

# Escape

GET OFFLINE AND  
ON TREND WITH THESE  
SCREEN-FREE BREAKS

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As war rages in the Middle East, it's the perfect time to book one of...

## The 26 cosiest cottages in Britain



**J**ANE Austen had it right about cottages. 'I am excessively fond of a cottage,' she wrote. 'There is always so much comfort, so much elegance about them.'

And something reassuring too – especially with the Middle East conflict causing so many travel woes.

Staycation bookings have surged by 260 per cent this month as more people turn to trips in the UK rather than risk getting caught up in the dreadful mess, according to research from holiday home insurance specialist Schofields.

With that in mind, we've scoured the

by **THOMAS ISACKE**

best of what's available for the coming May half-term. From stylishly converted barns to seaside retreats and moorland hideaways, here are our picks of the best cottages and holiday lets – plus, we've highlighted summer prices...

### THE SOUTH-WEST

#### SOUTH CORNWALL SECRET

ON THE Cornish coast's Fal Estuary, five miles south of Truro, Feock is a

quiet village with a parish church, close to Trelissick, a National Trust-run house and garden featuring exotic plants. Master Shipwrights House is a four-bedroom property with a fireplace, open-plan lounge, large garden and its own mooring.

**BOOK IT:** Seven nights from £2,520 or from £1,918 in the summer; sleeps eight ([luxurycoastal.co.uk](http://luxurycoastal.co.uk)).

#### HOT TUB WITH A VIEW

JUST south of Marazion village overlooking the tidal island of St Michael's Mount in south-west Cornwall, Perranuthnoe is a pretty village offering good walks and a shingle-sand beach. Base yourself at



Idyllic: A Grade II-listed home in Suffolk and, inset, Bryn Teifi in Wales

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

by ANNABEL  
VENNING

**A**MONG the wealth of travel trends predicted for 2026 – taking more railway journeys, road trips, ‘coolcations’ in the mountains – one has come to the fore... screen-free breaks.

We have never been more aware of the perils of digital addiction. Social media remains a hot topic of debate in Parliament, and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson recently announced schools should be phone-free in lessons and breaks.

Many of us know how reliant we have become on devices, yet feel powerless about it. 82 per cent of Britons admit to scrolling mindlessly, rising to 95 per cent among Millennials and Gen Z.

We feel guilty about phone usage and what it does to our moods and attention spans, but kicking the habits feels futile.

Even on holiday it's hard to escape: 67 per cent of British workers feel pressured to check work emails (even though 80 per cent would rather disconnect completely). And with 92 per cent of the globe now covered by mobile networks, it requires a concerted effort to escape the tyranny of tech.

Which is why more travel providers want to help people do just that. Luxury London magazine, Forbes and other trend spotters report a sharp rise in demand for digital detox retreats. Last year's Hilton Trends Report (2025) noted that 27 per cent of travellers said they intend to reduce social media use on holiday.

The global digital detox tourism market is projected to reach £3.5billion by 2033. Travel companies are meeting this demand in a variety of ways: optional lock boxes for phones; wi-fi-free areas or no wi-fi at all; and activities that ensure you immerse yourself in your surroundings, not your screen.

Others provide totally off-grid, nature-focused escapes to reduce stress. Studies have shown that three days away from digital stimuli can break the cycle of constant stimulation and addiction to dopamine hits induced by constant phone use. Neural pathways are reset, people feel more relaxed, sleep better, and interact more productively with others.

Unplugged, the off-grid cabin company, taps into this by offering stays of three nights or more (from £390) in cabins set in beautiful natural surroundings around England and Wales.

To help people ditch their screens, each cabin provides a lock box for smartphones, an old-fashioned Nokia for urgent calls, and an instant camera with film. Last year they saw a 44 per cent rise in bookings. Since then, they've added another 20 cabins to meet demand.

Similarly, Brett Norton, CEO of Ultimate Travel Club (utc.travel), reports a rapidly growing appetite for stays that encourage reduced screen time (rather than none at all) and where relaxation and wellness are prioritised.

One of these is Euphoria wellness retreat in Greece where guests can unwind with yoga, wellness and wi-fi-free areas. ‘Digital detox has moved firmly into the mainstream,’ Norton says.

‘We're seeing clear demand for holidays designed to reduce digital noise – places where nature, wellness and quiet take precedence – because travellers increasingly want breaks that deliver genuine rest and mental reset, not just a

Call of the wild: Glass-fronted cabins on Manshausen island in Norway.



# TAKE A PROPER SCREEN BREAK

Digital detoxes are trending – here are the holidays to book



change of scenery.’ Some destinations are digital detoxes by default, as they are too remote for signal or wi-fi.

One of my most memorable and restorative moments in 2024 was a three-day trek in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains National Park.

We were far too remote for mobile signal and listened instead to the whooping of gibbons and calls of hornbills.

Tired from trekking and forcibly removed from digital distractions, both nights I slept for 12 solid hours in a hammock strung between two trees.

I swore I would repeat the experiment back home by putting my phone on aeroplane mode for at least a few hours a day, but of course I didn't and was soon doomscrolling again.

So this is where screen breaks kick in: you have no choice but to log off for a while. Here are some of the best.

## MALDIVIAN PHONE BAN

GILI Lankanfushi is a five-star luxury private island resort in the Maldives with overwater villas, sugar-sand beaches and glorious marine life.

Guests can swap their phones for cameras (they receive the printed photographs) and staff will even deliver a morning digest for news junkies to avoid the dreaded lure of the web.

**BOOK IT:** From £1,044 a night B&B based on two adults sharing a Villa Suite (gili-lankanfushi.com).

## NO WI-FI IN SNOWDONIA

THE National Trust has several off-grid getaways including the remote and ravishingly pretty Hafod Y Fedw, a 17th-century cottage on the slopes of Eryri (Snowdonia). Surrounded by mountains, you can walk and stargaze. There is no wi-fi but you do have TV.

**BOOK IT:** From £514 a night for three nights. Sleeps four (nationaltrust.org.uk).

## RECHARGE IN GREECE

THE Euphoria Retreat, set amid the Peloponnese mountains, Greece, is an award-winning wellness retreat where the focus is on mindfulness, meditation, yoga and personalised programmes. Phone use is discouraged in the spa and

communal wellness areas.

**BOOK IT:** Five nights B&B from £1,102pp (utc.travel).

## DIGITAL NO-GO IN NORWAY

IN SUMMER the sun never sets in northern Norway. Audley Travel has an itinerary that

includes three nights on Manshausen island, staying in glass-fronted cabins with no wi-fi. Then on to Svolvær and Nusfjord to stay in *rorbu* – luxed-up traditional fishing cabins – for more hiking and fishing.

**BOOK IT:** From £11,595pp for 13 days (audleytravel.com).

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