

Staycation Swaps

Exchange your global getaway for a holiday much closer to home, says **Holly Rubenstein**

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Don't gallop away; there's adventures to be had right here in the UK, too

Whether you're looking for a city break, a wilderness escape, a country retreat or a trip to the seaside, Britain is blessed with destinations to rival some of the world's most desirable hotspots. It's time to embrace what we have on our doorstep and celebrate the year of the great British staycation.



SWAP THE FRENCH RIVIERA FOR THE... CORNISH RIVIERA

Who needs to travel to the Med when it's possible to experience the palm-fringed white sand beaches, glittering turquoise seas and fine fresh seafood of the Cornish riviera?

Cornwall's photogenic seafront fishing villages offer boundless charm. None more so than Mousehole, with its narrow, cobbled streets, brimming with buzzing restaurants and galleries, that wind down to the sheltered harbour with boats bobbing in the breeze. It's no wonder Welsh poet Dylan Thomas described it in the '30s as 'the loveliest village in England'. The tribute still holds true today.

Stay at **The Old Coastguard** (oldcoastguardhotel.co.uk), a sun-dappled spot with 14 sumptuous bedrooms that peer out to sea over palms and splashes of vivid hydrangeas.

The sophistication of St Tropez is captured at **The Scarlet** (scarlethotel.co.uk), an adults-only eco getaway on Cornwall's north coast, overlooking Mawgan Porth's sandy bay, and down the road from Padstow, home to Rick Stein's culinary empire and to Michelin-starred Paul Ainsworth at Number 6.

What's more, The Scarlet's sea vistas are some of Cornwall's best, whether you're catching them from the spectacular, stone-lined, outdoor swimming pool or from the al fresco hot tubs-with-a-view. Interior walls are lined with paintings by local artists, no doubt inspired by the region's mesmerising quality of light, which has invigorated creatives here for decades.

In St Ives, art enthusiasts can't miss Porthminster Gallery, housed in a converted pilchard press, or the renowned Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden. The Tate St Ives' eclectic collections are a must-see on the seafront.

There's a taster of Cap d'Antibes at Carbis Bay, with its award-winning, golden sand, bathing beach surrounded by subtropical scenery. For ultimate privacy, the beach houses at **Carbis Bay Hotel** (carbisbayhotel.co.uk) are big enough to sleep a family of four and just a frisbee's throw from the beach.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Mousehole is a quintessential Cornish fishing village, with a long and fascinating history; The Scarlet Hotel has views over Mawgan Porth Bay; *Breeze Catching the Waves* by Jenny Hirst; beach houses at Carbis Bay Hotel are practically on the sand; visitors at St Ives' Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden; sea vistas at The Old Coastguard

SWAP NEW ZEALAND FOR THE...

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

If you're dreaming of epic scenery and landscapes with high drama, you can save the air miles and the environment by trading New Zealand for the wilds of the Scottish Highlands.

This breathtaking region, roughly the same size as Belgium, is home to Britain's largest national park, the Cairngorms, plus Britain's highest mountain, towering Ben Nevis, and one of Britain's most famous lakes (with its resident monster), Loch Ness. Fairytale castles, world-class malts and boundless wildlife make it a must for any traveller's bucket list.

Stay at **The Torridon** (thetorridon.com) in Wester Ross, one of the UK's most remote hotels. Set amid sprawling parkland with a backdrop of mountains and forest, its romantic turrets overlook the tranquil shores of Loch Torridon. Walk for miles through rugged wilderness, go gorge scrambling in pristine waters or hike to the summit of a Munro. Its 18 rooms can be hired on an exclusive basis, too.

For a more boutique feel, deep in the Cairngorms within a 4000-acre estate, is **Killiehuntly**, a pretty 17th-century farmhouse (killiehuntly.scot). With four stylish bedrooms designed with minimalist Scandi-Scottish interiors, along with a bothy and a cottage in the grounds, it's a spot to swoon over. (For the duration of 2020, all properties will be available for private hire only.)

