. Book one of the three fabulous Curlditch Cottages, which come with their own walled garden overlooking the charming chicken coop at the bottom of the drive.

Full article available online at: <https://www.net-a-porter.com/gb/en/porter/article-b4fbb63fc4587574/lifestyle/travel/country-house-hotels-in-england>

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**FOOD HEAVEN**

The Pig at Combe offers an array of dining options, including the Georgian Kitchen private dining room and a Wine Dinner in The Cellar



**SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED**

Dating back to the medieval period, the seven-room Angel Inn has been stylishly renovated into a luxe boutique stay

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**THE ANGEL INN, *Petworth***

Expect nothing less than a heavenly stay at West Sussex's Angel Inn. This former coach house is packed with period details – think wonky staircases, exposed beams and charmingly low doorways – but its seven rooms have been lovingly updated with all the creature comforts of a thoroughly luxe country stay. For a dose of opulence, check into the Scots Pine room, a teal-tone suite with a sprawling bed and freestanding bath. If you can peel yourself out from under the covers, you don't need venture any further than the hotel's own eatery for a mean Sunday roast, washed down with 18-year-old whiskey. It'll set you up nicely for a stroll through the cobbled streets of Petworth, lined with chocolate-box houses, antiques shops and delis like the Hungry Guest, sure to impress even the most seasoned of foodies.

3

**THYME, *Cotswolds***

Thyme is the quintessential Cotswolds retreat, film-set perfect and cocooned in its own private hamlet. The 150-acre manor estate boasts a collection of 17th century farmhouses, cottages and a lodge, where the aesthetic is elegantly bohemian with reclaimed woods, long trestle tables and chandeliers. Out of all the wonderfully light and airy bedrooms, Nepeta is the prettiest, with its beamed ceilings, jugs of wild flowers and gargantuan roll-top bath. The fabulous holistic Meadow Spa is a real draw, set in romantic walled gardens with a heated outdoor pool fed with local spring water. But the brilliant food is the main attraction here – the renowned cookery school takes a sustainable approach to the seasonal menu with locally sourced produce such as pumpkin soup, guinea fowl and braised cabbage, not to mention the nearby Swan Pub, whose Sunday roast is the stuff of local legend.



**CULINARY DELIGHT**

Thyme's recently opened Dix Barn restaurant blends rustic country features with sleek, modern furnishings



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## 4

### THE WILD RABBIT, *Kingham*

At the heart of the postcard-pretty English village of Kingham is the charming Wild Rabbit inn. The philosophy here is farm-to-fork, and Michelin-starred chef Alyn Williams has the first-class organic produce from nearby Daylesford Farm's creamery, bakery, smokehouse and market garden at his disposal, which means you can expect seasonal, vegetable-focused dishes served in the bright, high-ceilinged dining room adjacent to the cozy bar. The sleeping arrangements are also a seductive synergy of luxurious and laid-back: 15 rooms and two new self-contained cottages feature linen sheets, exposed bricks and modern artworks by Hugo Guinness – it's the ideal sanctuary after a ramble in the beautiful Cotswolds countryside.



## 5

### CLIVEDEN HOUSE, *Berkshire*

Cliveden is England's landmark hotel, against which all others must be measured. Sitting among acres of lawn and parkland rolling down to the River Thames, about 45 minutes from London, it needs little introduction: the former country seat of the Astor family, almost every British monarch since George I has been entertained here. But nothing prepares you for the exuberant fanfare of the place – the long gravel drive past the marble Fountain of Love; the formal gardens and scented parterres; the gleam of the towering golden clock tower at the entrance. It is certainly grand, and yet without any hint of preciousness. As Britain's chilly fall evenings set in, take tea in the cozy drawing rooms surrounded by tapestries, roaring hearths and rolling views of the unspoiled landscape. Hole up for the weekend at the adjacent Spring Cottage, with its heady atmosphere of historic lust (forever associated with Christine Keeler and the scandal that brought down a government), located amid the many romantic wooded pathways in the grounds.

