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**magazine**

APRIL 2023



**Crowning glory!**

Bountiful blueberry trifle and more celebration puddings

**The foodie King**

The regal effect on food, farming and beyond

**Exclusive!**

Make our luscious menu from the royal residence chefs



*Purple Reign*

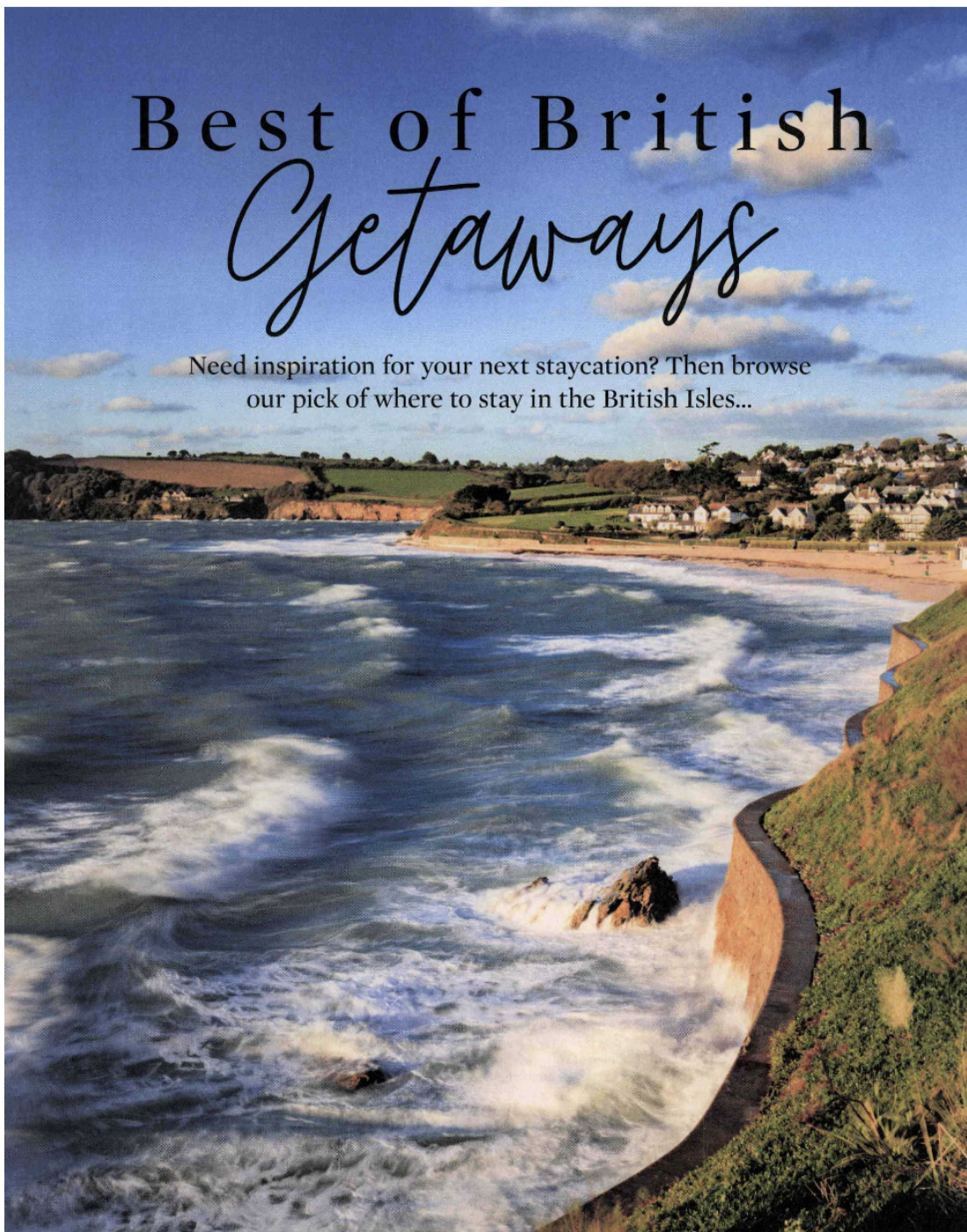
**35**  
NEW SPRING  
RECIPES

- Chorizo chicken one-pot
- Feelgood fish and chips
- Honey-glazed pork
- Crispy beef chow mein

