

ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY



Stroll down to the
pavilions of Barnsley House,
then down and explore
the park and grounds
near Kington-upon-Avon
in the Warwickshire
countryside. Top right

COSY UP IN THESE 10 WONDERFULLY BRITISH RURAL RETREATS, FROM SUMPTUOUS MANOR HOUSES TO CHIC BOUTIQUE HOTELS, FOR BRACING WALKS, BLAZING FIRES AND PAMPERING SPAS

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE SO ROMANTIC as the British countryside in winter. All that stamping through muddy leaves, followed by scones and jam in front of a crackling fire. But with such huge choice these days, deciding where to stay is the hard part. The British country hotel has undergone a renaissance in recent years, so much so that the typical chintzy, crumbling manor houses of yore have gone the way of the smoky pub and all but disappeared. Instead, there's a new breed of country hotel that's every bit as polished as its chic urban counterparts, and just as varied. For every rural retreat with a foothold in the past, channelling four posters and gorgeous antiques, there's another offering the kind of designer gloss that wouldn't look out of place on Bond Street. Whatever style you want, we've found a rural retreat that's just right for you. All you have to do is check in and relax.

BARNSELY HOUSE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Set in the heart of the rolling Cotswold hills, just a few miles from Cirencester, the swish Barnsley House hotel is a gem of a hideaway. The decor is a carefully honed mix of traditional and contemporary – stone fireplaces, wood floors and exposed beams, and slick, modern bathrooms – and no two rooms are the same. The romantic, rambling gardens draw nature lovers from all over, and the wilderness path makes a tranquil route to the spa. The Italian-influenced cuisine – using home-grown produce – by acclaimed chef Graham Grafton is exemplary. Doubles from £275, B&B; +44 (0)1285 740000, barnsleyhouse.com ▶

