

Romance in the Countryside

HISTORIC HOUSE HOTELS

Ask a few couples what makes a romantic getaway and you will probably get slightly different answers from each couple, maybe even each partner. There are a few standards that go without saying, including candlelit dinners and beautiful surroundings, but to be classified as memorably amorous it takes a bit more than a room with a view and a few candles. Indeed, a truly romantic country house hotel, much like a good relationship, has that perfect alchemy of comfort and excitement, intrigue and indulgence.

The trick is in finding your match



Portmeirion Village

It is hard to believe that this exotic looking and magical place is situated in North Wales, but it's one place where nothing is what it seems. Although it looks old, Portmeirion is a 20th century folly, constructed between 1925 and 1976 by the architect Clough Williams-Ellis. Working on a tight budget, he built the village piecemeal, structure by structure, recycling elements from stately homes. As a result, there are some remarkable pieces of architecture including the plaster interior of the Town Hall, a Jacobean masterpiece illustrating the 12 Labours of Hercules. Williams-Ellis bought it for £13 at an auction in 1933 and had it dismantled and rebuilt in Portmeirion, saving it from likely



destruction. Clough added character to his new buildings with a set designer's tricks, using paint effects to suggest the appearance of damp and age. He concealed functional elements with whimsical details, avoided straight lines where he could and created symmetry by painting trompe l'oeil windows. He called this process 'Cloughing things up' and because space was limited, he reduced the size of most of the buildings by twenty percent, all of which adds to the village's charm. If you are looking for a romantic backdrop, then Portmeirion is an ideal destination. www.portmeirion-village.com

Middlethorpe Hall

On the outskirts of York lies Middlethorpe Hall, a fine country house dating to 1699, and once home to the famous diarist Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Elegantly decorated in 18th century style and furnished with antiques and fine paintings, it has the ambience of a well-kept, private manor house rather than a hotel. Indeed, when it comes to being a romantic destination, this hotel has it all: period charm, character, history and beauty. It is large enough to escape for private moments, but small enough to feel intimate.

You can indulge yourself by making use of the health and fitness spa facilities, which are built behind the façade of two charming Edwardian cottages. The spa includes a mosaic-lined pool, a steam room, saunas and a whirlpool bath... all very relaxing. If this doesn't get you in the mood for love then you could always explore the 20 acres of manicured gardens and parkland, which surround Middlethorpe Hall, including a fragrant rose garden, intriguing walled garden and an enchanting meadow. www.middlethorpe.com





Hartwell House

Hartwell House

This 17th century property is not only architecturally beautiful, but it has a remarkable history: its most famous resident was Louis XVIII, exiled King of France. Interestingly, the Domesday Book mentions Hartwell, an earlier house having stood slightly to the south of the present property. The present house remains unspoilt, retaining a number of its original Jacobean features with the later addition of Georgian facades and garden structures by eminent architects including James Gibbs, Henry Keene and James Wyatt. After a sumptuous meal, you can look forward to a good night's sleep in one of the luxuriously furnished rooms. Indeed, staying here certainly gives you a true taste of the good life. Hartwell House is steeped in history, offers excellent services and facilities and also makes a great base for exploring the neighboring stately homes of Waddesdon Manor, Blenheim Palace and Hatfield House.

www.hartwell-house.com

Cringletie House Hotel

For a romantic getaway north of the border, you simply cannot go wrong with Cringletie House Hotel, a thoroughly charming hotel with a string of awards to its name, situated in Peebles on the Scottish Borders. This former Scottish Baronial castle features 28 acres of well-tended grounds and stunning views. The décor manages that delicate balance of being sympathetic to its history, highlight-



Hartwell House

ing stunning original features while also having a crisp modern finish, preventing any chance of a stuffy old hotel cliché.

The communal areas in the hotel include a sizable conservatory offering views of the grounds, plus a cosy lounge and two spacious, yet intimate dining areas. If you fancy a cocktail or two before dinner you'll be in luck as the head bartender, Mark Barratt, is a bit of a cocktail mixing extraordinaire and has many signature cocktails including a garden martini while the manager, Jeremy, is always looking to entertain his guests, offering experiences such as safari lunches and outlander dinners. If you are thinking about its romantic qualities then perhaps I should mention that it is the hotel in which my now-husband proposed to me, and the place where we were married. If you want to stay in a Scottish castle, steeped in history, with impeccable service and a dose of luxury, Cringletie House ticks all these boxes and more.

www.cringletie.com

“The Headland Hotel has a romantically gothic profile that makes it like no other.”

The Headland Hotel

The Headland Hotel stands defiantly isolated above Fistral Beach and has a romantically gothic profile that makes it like no other. The 115-year-old stone and terracotta-clad edifice stands out against the wild Cornish landscape and offers a



Cringletie House Hotel



unique hotel experience. The Grade II-listed hotel was purpose-built in 1900, sparking a minor local uproar as the location, on Towan Head, had previously been used by local fishermen to dry their nets. An early guest of the hotel was the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII. The dining room is nothing short of spectacular with stunning views over the briny and the former ballroom that has been converted to a sitting room is an ideal place to relax and enjoy pre-or post-dinner drinks. It's historic charm, waterside location, architecture and service all make The Headland Hotel enchanting and inexplicably romantic.
www.headlandhotel.co.uk

Although they say it's not the destination that's important but the person you share your journey with, there is no doubt that the five historical hotels featured here will make a stay with someone special, extraordinary.

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