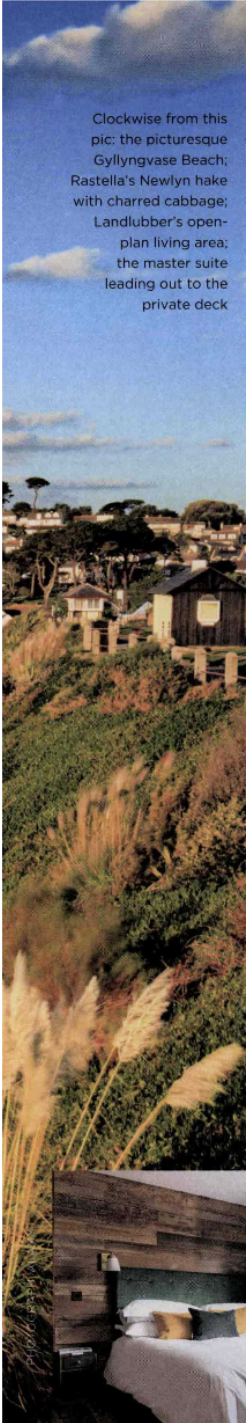


# Best of British *Getaways*

Need inspiration for your next staycation? Then browse  
our pick of where to stay in the British Isles...







Clockwise from this pic: the picturesque Gyllyngvase Beach; Rastella's Newlyn hake with charred cabbage; Landlubber's open-plan living area; the master suite leading out to the private deck

# Falmouth

CHRISTINE FAUGHLIN

Grim weather is no match for the luxurious lodgings, beautiful beaches and culinary excellence of this Cornish hotspot

No matter how much I read about the health-giving properties and life-affirming benefits of cold-water swimming, you'll never catch me taking the plunge at any time other than the height of summer. So it's with a mix of admiration and total bewilderment that I watch an impressive number of people

tip-toeing across the chilly sands of Gyllyngvase Beach and into the frigid late-November sea beyond. But if I were ever to change my tune, I'd want to warm up directly afterwards, and Gylly Beach Cafe, with its heated, enclosed patio has the perfect answer. Here, I share hot, salty chips with my partner Anita, and watch those same brave souls emerge pink-skinned from the foaming waves, flicking seaweed from mottled ankles and making their way back up the beach to the shelter of the cafe.

We have taken advantage of a very slim break in foul weather to meander along this stretch of coast. We clamber over rock pools and walk as far as we can along the coastal pathway, hoping to get to Swanpool, the next beach along, but are forced back where the path is closed for improvements. I'm glad we made the effort to get out and about - albeit briefly - because frankly, it wasn't easy to leave our luxurious lodgings.

Originally built as a grand Queen Anne-style manor house in 1913, Merchants Manor is now a boutique hotel and spa - with Falmouth's only AA 3 Rosette-rated restaurant. We're staying in 'Landlubber' - one of two self-catering residences that wouldn't look out of place in an interiors magazine - and are secretly thankful for the stormy weekend weather forecast that is more than encouraging us to stay put.

An open-plan living area with striking geometric floor tiles and floor-to-ceiling glass walls has all we need (including underfloor heating), while the oak-clad bedrooms have roomy beds, plush drapes and luxe wet rooms with brass fittings and herringbone tiling. Every room opens out onto the private deck with hot tub that runs the length of the property. It's the best of both worlds - we get



the privacy, comfort and convenience of a self-catered space, with the added benefits of easy access to a top-notch restaurant, spa, sauna and pool.

Popping up to the hotel's restaurant, Rastella - an old Cornish word for 'grill' - is a treat. It offers an ever-changing seven-course tasting menu, devised by head chef Aiden Blakely-May, and our server recommends an affordable red wine that really does go with every course. A dish of brill with Cornish mushrooms is our pick of the savoury courses, while a yogurt sorbet with blackberry sauce, served in teeny-tiny cones, takes the sweet course crown.

Next night, we order off the à la carte menu - the descriptions are just a word or three, so it's anyone's guess what we'll be getting. While the friendly staff are happy to explain each dish in detail, we enjoy our own fun guessing game. As is often the case, the simpler the menu description, the more complex the dish - no one is more surprised than me when 'Braised venison, beetroot, Trenow carrots' arrives as mini croquette balls with pretty pickled veg. As with the tasting menu, we enjoy a knockout fish main - crispy-skin Newlyn hake alongside a charred wedge of cabbage and served with black garlic sauce - as well as some ultra-fresh veggie sides.

