

The new breed of holiday rentals offers affordable luxury and added extras – from cinemas to pro chefs.

By Susan d'Arcy



The self-catering holiday has come a long way. No longer are we expected to provide our own linen, towels and cleaning materials. You don't even have to supply your own entertainment. These days, properties might come with concierges who can arrange everything from chefs to cook for you to teachers who will give hands-on lessons in painting, poker, falconry or make-up artistry. As well as glorious wilderness, you'll find self-catering cottages in the grounds of country-house hotels (you can share their five-star facilities) and in prime city-centre locations.

Sawday's, which has just launched a self-catering website, insists that flexibility is now key. "The laminated list of do's and don'ts is almost extinct," it says. "Short breaks are pretty common, as are negotiable changeover days." Self-catering is also a good way to go posh at affordable prices. The upmarket operator CV Travel says: "We've seen huge growth among those sharing with friends or extended family, which brings down the rental cost while providing a holiday in the kind of property that dreams are made of." Here's our pick.

PARTY PADS

24 CORNWALL Sleeps 16

If you're after tumbledown, look away now. Estuary House is unflinchingly modern and minimalist, with eyefuls of the Camel estuary from the open-plan living area on the top floor, a private boat mooring, for forays into Rock and Padstow, geothermal heating and solar panels, so you can feel all smug and eco-conscious as you pop open another bottle of fizz. £3,000/£6,000; 020 7401 1086, cvtravel.co.uk