The opulent **Glenfeshie Lodge** dates back to the 1880s and once played host to Queen Victoria (glenfeshie.scot). The lodge is reached by a winding single-track road through a pine forest, and framed by mountains and the salmon-rich River Feshie. Here, the restorative power of nature feels palpable. So magnificent is the scenery that Edwin Landseer's famous painting, *The Monarch of the Glen*, is said to originate from here. Up to 12 guests can stay in the Lodge on a fully catered basis, and its resident gamekeepers can organise a variety of outdoors activities, including its famous pony picnics.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Cairngorms National Park is wild and beautiful; find a cottage to call your own for the weekend at Killiehuntly; or stay in one of the farmhouse's Scandi-chic rooms; The Torridon stands on the shores of remote Loch Torridon; stag spotting is surprisingly easy in the Highlands; Glenfeshie Lodge is framed by forests and mountains



SWAP CHAMPAGNE FOR...

WEST SUSSEX

The heartland of the UK's wine industry, West Sussex is home to three quarters of England's 8,600 acres of vines. Seventy per cent of the fruits of these vineyards go into making the acclaimed sparkling wine that frequently trumps champagne in blind tastings.

The key to English sparkling wine's world-class quality is its location. The picturesque rolling hills of the South Downs National Park have the same chalk-rich soil as the famous Champagne region of France. Head here for vineyard tours and tastings in a peaceful bucolic setting, just an hour and a half's drive from central London.

While there, be sure to stop at the scenic **Nyetimber** estate in West Chiltington on one of its open days, where tastings of its award-winning sparkling wine are held in its striking medieval barn (nyetimber.com).

High on the South Downs is newcomer **Rathfinny**, which is set to become England's largest vineyard, with 400 of its 600 acres under cultivation (rathfinnyestate.com). Other stops should include Ridgeview, Bolney Wine Estate, and Breaky Bottom vineyards.

Stay at **The Spread Eagle** in the pretty market town of Midhurst (hshotels.co.uk/spread-eagle). It's one of England's oldest coaching inns and dates back to 1430. Alternatively, you can retreat to ivy-clad **Ockenden Manor** in Cuckfield (hshotels.co.uk/ockenden-manor), for countryside views, fine dining and the beautiful spa with its flotation tank and eight treatment rooms. Sounds like the perfect hangover cure.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The South Downs' chalk-rich soil has been compared to Champagne's; stay at The Spread Eagle, one of the country's oldest coaching inns; you'll find vineyards galore in this sunny nook of southern England; taste award-winning English sparkling wine at the Nyetimber estate; then retreat to Ockenden Manor to soothe a sore head



SWAP ROME FOR...

BATH

Ancient history and Georgian elegance sit comfortably side-by-side in majestic Bath, the UK's only city to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Bath has been a wellness destination for millennia, thanks to its unique natural thermal springs. A trip to the city isn't complete without a visit to the awe-inspiring ancient Roman baths, dating back to AD43. These days, the therapeutic hot waters can be experienced down the road at the thoroughly modern **Thermae Bath Spa** (thermaebathspa.com), with its showstopping open-rooftop pool taking in swooping 360-degree views of the city.

Just a short walk away is **The Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa** (royalcrescent.co.uk), a jewel in the centre of Bath's iconic, honey-hued Royal Crescent. It's one of the UK's greatest examples of Georgian architecture, straight from the pages of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Check into luxe five-star suites with private terraces overlooking gloriously green gardens and don't miss afternoon tea, which attracts guests from around the world.

If you fancy something a little more low-key, charming **Broad St Townhouse** (butcombe.com) is a boutique retreat in the heart of the historic quarter. It's Grade II listed and retains many of its original architectural elements, plus its own distinctive sense of style. Next door is sister venue **The Pig & Fiddle**, a newly refurbished pub with a tempting menu of pub classics done with a twist. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Bath's 1774 Pulteney Bridge straddles the River Avon; the magnificent 2,000-year-old Roman baths; try the sumptuous tea at The Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa; or enjoy an al fresco meal in its gardens; pause for coffee at Broad St Townhouse's cafe; or book into one of its seductively furnished bedrooms