We flirt with the idea of a nightcap by the fire in the manor's cosy lounge, but the lure of Landlubber is too great. Settled on the sofa, rain pounding dramatically against the windows and wind howling in the distance, we raise our last glass of red wine to the Great British holiday downpour. Rain that we are happy to say, pretty much stopped play. ▶

## THE DETAILS

A three-night B&B stay in Landlubber (3-night minimum stay) costs £300 per night, based on two sharing. A one-night B&B stay in a Comfy Shower Room costs from £118 for two sharing. To book, visit [merchantsmanor.com](http://merchantsmanor.com)



BEST OF BRITISH



# Kent

NICOLA SMITH

A revamped farmhouse in Deal offers proper rural escapism and some truly delicious food



After bumping down winding roads, through fields and onto tracks that make us question if we are on the right road, an understated sign signifies both civilisation and our arrival at Updown Farm. Despite being only 20 minutes' drive from

Deal in Kent, this handsome red-brick 17th-century farmhouse appears in the woodland with a delicious sense of welcoming guests to the middle of nowhere.

The feel is very much 'country house retreat meets country house party', as my partner, Fiona and I are welcomed through the grand doorway by Freddie, who greets us by name and proudly gives us a tour. The oldest part of the house was built in the 1690s and extended in the mid-Victorian era, and until the 1980s it was a working farm. Owners Oliver Brown and Ruth Leigh (daughter of renowned chef, Rowley) have lovingly renovated the property, which opened in July 2022, with Oliver heading up the kitchen and Ruth orchestrating front of house.

The modern influence is clear, with the bold orange library and an explosion of abstract artwork at every turn. Huge feature fireplaces sit in both the library



## THE DETAILS

Rooms at Updown Farm cost from £250 per night bed and breakfast. On Thursday and Saturday evenings, guests eat in the farmhouse kitchen or garden (weather dependent). On Friday evenings and Sunday lunch times, Updown opens the garden restaurant situated under the pergola (weather dependent). For more information and to book, visit [updownfarmhouse.co.uk](http://updownfarmhouse.co.uk)

BEST OF BRITISH



and the long, pearl-coloured drawing room, with its beautiful throws and cushions yet, curiously, neither fire is lit on what is a decidedly chilly day. Here we sip our welcome mocktails, made from the on-site lemon verbena bush, and peruse the heaving book shelves.

## HELP YOURSELF

Leading off the drawing room is a small, deep blue room housing a generously stocked honesty bar (it has all the ingredients for a Negroni, plus a stash of local beers), but the mood lighting is slightly too moody. When we come to plunder the bar for an aperitif, our phone torches are needed to locate the beer, and to scribble down our libations.

Our room, Bedroom One (there are four rooms plus a two-bedroom Gardener's Cottage), is the largest in the house, with its sprawling super king bed and separate sitting area. An assortment of





Clockwise from far left: The cosy and intimate farmhouse kitchen-cum-conservatory; Updown Farm's charming red-brick exterior; a covered pergola for warm-weather al fresco dining; comfort and style in Bedroom One



cushions and pillows are daring combinations of mustard yellow and cyan blue, while the Georgian window frames a picture book garden. Set in seven acres with wild meadow areas and raised borders, Updown Farm promises to come alive in spring, and guests are welcome to explore the grounds or just sit and read in dappled shade (as Jane Austen, a frequent visitor to Kent, might have done...). This is proper rural escapism.

#### FARMHOUSE DINING

We take dinner in the farmhouse kitchen-cum-conservatory, made cosy with its drapes, candles, snow-white tablecloths and mini-heaters, while jazz creates a relaxed but intimate vibe. The kitchen seats up to 12 people, while in spring and summer, dinner is taken in the garden restaurant, under the beautiful covered pergola, warmed by monster gas heaters. With its wicker chairs and scatter cushions, set amid this glorious walled garden, it is a perfect country setting for al fresco dining.

Adjacent to the pergola, the red-brick former stable houses a baker's oven. Freddie tells us that much of the cooking is done in the outdoor oven, including bread, pizzas and sides of beef. When we arrive, smoke is drifting enticingly from the chimney into the late afternoon sky.

It explains the deliciously warm, springy bread with salted butter which opens dinner proceedings, while the nutty roasted pumpkin ravioli that follows is equally as exquisite, accompanied as it is by sage butter that dribbles down the chin (no-one cares, it is too delicious). Brown's vision is Italian inspired, using largely locally sourced ingredients, and the set menu changes weekly.



Our main course is succulent pork loin, which comes with a memorable Sicilian caponata: sweet yet with a kick of spice, and a perfect bedfellow for the naughty pork crackling (so crispy that we hear a fellow diner ecstatically crunching away on his across the room). A bubbling hot potato gratin completes the ensemble, all served by the amiable Megan who, despite being at Updown just two weeks, is well informed and supremely at ease.

