

The Information

THE INDEPENDENT

The essential guide to going out and staying in 01.10.2011

THE 50 BEST

Weekend retreats



Comedy

Daniel Kitson's human stories

Talks

Val McDermid in Lichfield

Film

Lars von Trier's Melancholia

Pop

Death from Above 1979

Theatre

Mike Leigh's evocative Grief

6 THE 50 BEST WEEKEND RETREATS

25. The Swan at Southrop

"The food is the focus at this 17th-century pub and restaurant" says Sarah. She recommends staying in one of its beautiful cottages – and booking into its Thyme Food School for a cookery course, where you can learn artisan skills from breadmaking to charcuterie to handmade chocolates.

Where The Swan, Southrop, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, GL7 3NU (01367 850072; www.southropmanorestate.co.uk)

How much Cottage sleeping two from £170

26. The Hambrough

Sophie describes Ventnor on the Isle of Wight as "a classic seaside town that transports you back to childhood" and suggests you take a hike across to Steep-hill Cove for a crab lunch before retiring to the Michelin-starred delights of Robert Thompson's top-quality restaurant, and the luxurious rooms at the Hambrough.

Where The Hambrough, Hambrough Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, PO38 1SQ (01983 856333; www.robert-thompson.com)

How much Doubles from £170 with dinner, bed and breakfast

27. Tuddenham Mill

Tuddenham Mill's chocolate-box looks and tucked-away Suffolk location belie its newly earned inclusion on the foodie map. Head chef and rising star Paul Foster uses local ingredients and foraged produce from the surrounding fields and rivers to offer a truly innovative British menu. The simple rooms in the restored mill and outlying barns are homely – though the loft rooms have an unusual and rather intimate bathroom arrangement – and the complimentary sloe gin addictive.



All in good taste: Tuddenham Mill in Suffolk offers a truly innovative British menu (27)

Where Tuddenham Mill, High Street, Tuddenham, nr Newmarket, Suffolk, IP28 6SQ (01638 713552; www.tuddenhammill.co.uk)

How much From £185 with breakfast

28. The Pig

Sophie is enthusiastic about this new retreat with a traditional country kitchen attached, where chef James Golding cooks up food grown in its own walled garden or foraged from the surrounding area. "The baby sister to the acme of country house hotels, Lime Wood, opened recently in the New Forest, offering cosy rooms, suites in the stables and piggery, and affordable, indulgent food."

Where The Pig, Beaulieu Road, Brockenhurst, the New Forest, Hampshire, SO42 7QL (01590 622354; www.thepighotel.co.uk)

How much From £125

29. Mr Underhill's

At the foot of Ludlow Castle, Mr Underhill's occupies a suitably regal position in this Marches town known for its top foodie credentials. It's the only Michelin-starred restaurant in town that also has rooms – so after enjoying its exceptional nine-course market menu, you can waddle back to the comfort of your bedroom.

Where Dinham Weir, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1EH (01584 874431; www.mr-underhills.co.uk)

How much Singles from £130 including breakfast

30. The Three Chimneys

A restaurant with rooms, there are six very cute bedrooms available in the adorably named House Over-by, just across the courtyard from one of Scotland's best restaurants. The location of this old crofter's cottage, in a far corner of the Isle of Skye, may be remote but the cooking makes the journey more than worthwhile. For the full experience, opt for the "Seven Courses of Skye Showcase" menu.

Where The Three Chimneys and House Over-by, Colbost, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye, IV55 8ZT (01470 51258; www.threechimneys.co.uk)

How much From £295 with breakfast

FAMILY FRIENDLY**31. Bluestone**

Set in the Pembrokeshire National Park, Bluestone positions itself as a "five-star short-break destination like no other". Sophie likes how the "no-nonsense design in the timber lodges and cottages provides a springboard for rope courses, a water-park, a Lego room, zip wiring and more." David adds approvingly that it "combines boutique style with green credentials."

Where Bluestone, The Grange, Canaston Wood, Narberth, Pembrokeshire, SA67 8DE (01834 888 160; www.bluestonewales.com)

How much Short breaks from £249

32. The Gallivant

"A great beach hotel for all the family," is Sarah's verdict on this Sussex seaside oasis. With plenty of walking and windsurfing opportunities, she continues that it's "the perfect place to blow away

the cobwebs and get the children out in the fresh air."

Where The Gallivant, New Llyd Road, Camber, Rye, East Sussex, TN31 7RB (01797 225 057; www.thegallivanthotel.com)

How much From £85 with breakfast

33. Canopy & Stars: Lochhouses

Try something a bit different – these giant tents are a treat for big kids and small, according to Sophie. "The wild, dune-backed beach of Lochhouses is a prelude to these seven safari-style tents immediately behind, whose simple canvas exteriors belie luxury within." Think family-friendly glamping on the Scottish coast.

Where Lochhouses Farm, Tynninghame, East Lothian, EH42 1XP (01275 395 447; www.canopyandstars.co.uk)

How much From £55 sleeping six to eight

34. Polurrian Bay Hotel

"This luxury peninsula address has plenty to recommend it," starts Sophie. "It's the first UK hotel from Nigel Chapman since he sold Luxury Family Hotels to Von Essen, plus it has a kids' club, spa, thoughtful design and children under 12 stay for free with their parents."

Where Polurrian Bay Hotel, Mullion, Cornwall, TR12 7EN (01326 240421; www.polurrianhotel.com)

How much From £120 with breakfast

35. Choristers House

"Ideal for family gatherings or groups of friends, this is a former school in the grounds of Fountains Abbey, an Arts and Crafts fantasy with turrets and mock-medieval designs inside and out," says David. Its dramatic location and acres of space should prove popular with all ages.

Where Fountains Abbey, Ripon, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG4 3DY (01765 608888; www.fountainsabbey.org.uk/html/visiting/what-to-see/choristers-house)

How much From £478 for two nights sleeping up to 10

36. Preseli Venture

This small family-run adventure centre specialises in kayaking and coasteering – David explains that's "like mountaineering, although instead of going up mountains, you go sideways along the cliffs on the coast", for those who don't



New wave: enjoy coast-based activities at Haverfordwest's Preseli Venture (36)



Some like it trot: Brockenhurst's the Pig (28)