



The English Rose room, in the Lodge, has views of the lawns

Find inner calm in the Cotswolds

There's something about the Cotswolds that makes your mood lighten as soon as you arrive. It could be the rolling hills (the 'wolds'), the honey-toned stone buildings that appear cast in a constant sunny glow or the lively market towns. Nestled within this quintessentially English, picture-postcard setting is Thyme, a peaceful 'village within a village' in the actual village of Southrop.

The 150-acre estate and 17th-century outbuildings have been lovingly restored by the current owners with a focus on nature and seasonal produce. They've



The Lodge sits in 150 acres of beautifully manicured gardens



Dogs will love exploring the grounds

created 31 bedrooms, each with a botanical name such as Lemon Balm, Bergamot and Calendula, with design details to match. Garden rooms have a private garden with firepit, glass doors overlooking the patio and freestanding roll-top baths.

There's also a shop selling Bertoli products - Thyme's brand inspired by nature, plus the toiletries are found in all the rooms.

Thyme's restaurant, which has an open kitchen, is in the 19th-century Ox Barn and serves seasonal dishes using

vegetables such as kohlrabi, yacón, bitter leaves and fennel as well as the humble pea, leek and onion. It's a true collaboration between chef and garden.

The Baa Bar (in the old lambing shed), with its dark walls and comfy, low velvet sofas, serves botanically-inspired cocktails, and the cheese and chard toastie is a must. For pampering, there's the Meadow Spa, with treatments such as the Bertoli Beauty for Hands and Feet (£155 for 90 minutes) - a deeply luxurious manicure and pedicure. Or you can practise guided breathwork in Thyme's restorative Botanical Bothy space before relaxing in its private garden and sinking into a herbal bath next to a roaring fire (£225pp). There's also an outdoor spring-water swimming pool and tennis courts and, if you think all that's missing is a pub, fear not, Thyme has one! The Swan, in Southrop village itself, offers hearty food and an open fire.

GET THERE Double rooms at Thyme (thyme.co.uk) from £450 a night, including breakfast.

Learn the art of tennis in Scotland

Scotland has its fair share of fine country estates, yet none of them tick quite as many boxes as Cromlix in Stirlingshire. The first is glamour, in the form of its celebrity owners; tennis star Andy Murray and his wife Kim (the five-star hotel is just three miles from his hometown of Dunblane).

Built in 1874, the grand Victorian mansion was bought by the Murrays more than a decade ago and has recently been given a makeover by Kim and interior designer Suzanne Garuda. As a result, the style box is also well and truly ticked: fresh flowers from the garden (more than 5,000 tulips bloom here in spring) are thoughtfully matched to the bold botanic wallpapers and patterned statement sofas in the public rooms. Each of the 15 spacious bedrooms and suites (as well as the self-contained Gatehouse Lodge - perfect for families) are different and come with toiletries by exclusive Edinburgh brand MODM. Oh, and there's Murray's personal collection of modern art on the walls, including works by Damien Hirst and David Shrigley, as well as pieces on loan from the Royal Scottish Academy.

Unsurprisingly, the tennis box has been ticked, too. Guests can borrow rackets to play on the outdoor courts (in Wimbledon colours) or you can book private professional coaching (sadly not from Andy) for £120 an hour. There's also billiards, croquet and pickleball. If walking is as active as you want to get, there are 34 acres, including woods and a private loch, and foraging is available with local guide Lauren. Traditional Scottish outdoor pursuits can also be arranged, such as fishing with the estate's friendly ghillie Steve, as well as falconry with Elite Falconry, including the chance to don a gauntlet and handle owls, hawks and eagles - an experience you'll never forget.

Finally, there's the food, overseen by executive head chef Darin Campbell, who's worked at Gleneagles and for Marcus Wareing in London. The menu at the Glasshouse, a conservatory overlooking the gardens, includes everything from seared Kinlochbervie monkfish to dry-aged Scotch beef.

The hotel really is a case of 'love all' and you can even get married in the original chapel. Both Andy and his brother Jamie had their weddings here.



Explore the rugged landscape and lochs surrounding Cromlix



Andy and Kim Murray display their art collection at the hotel

GET THERE Double rooms at Cromlix (cromlix.com) from £315 a night, including breakfast. Little's (littles.co.uk) can arrange transfers from Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. Flights with easyJet (easyjet.com) from London Gatwick from £16.49pp one way.

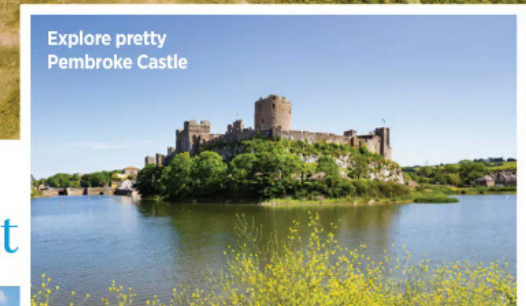


Play everything from tennis to outdoor chess

Good escapes



Walk along the coastline near Broad Haven South



Explore pretty Pembroke Castle

Ramble along the Pembrokeshire coast

If you're looking to switch off from the everyday hustle and bustle, it doesn't get much better than Pembrokeshire in south-west Wales, 40 miles from Carmarthen and 60 miles from Swansea.



Silk Purse Cottage was once a stone barn

But it's the coastal rambles that really set the area apart - try a scenic stroll along the West Angle Bay Circular Walk - a four-mile trail

Angle, one of the county's smaller villages, makes the perfect base with its unique, Indian Colonial-style architecture and medieval historical sites, such as the Tower House dating back to the 14th century, and expansive sandy beach.

Coastal Cottages has a wide range of properties in the area, including Silk Purse Cottage, a cosy, two-bedroom retreat in Angle. A converted farm building, its rustic interior is both comfortable and charming - and it's dog-friendly, too. Time in the evenings can be spent catching up by the fire or preparing family dinners in the well-equipped kitchen. When the sun shines, the garden is gorgeous and you'll soon make friends with the friendly sheep next door (safely behind a fence if you do bring your dog).

past spectacular views, beautiful beaches and an impressive Victorian fort. More serious hikers can brave the Angle Peninsula - a strenuous but breathtaking nine-mile route covering the most impressive stretches of the west Welsh coastline. The best thing about walking is you'll need to refuel afterwards and The Old Point House on the beach in Angle serves butties filled with Pembrokeshire crab, whole-roasted mackerel and sandwiches stuffed with local smoked salmon. For afters, head to The Wavecrest Cafe and watch in awe, feet sore, as the tide swells and you indulge in a huge slice of delicious cake.

GET THERE Coastal Cottages (coastalcottages.co.uk) offers seven nights in Silk Purse Cottage from £710 in April (sleeps four). □