



eat, sleep, escape

Thermal spas in Bath, members bars launching country boltholes and City workers becoming boutique hoteliers: the UK's best new weekend spots **WORDS BEN MCCORMACK**



Clockwise from top left: The Seaside Boarding House; tuck in at The Gainsborough Bath Spa; a Soho Farmhouse cabin; Chapel House PZ

The Gainsborough Bath Spa, Bath

FOR STARTERS: While some hotels tout a hot tub, the Grade II-listed Gainsborough claims to be the UK's only hotel with natural thermal waters, enjoying a private supply up to 40°C. The recommended one-hour spa circuit takes in three thermal pools, saunas, steam room and an ice alcove (at your peril). The 99 guest rooms feature a soothing Georgian palette, and two suites even have the famous water on tap.

MAINS & MORE: Try a different eau-de-vie in the Gainsborough Bar



BILL, PLEASE: Double rooms (room only) from £285 a night
CONTACT: 01225 358888; thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk

ahead of English-meets-Asian cooking that nods to the hotel's Malaysian owner, YTL Hotels. Austrian-born chef Johann Lafer is a Michelin-starred celebrity in Germany, hence Bavarian sausage for breakfast (for more on the city, see *24 Hours in Bath*, p.166). **SIDES:** Britain's most beautiful cityscape is on your doorstep. Saunter through the Royal Crescent, admire Pulteney Bridge, visit the excellent Fashion Museum and take afternoon tea at the Pump Room adjoining the baths. Take in a play at the renowned Theatre Royal, or Christmas sees plenty of festive markets.

Chapel House PZ, Cornwall

FOR STARTERS: Former City worker Susan Stuart spent two years converting this Grade II-listed Georgian stunner into a boutique hotel. Modernist furniture from Stuart's old home in Stockwell fits the clean-lined proportions to a tee, while a neutral colour scheme of grey, green and white emphasises the natural light and nearness of the sea (visible from most of the six guest rooms).

MAINS & MORE: Stuart is an accomplished cook. Find the likes of pan-fried brill with samphire in her dining room – open to the public at weekends and on demand for guests the rest of the time. Breakfasts include

Cornish specialities, such as sizzled cod roe, while freshly baked cakes and refreshments are complimentary and available all day. **SIDES:** Wander down Chapel Street to the harbour, where ferries to the Isles of Scilly depart, stopping for a pint in the jaunty Admiral Benbow or 13th-century Turks Head. Alternatively, do a tour of the Penwith peninsula. Make the most of your weekend by catching the night sleeper back and arrive in London ready for work on Monday morning.

BILL, PLEASE: Double rooms with breakfast from £150 a night
CONTACT: 01736 362024; chapelhousepz.co.uk



The Seaside Boarding House, Dorset

FOR STARTERS: If Soho House (below) isn't your thing, try The Seaside Boarding House: this was set up by The Groucho Club founder Tony Macintosh and its former MD Mary-Lou Sturridge. Perched above Chesil Beach, the view stretches along the Jurassic Coast, while inside it's the opposite of Farrow & Ball faux heritage (check out the Peter Blake art). The eight bedrooms (seven more on the way) all have individually designed bathrooms, Wi-Fi and a TV on request, though why watch anything other than the sea view?

MAINS & MORE: Menus are overseen by semi-retired modern British legend Alastair Little and inspired by the surrounding land and sea (read locally grazed roast lamb, or turbot and chips). There's also great local eating nearby, including the Hive Beach Café and Hix Oyster & Fish House.

SIDES: A minute's walk and there's the beach. If it's raining, curl up in the library with something appropriate: *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Persuasion* were both set in Lyme Regis.

BILL, PLEASE: Double rooms with breakfast from £180 a night
CONTACT: 01308 897205; theseasideboardinghouse.com



Soho Farmhouse, Oxfordshire

FOR STARTERS: Alexa Chung, Eddie Redmayne, Stanley Tucci... Did any bright young (or not so young) thing not turn up to the opening of Soho House's *rus in urbe* resort? The 100-acre site – with a seven-bedroom farmhouse, four-bedroom cottage and 40 cabins – refutes accusations of being a posh CenterParcs through attention to detail: staff welcome you by name (your number plate having been scanned on entry), while nice cabin touches include wood-burning stoves, porch rocking chairs, bicycles, wellies (in your size, naturally) and fridges full of cocktails.



MAINS & MORE: Have a chef arrive on a milk float to cook breakfast to order or head to the Farmyard for a deli with cheese room and wine cellar, and the Main Barn restaurant overseen by Tom Aikens (think halibut with sea vegetables and brown shrimp). The Mill Room pub closes when the last person leaves.

SIDES: Chill out in the Cowshed spa or work up a sweat on the tennis courts or five-a-side football pitch. Get your hair done at the Josh Wood salon and catch a film in the Electric Barn. Blenheim is nearby, as is Bicester Village shopping outlet.

BILL, PLEASE: Double cabins with breakfast are from £220 a night
CONTACT: 01608 691000; sohofarmhouse.com

SEASIDE BOARDING HOUSE IMAGE BY ANGUS PIGOTT PHOTOGRAPHY