



LOOKING TO INJECT YOUR HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION WITH A LITTLE PERSONALITY? THEN WHET YOUR APPETITE WITH THIS INSPIRING SELECTION OF ECLECTIC SPACES - FROM A BAUHAUS RETREAT IN THE DOLOMITES TO ARCHITECT-DESIGNED BEACH HUTS IN HOLLAND

# TOP 10 GRAND TOP 10 GETAWAYS

WORDS **ALICE CORR & CAMILLE JACKSON**

## 1 Outback adventure

### Longitude 131°, Uluru, Australia

Camping doesn't get any more glamorous than this: these five-star luxury tents are pitched next to Uluru (Ayers Rock) in central Australia (pictured left and right). Situated in World Heritage-listed wilderness at the Longitude 131° resort, the tents are equipped with everything you'd expect from a five-star hotel. Wake up under a canvas and flick a bedside switch to raise the blinds and watch the sun rise over the majestic Uluru. Spend the day learning about aboriginal culture and exploring the area's unique flora and fauna with an expert guide. And it wouldn't be camping without a little alfresco dining, so after your busy day, you can relax under a glittering canopy of stars at the resort's open-air restaurant. Tents cost AUS\$2,523 (approx £1,225) for three nights. Longitude 131° (+61 2 8296 8010; longitude131.com.au).



## 2 Kitsch caravans

### Vintage Vacations, Isle of Wight

If you're looking for something a little different, these retro Airstream caravans on the Isle of Wight could be just the answer. Situated on a working dairy farm, these kitsch aluminium motor homes are far from trailer trash. The fittings and interior decoration are all vintage, from the Sixties light fittings and original crochet blankets on the bed, to the groovy Tiddlywinks game and retro magazines. Although the on-site facilities are fairly basic, it's a surprisingly comfortable place to stay as everything has been refurbished to twenty-first century standards. Owner Helen Cunningham bought her first Airstream on eBay and had it shipped over from Missouri in 2004; now she owns 10 caravans, hailing from the Forties to the Sixties. From £160 for a weekend (caravan sizes vary). Vintage Vacations (07802 758 113; vintagevacations.co.uk).



### 3 Up against the Wall

#### Commune by the Great Wall, Beijing, China

At more than 4,000 miles long, the Great Wall of China is truly impressive. So what better way to see one of the great wonders of the world than to stay in a contemporary retreat tucked away next to the Wall, with spectacular views of the Shuiguan mountains. Commune by the Great Wall is an award-winning collection of 11 villas designed by 12 different Asian architects, including Shigeru Ban of Japan and Rocco Yim of Hong Kong. Located just over an hour away from Beijing Capital Airport, this is a truly luxurious complex which features a permanent art exhibition, private cinema, ballroom, three restaurants and spa. The Suitcase House, pictured right, designed by Hong Kong architect Gary Chang, is a four-bedroom, four-bathroom dwelling with in-house sauna. Come evening, relax on the roof while surveying the Great Wall. From 1,900 RMB (approx £140) per night. Commune by the Wall (+86 10 8118 1888; [communebythegreatwall.com](http://communebythegreatwall.com)).



## EXPERIENCE MODERN SIMPLICITY AT ITS BEST AT THIS BAUHAUS RETREAT

### 4 Bauhaus hideaway

#### Pension Briol, South Tyrol, Italy

If you want to really get away from it all, check into Pension Briol in the heights of the Dolomites in Italy's South Tyrol region. As there is no direct road, the last hour-and-a-half of your journey has to be made on foot. The epitome of modernist simplicity, the flat-roofed building, designed by Viennese artist Hubert Lanzinger, has remained unchanged since it was built in 1928. It is certainly not your average alpine chalet; the architecture and interior design bear the hallmarks of Bauhaus style, of which Lanzinger was a student. It is a wood and stone affair, with broad staircases, spruce floors, spartan furniture and expansive windows that reveal breathtaking views of the unspoiled scenery. There is no television or radio and, to maintain the authentic feel, the owner has resisted installing central heating, so the pension is only open from May to October. From €69.50 (approx £55) per person, per night, half board. Pension Briol (+39 471 650 125; [briol.it](http://briol.it)).





## 5 The height of luxury Therme Vals, Graubünden, Switzerland

This spa and hotel complex is situated over thermal springs in a small mountain village in Graubünden, Switzerland. More than 20 years ago, the tiny Vals community bought the bankrupt hotel, which was built in the Sixties, and commissioned leading Swiss architect Peter Zumthor to create the spa. Therme Vals was added to the list of Swiss Conservation Heritage sites in 1998, only two years after its completion. Designed to appear as though it predates the hotel, the building was constructed using local Valser quartzite stone, and is topped by a grass roof that appears to float, thanks to Zumthor's clever use of glass. The spa also includes a maze of tranquil pools, designed to rejuvenate. From €63 (approx £50) per person per night. Therme Vals (+41 81 926 8080; therme-vals.ch).

