

20 fabulous festive bolt holes

Why spend your Christmas tripping over relatives at home when you can rent a splendid house for a large party, asks [Will Hide](#)

1 Grey Manes Somerset

There is space in this lovely stone country cottage for 12 adults and four children. If you want to work off some Christmas pud, there's an indoor pool, and you're on the edge of the Somerset Levels for country walks. There's a wood-burner in the living room and a 42in TV for when *The Sound of Music* rolls around again. **Details** Available on December 30 for £3,700 for seven nights (01823 601644, [premiercottages.co.uk](#)).

2 Blencowe Hall Cumbria

This Grade I listed manor house is on the edge of the Lake District, seven miles from Ullswater. It has 12 bedrooms (sleeping up to 24) and is the perfect place for children, who could enact games of knights and knaves in the 16th-century building and grounds. There's even a two-storey children's hideaway built into the huge kitchen fireplace chimney.

Details Available on December 23 for seven nights from £9,253 (01386 701177, [ruralretreats.co.uk](#)).

3 Maryfield House Cornwall

This Grade II listed vicarage is a great place for a traditional Christmas. It lies in the National Trust estate of Anthony House, next to the church. It's tastefully decorated, making the most of its large rooms with beamed ceilings, stone

fireplaces and arched windows. It's near Looe and Polperro and the beach at Whitsand Bay if you fancy a dip. It sleeps ten comfortably.

Details From £5,690 for five nights (0800 1712156, [thewowhousecompany.com](#)).

4 Felmingham Hall Norfolk

You get the best of the Tudor lifestyle when you stay in this magnificent mansion (which sleeps 14), with its tapestry-hung walls, huge open fires, acres of oak panelling and a stunning moulded ceiling in one of the reception rooms. But you also get the best of the modern world, with a plasma-screen TV, baby grand piano and funky pink sofas in one of two sitting rooms. All the bedrooms have their own bathroom. There's also a well-stocked playroom and bar. But the *pièce de résistance* has to be the dining room, with a table to seat 14. But take note: the kitchen is compact if you're cooking a celebratory meal. **Details** Available at new year for £5,300 for five nights (0800 1712156, [thewowhousecompany.co.uk](#)).

5 Drystone Manor Cotswolds

This imposing restored Queen Anne house is 20 minutes from Oxford by car and can accommodate up to 20 people, ►



Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire



Castle Fionn (10) in Inverness is an impressive baronial pile with four-poster beds and sumptuous furnishings

Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire

◀ so it is ideal for a gathering of the clan or a group of families. If the weather is mild there's a tennis court, football pitch and geothermally heated pool. Inside, the furnishings are a mix of contemporary and traditional. And there's a barn and cottage — handy for snorers?

Details Available on December 24 for a week, from £9,400 (0845 6182215, akvillas.com).

6 Tregenna Cornwall

Sleeping ten, this eco-house on the 1,000-acre Trelowarren Estate overlooks the Long Valley. Hardy renters who want to escape death-by-*X Factor/Strictly* can join the owners for a festive dip in the briny at Kynance Cove, and there's always the biomass boiler-heated pool on site. If you want time off from the kitchen, tuck in at the nearby New Yard restaurant.

Details From December 29, a week is £2,075 (01326 221224, trelowarren.com).

7 Millcombe House Lundy

Even though Christmas comes but once a year it is once too often for some folks. So if you and a bunch of pals want to explore your inner Garbo, head to Lundy island, 12 miles off the north coast of Devon. Millcombe, built in 1836, is a Georgian house that sleeps 12. If you do feel a bit sociable, you could join the islanders for Christmas dinner in the Tavern.

Details Available from December 23, from £2,133 (01628 825925, landmarktrust.org.uk). Helicopter transport is available from £99pp return.

8 Somerleyton Hall Suffolk

If you fancy being lord and lady of the manor, stay at this Tudor-Jacobean mansion, which is still owned by Lord Hugh. Inside, it has been refurbished in rather grand style — though it still retains a friendly atmosphere — while outside there are 14 acres of gardens, a boating lake and a nine-hole golf course.

Details The hall, which sleeps 16, is available from December 23 for £22,400, which includes all food and alcohol (01835 824642, ltr.co.uk).

9 Exmoor Hotel Somerset

Yes, it's a hotel in the Exmoor National Park, but at Christmas and new year you can book the whole place for a house party, so not only do you get your own residence

to share with family and friends but also — drum roll please, Raymondo — someone else to do all the cooking and washing up. There are no TVs and mobile phone reception is patchy so bring *Twister* and extra batteries for those festive gifts, and with Exmoor on your doorstep there's no excuse for not stepping out on plenty of bracing yomps o'er hill and dale.

Details Available over Christmas and new year, from £1,000 per night for ten people, including food (01643 841432, exmoorhotel.co.uk).

10 Castle Fionn Inverness

If it's just you and 27 of your closest friends this Christmas, head for this spectacular baronial pile. Castle Fionn is fairytale stuff: a turreted castle set amid rolling lawns beside a loch. Inside, it's a big, beautiful, labyrinthine place, with drawing rooms heaving with sumptuous furnishings, marble floors, antique paintings, four-poster beds and spiral stairways. You can self-cater in the huge kitchens, or hire in-house chefs. Outdoor pursuits include fishing, boating and hiking.

Details From £26,400; sleeps 28 (01637 881942, uniquehomestays.com).

