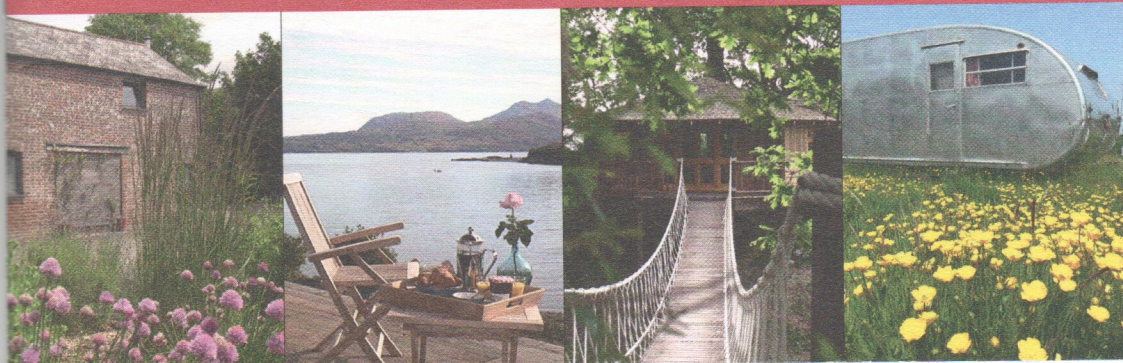




 COUNTRY LIVING

ROMANTIC *retreats*

42 MAGICAL PLACES TO STAY



Shoreline shelters

HARBOUR HOUSEBOAT BEMBRIDGE, ISLE OF WIGHT

Sturdy the houseboat was built on the hull of a 72ft Thames lighter (a barge used for transporting goods up and down the river). And, as its owners, Georgina Moore and her partner James, also live on a houseboat on the River

Thames, they have fitted out their floating holiday home with expertise. A surprisingly spacious living/kitchen/diner has been decorated with a suitably maritime accent – a navy-blue sofa and a zinc-topped table are offset by



upcycled pieces of furniture and local art. Views here extend across the Solent as far as the mainland (use the telescope to get a closer look). On the roof is a viewing deck, ideal for sundowners and watching the sea-going traffic drift by, as the houseboat rises and falls with the tide. A fully fitted kitchen with range cooker allows guests to make the most of the local seafood: Bembridge is known for its crab, and being moored at the harbour makes it easy to buy fresh fish from the day boats. Across two levels, there are four large bedrooms – two of which have Loaf king-size beds – and two smart bathrooms. The boat also has a bio-plant treatment system, which returns clear water to the harbour. Step ashore to discover the village of Bembridge, with its crab shack, pubs, restaurants and shops – the nearest beach is just five minutes away. Get active on the island's coastal path and 200 miles of cycle routes. Or visit the historic sites of Osborne House and Carisbrooke Castle. *Sleeps six. From £198 per night; three-night minimum stay (canopyandstars.co.uk).*

TOTALLY
PRIVATE
SETTING

BARGES &
HOUSEBOATS



BLAGDON WATER HOLSWORTHY, DEVON

As the three traditional canal barges moored at Blagdon Water are spaced far apart, each with its own jetty and picnic area, you can enjoy the lake setting in total privacy. Located on the border between Devon and Cornwall, all have en-suite cabins, a light-filled galley living space and a heritage feel. *Sleeps four to five. From £450 per week (blagdonwater.com).*

TWEE GEBROEDERS PIN MILL, SUFFOLK

A cherry-red oil-fired range forms the centrepiece of this beautifully restored 1914 Dutch sailing barge on the River Orwell, whose interior is panelled in tongue-and-groove with striped soft furnishings. It's also close to the renowned Butt & Oyster pub and 85 acres of National Trust woodland. *Sleeps four. From £125 per night (heritage-travel.co.uk).*