The fragrant waft of grappa signals the arrival of dessert: a wobbling, virginal white mound of panna cotta with quince (marinated in said Italian beverage), adding a pleasing tartness. The happy buzz of dinner guests drifts from kitchen to drawing room as we adjourn for coffee, pleasantly sated by our Italian inspired extravaganza. *Ottimo!*

Updown Farm has great plans to add more accommodation, and to transform its cathedral-like barn into restaurant seating, but one thing won't change: it will remain a dreamy Arcadian idyll (with excellent food). ►



# Scotland

RUFUS PURDY

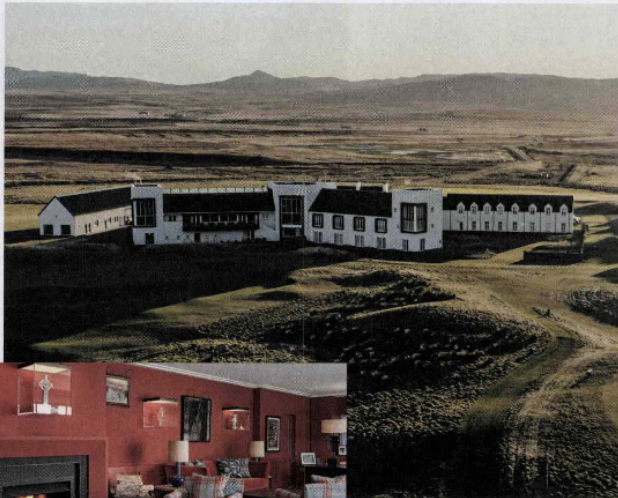
With its gorgeous Hebridean location, this luxe hotel is a stone's throw from some of Islay's best distilleries

The wild stag eyes me warily, like an insecure man in a bar who knows the girlfriend he's sitting beside is much better looking than him. Even though I'm standing on the other side of a fence and his harem of russet-coloured does are resting on the shore of a small beach a short distance away, the look of hostility in his eyes tells me that, if I don't get back into my tuk tuk and continue on my way, it won't be long before his antlers make contact with my bottom.

Tuk tuks? Stags? No, I'm not having a fever dream. I'm midway through a trip around the Hebridean island of Islay, in which I've already pattered along loch shores, through coppery peat bogs and villages of white-painted houses, and past ancient Celtic crosses and whisky distilleries. By the time I get to the stag, I've ticked off most things on my Scottish sights bingo card. The only incongruous detail is the tuk tuk itself – a vehicle more suited to the streets of Mumbai and Bangkok than the Hebrides – though the 'Tuk a Wee Tour' sign on the roof helps redress the balance.

With its low speeds and open sides, a tuk tuk is a great way to experience this isle of bleak beauty, in which you're just as likely to see hares or roe deer on the roads as cars, low clouds feel almost within touching distance and winds whistle across the marshes like troubled spirits. It may be stunning but, outside of summer, it can also be a little cold and wet.

Luckily, I have two great options when it comes to getting warm. The first is to drink some whisky, for which Islay is rightly famous (its nine distilleries read like a rundown of the Scotland's most famous single malts). The second is my hotel, The Machrie, a cosy



## THE DETAILS

Summer rates at The Machrie start from £340 per room, per night, including full Scottish breakfast. For more information, visit [themachrie.co.uk](http://themachrie.co.uk)



refuge at the end of a mile-long track. It may be adjacent to one of the world's best golf courses but it certainly isn't one of those bland golf hotels in which guests like myself, whose only experience of the game is putting balls through miniature windmills, feel alienated. Yes, there are golfers here. But there are also plenty of guests who clearly have no intention of picking up a sand wedge. They've come to The Machrie for the luxe rooms, chef Calum Hall's locally sourced food and the ambience – and they're using it as a base to see the island, tour the likes of the Ardbeg, Bunnahabhain, Caol Ila and Laphroaig distilleries and come back to the hotel to sample their produce beside crackling fires.

I'm in full agreement. The Machrie is beautiful and welcoming. Comfy sofas and chairs are everywhere, contemporary art hangs on Farrow & Ball-painted walls – none of your tired tartan trimmings here – and even the animal heads in the Stag Lounge and the 18 Restaurant & Bar are witty pieces made from fabric and wood. I spend my final night there in a fireside armchair, sipping Deer & Stormy whisky cocktails and G&Ts made with Islay gin, before heading through to the restaurant for a Taste of Islay menu that includes Loch Gruinart oysters in a seaweed-and-breadcrumbs coating, a loin of rabbit wrapped in leek, a creamy bisque made with local crab and lobsters, and vegetables from nearby Nerabus Farm. And that's before I even get to the main. It's venison, of course – a sunset-pink loin served with salted crab apple and spinach purée – and my mind goes back to earlier in the day, and those hostile eyes and sharp-looking antlers. It couldn't be, could it?