11 Borth Abersoch, Gwynedd

"Luxurious simplicity" is the byword here, according to the owner of this des-res pad, which sleeps 12 and has a mini cinema and helipad. Abersoch is a lively town with glorious stroll-for-hours beaches close at hand, and Borth Cottage is fitted with more mod-cons than you can shake a reindeer at. **Details** Available from December 23 or 30, from £6,000 (01244 784152, simonescapes.com).

12 Harbour Watch South Devon

Overlooking Salcombe Estuary, this place can accommodate 12 people in four bedrooms. It has its own sandy beach and, while you might not be popping on your cozzie, you might appreciate a wander to clear the cobwebs after sharing a sherry or three with Uncle Gerald. Inside there's an open-plan living and kitchen area that

looks out over the sea and a TV room in which to keep youngsters entertained.

Details Available from £3,500 over

Christmas and new year (01548 853089, www.toadhallcottages.co.uk).

13 Woodlands House Herefordshire

This Grade-II listed red brick Queen Anne country house is in Lyonshall, mentioned in the Domesday Book. It sleeps 18 in nine bedrooms and has festively decorated reception rooms, including two living rooms. Outside, there's a large garden and private woodland. You could also drive to nearby Hay-on-Wye or Ludlow.

Details Available from December 20 and 28, from £4,150 per week (01074 011086, cvtravel.co.uk).

14 Sandbridge Barton South Devon

Sleeping 12, this secluded Grade II-listed house near Stoke Gabriel has a

“
Borth Cottage, a des-res pad in Abersoch, is fitted with more mod cons than you can shake a reindeer at
”

mosaic-lined indoor pool, a full-size snooker table and a large Aga for cooking for the troops and huddling round on frosty mornings. There's also a great view across the gardens, ponds and partly wooded valley towards the River Dart estuary. **Details** A week-long stay, available from December 21 and 28, is from £4,613 (01647 434063, www.helpfulholidays.com).

15 Ard-Aulinn Co Derry

Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire

This house — which means “beautiful peak” — is newly built, with five bedrooms, three of which are en suite. There’s a spacious family room, an open-plan kitchen-dining area and a large bar where, with advance notice so the local pub can set it up, you can have your own supply of draught Guinness. There’s some beautiful countryside round about to explore.
Details Sleeps 12, from £3,500 over Christmas or new year (07849 108130, ard-aulinn.com).

16 Y Stabl Bethlehem, Carmarthenshire

Stay in a stable in Bethlehem at Christmas? It’s been done before, but probably not on the border of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Once a farm outbuilding, this geothermally heated property, which sleeps ten, has exposed wooden beams, high ceilings and five en suite bedrooms. The dining room even comes with its own pulpit should you feel the need to preach to your loved ones. As you’d expect in this area, there are some stunning walks in the Black Mountains, and market towns such as Llandeilo and Llandovery are a short drive away.
Details A week from December 23 is £2,019 and from December 30 from £1,215 (01550 779250, cennencottages.co.uk).

17 Ower Quay Poole, Dorset

No excuses on the “last one to the sea’s a big girl’s blouse” front for a New Year’s Day dip here — this house, which sleeps ten, is only yards from its own beach. Privacy is pretty much guaranteed, as it lies down two miles of unmade track that passes through Rempstone Forest and there’s a two-acre garden. There’s a large kitchen and living room, so plenty of space for games.
Details A week from December 29 is from £2,085 (0800 9804070, dorsetcoastalcottages.com).

18 The Old Chapel Tregurthy, Cornwall

This 19th-century chapel has been converted into accommodation that can sleep up to 16. It’s near the harbour at Charlestown and, after hikes along the cliffs on the coast near St Austell, you can warm up by its open fire. For a day out you

could walk 15 minutes along the bridle path that leads to the Eden Project.
Details Available for a week from December 22 for £2,491 (0845 2681560, cottages4you.co.uk).

19 Sharnberry Co Durham

If you go down to the woods today, you’re sure of . . . forest walks, nature trails and mountain-biking loops. Sharnberry has five bedrooms and is in a quiet corner of Hamsterley Forest, on the edge of Weardale and Teesdale. There’s moorland nearby for bracing post-turkey outings, while, inside, ten of you can make use of the spacious country kitchen-diner, log-burning stove and underfloor heating downstairs.
Details Available for a week from December 21 for £1,250 (07815 612689, sharnberry.co.uk).

20 Pitlands Barn West Sussex

This 1844 flint barn on a working farm in the South Downs has been converted recently into three separate self-catering cottages that together sleep 14. The largest, the Granary, would be the focal point of a Christmas celebration and has a large open-plan living area with vaulted ceiling, wood-burner, dining table that seats 12 and well-equipped kitchen. There are two nice pubs within walking distance and Chichester is only eight miles away.
Details The price for all three rented together for a week from December 23 is £2,500 (02392 631263, pitlandsbarns.co.uk).

All properties were available and prices correct when going to press

Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire



Clockwise from top left:
Ower Quay (17) in
Poole; Tudor living at
Felmingham Hall (4);
Sommerleyton Hall (8);
bathroom bliss at Borth
Cottage (11); one of the
dozen bedrooms at
Blencowe Hall (2); and
the indoor pool at
Sandbridge Barton (14)

Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire



Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire



Source: Times, The {Weekend}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Saturday 29, October 2011
Page: 19,20,21
Area: 2093 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 449938 Daily
BRAD info: page rate £16,645.00, scc rate £67.00
Phone: 020 7782 5000
Keyword: Carmarthenshire