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### HECKFIELD PLACE, *Hampshire*

This 44-bedroom hotel in the deep green heart of rural Hampshire is a revelation less than an hour from London. Nearly 10 years in the planning, it is a no-expense-spared, intricately conceived and designed passion project by its businessman owner, Gerald Chan, who has aimed for a completely self-sustaining environment. His passion has evidently trickled down to the staff – the atmosphere of enthusiasm and job contentment is contagious. It's a bucolic escape, but also a constant hub of activity: from private screenings in the cinema to the gardening, cooking or art courses. For all the ornamental, symmetrical elegance of the walled gardens and the architecture, there is no standing on ceremony here. Borrow boots and bikes to explore the estate; help yourself to a slice of cake at tea, compliments of the house; pick your own flowers; and hook your own fish to be cooked up in the kitchens of Skye Gyngell's informal yet sensational Marle and Hearth restaurants, the latter with an open grill and a homely, almost pub-like vibe.



HIT PAUSE

From the private cinema to the well-appointed rooms, Heckfield is primed for relaxation.

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**BEST BAR NONE**  
The Parrot Bar at Beaverbrook serves cocktails inspired by guests past and present

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### BEAVERBROOK, *Surrey*

Only a half hour from either Gatwick or Heathrow airports, this extravagant country mansion, which opened as an hotel last year, is a huge boon for weekenders and short-breakers. The former country seat of Lord Beaverbrook, a cabinet minister during both World Wars, it is filled with antiques and memorabilia of his era, offering endless hours of distraction but without the reverential stiffness of a museum. On the contrary, the place thrums with life at weekends: for children, the Sharkey and George club, a treehouse and an old private cinema; for grownups, 400 acres of grounds and woodland to wander through. A trout lake, a kitchen garden and soon-to-be-opened tennis courts and indoor and outdoor pools make this the perfect escape for the whole family.

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### LIME WOOD, *Hampshire*

In this chocolate-box-pretty corner of England, Lime Wood is a star turn; a beautiful manor house set amid landscaped lawns and reached at the end of a sweeping drive. While the architecture is grandly elegant, the mood is relaxed and unbuttoned, attracting Londoners with dogs in tow, families, businessmen and locals. This is a place to come to recharge (there are various boot camps and spiritual/yoga retreats throughout the year in the excellent spa) and to indulge in traditional country distractions, from horse riding to archery and falconry. Top chef Angela Hartnett's dining experience is a refined interpretation of English/Italian comfort food, while the onsite smokehouse offers cured local meats and fish. Bedrooms are equipped with every kind of device to make you more comfortable and coddled, but if it's available, the stunning Lake Cabin is the one to book: it's a secluded hideaway cantilevered over the water with a terrace, a wood-burning stove and free-standing bathtub.



**SOAK IT ALL IN**  
The secluded terrace and free-standing bathtub of Lime Wood's Lake Cabin

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### LYMPSTONE MANOR, *Devon*

This Georgian mansion faces psychedelic sunsets over the estuary of the River Exe, surrounded by 28 acres of vineyards, woodland and elegant lawns sweeping down to the water's edge. The 21 rooms are drenched with natural light in the main house, with individual artworks, marbled bathrooms and our favorite feature: a gin and cocktail cabinet. It's a place to come for the food, unsurprisingly, since the place belongs to respected chef Michael Caines MBE and holds a coveted Michelin star. Dinner beneath the statement chandeliers is about formal old-school elegance – all white gloves and multiple sets of cutlery and glassware – with an eight-course tasting menu that exploits the best local produce from the region, from Darts Farm beef to Brixham scallops and estuary mussels. Walk it all off the next day by borrowing some wellingtons or bikes for forays along the nearby Triassic coastline.

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**FLIGHTS OF FANCY**

Each room and suite at Lympstone Manor is named after a species of bird found in the nearby estuary



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