Clockwise from far left: rabbit loin wrapped in leek from the Taste of Islay menu; Rufus and the bright green tuk tuk; The Machrie, 'a cosy refuge at the end of a mile-long track'; a comfy lounge, perfect for a fireside dram; whisky tasting at Islay's Bunnahabhain Distillery



BEST OF BRITISH





Clockwise from far left: Joro's pared-back aesthetic; chef Zachary Turner; a dish from the Asian-focused menu; the hotel's 'chilled-out' monochrome décor



# Sheffield

KATHERINE HAIGH

Scandi-chic comes to South Yorkshire with stylish rooms and a restaurant in a shipping container



My first thought on entering House of Joro is that it really does resemble someone's house. The door from the street leads straight into a shared living area complete with sofas, fireplace, a well-equipped kitchen and an honesty bar with an impressive array of artisan snacks. When my husband and I get to our room, a couple of squidgy, freshly baked cookies are laid out next to a half bottle of English sparkling wine, which sets the tone nicely. The chilled-out theme is continued throughout, from the monochrome décor to the complimentary body balm and relaxing essential oil spray in the bathroom. We have checked in to freshen up before an eight-course tasting menu experience at Joro itself, just minutes away on foot.

When dinner time comes around, we stroll over to the restaurant. The table is larger than I expected for just the two of us - it's circular and would easily seat six in another setting, but here the places are set side by side so we can easily talk to each other but also both see what's going on in the kitchen. And there is plenty going on. You could be forgiven for expecting food at a place called Joro (meaning 'earth' in old Norse) to be Scandinavian, but the menu has an Asian focus - the restaurant is named for its ethos and cooking style, using British ingredients, minimising waste and employing traditional cooking methods.

A menu is provided so we can anticipate each course, but the minimalist descriptions - just three or four key ingredients - belie the amount of effort that has gone into each item. We start with canapés, including a perfectly charred flatbread with garlic butter, spread with a Scandi-style wooden butter knife that proprietor Charlotte tells me is made especially for the restaurant by a local craftsman.

As the courses start coming, each is introduced by a knowledgeable member of staff. Ingredients like summer truffle and Roscoff onions, which I've previously only seen on *MasterChef*, are presented in earthenware

dishes. The chawanmushi starter, a Japanese soup, remains one of my favourite dishes, with tiny pieces of shellfish and duck liver packing an umami punch and cubes of raw courgette for crunch. The 'transition' course, between savoury and sweet, is another winner. Involving buttermilk, jalapeño granita and green tonic, it sounds a bit bizarre on paper but is in fact a perfect palate cleanser, preparing us to enjoy an intense strawberry dessert and then mango parfait.

To drink, we opt for the non-alcoholic pairing. Each drink is presented shortly before the course it will accompany, along with an explanation of what it is and how it has been chosen. Some are familiar, like the lapsang tea which goes with the first course; others have been made in-house, using ingredients which would otherwise go to waste. There is an amazing mocktail made using fermented pineapple rinds, but best of all is the cola. Created from scratch using the same spices which are in its matched dish of roast pork, it's a far cry from the bottled fizz of children's parties.

It's almost jarring to step outside again and realise we've spent the evening in a shipping container in an unassuming part of Sheffield - the food and drink has transported us to somewhere much more exotic. After the buzz of excited diners and upbeat music in the restaurant, the calm of our room is amplified and we easily drift off to sleep.

Next day, there are six of us at the communal dining table for breakfast (though there is also the option to have the food brought to your room), and for the first few minutes there is almost silence. I sense that this isn't just because some of us were enjoying the honesty bar last night, but because all attention is on the food. We will certainly remember the food, but that's not all - at this house, we've been made to feel very much at home. ■



BEST OF BRITISH

## THE DETAILS

Rooms at House of Joro cost from £90 per night including breakfast. The eight-course tasting menu at Joro costs £75pp with an optional drinks pairing of £55pp or non-alcoholic drinks pairing of £35pp. There is also a five-course lunch menu (£35pp) and a 10-course menu (£95pp), both with optional alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks pairings. Visit [jororestaurant.co.uk](http://jororestaurant.co.uk)