## 6 Down on the beach Seasidesleepers, Domburg, Holland

For a beach holiday with a difference, experience the architecturally designed Seasidesleepers in Holland. Situated in Domburg, across the channel from Southend-on-Sea, you can enjoy a fantastic sunset, be lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves, and then tuck into freshly delivered hot rolls on your balcony. It's easy to unwind when you can feel the sand between your toes and enjoy a spot of sea fishing. Beachside holiday huts are popular in the Netherlands, and these prefabricated structures are removed by lorry from the beach during storm season (October to April). WTS Architects (wtsarch.com) has kitted out each building with the latest modern features, including a bathroom and kitchen, and cleverly designed the space to sleep up to five people, with the loft room accessed by a ladder. From €435 (approx £347) for a weekend. Sleepsiders (+31 118 570 055; slaapzand.nl).





## 7 Modernist luxury

### Knai Bang Chatt, Cambodia

This elegant complex consists of three modernist villas, one of which was designed by a protégé of Cambodia's most revered architect: Vann Molyvann, who was himself a student of Le Corbusier. Built in 1962, the Blue House is a multi-terraced, three-storey villa with stunning views over the Gulf of Thailand, and provides a rare opportunity to experience modernist architecture on the other side of the globe. Located on Cambodia's southern coast in Kep – which thrived as a seaside resort in the Sixties – it's surrounded by beauty spots, such as the tropical forest of Bokor National Park and nearby Rabbit Island. Advertised as a private house, not a hotel, Knai Bang Chatt is an exclusive getaway, complete with yoga, massage and meditation sessions. Relax in a hammock under a palm tree on the private beach, or in the sea-facing infinity pool. From US\$146 (approx £73) per person per night, excluding taxes. Knai Bang Chatt (+855 1287 9486; knai bangchatt.com).

## A UNIQUE TIMBER-CLAD HERMITAGE IS THE IDEAL SPACE FOR REFLECTION

## 8 Sacred space

### Glencomeragh House Retreat Centre, Clonmel, Co Tipperary, Ireland

The award-winning hermitages at the Glencomeragh House Retreat Centre can be hired out by those in need of a little reflection and contemplation. Nestled in a valley between Slievenamon and the Comeragh Mountains, architects Bates Maher (architectstm.com) created four hermitages, clad in locally sourced timber, that look out on to mature forests and grounds. Each hermitage is centred around a tiny, outdoor sacred space devoid of any distraction, designed to help you 'connect with your inner self'. Inside, shuttered windows create a space that's conducive to contemplation and meditation. Each hermitage is decorated with bespoke, minimalist furniture, a double bed and double sofa bed, underfloor heating and a Jacuzzi. Guests are also asked to wear the flip-flops provided. From €60 per night (approx £48). Glencomeragh House Retreat Centre (+353 52 33181; glencomeragh.ie).





## 9 High on a hill Wicklow Head Lighthouse, Dunbar Head, Republic of Ireland

Afraid of heights? Then this 95ft octagonal lighthouse on Ireland's east coast could be the perfect place to conquer your fear. The survivor of two lighthouses built on Wicklow Head in September 1781, it has weathered the Irish coastal storms for more than 200 years. It was struck by lightning in 1836, and the ensuing fire completely gutted the tower, but thankfully it was preserved and the brick dome on the roof was added in 1866. The lighthouse was acquired in 1996 by the Irish Landmark Trust, which has faithfully restored the building. Make yourself at home in its rustic but stylish interior (think whitewashed walls, pine furniture and brass beds). But beware of the ghost: according to Wicklow legend, 150 years ago a woman was beheaded by a jealous suitor, so if you hear noises in the night... From €624 (approx £500) for four nights. Wicklow Head Lighthouse (+353 1 670 4733; irishlandmark.com).

DAVID GRANDORGE

## ENJOY THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE IN A STYLISH AND TRADITIONAL FARMHOUSE BARN

### 10 Barnstorming... Quakerhall Barns, Norfolk

Hall Barn and Quaker Barn, set in the grounds of Quaker's Hall – a Grade II-listed farmhouse built at the turn of the eighteenth century – are a perfect combination of old and new. Both are open plan and mix period features, such as exposed beams, an inglenook fireplace and antique furniture, with contemporary details such as marble-resin floors and granite worktops. The straw-bale insulation will keep you cool in summer and warm in winter, and the oak dining tables, which can comfortably seat eight, are ideal for intimate entertaining and for tucking into the luxury welcome hamper that greets every guest. Alternatively, dine outside on the terrace as the south-facing gardens look out across acres of farmland. The barns are located near the sandy beaches of Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea, so don't forget your bucket and spade. From £705 per week. Quakerhall Barns (01328 821 744; quakerhallbarns.co.uk).

