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News

Great rural escapes for families in the British Isles

LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Launched in June 2013, Hare's Leap is a collection of handcrafted self-catering yurts and shepherd's huts on the 150-acre, organic Rock Farm Slane, on the Slane Castle Estate in County Meath. Founded by Carina and Alex Mount Charles as an ecotourism venture, and embracing an idyllic location on the north bank of the River Boyne, the luxury campsite presents the ultimate back-to-nature holiday, just 45 minutes' drive from Dublin. Activities on offer on the estate and surrounding area include wild food foraging, tree climbing, salmon and trout fishing, kayaking, wild swimming, yoga courses and endless magnificent walking trails through ancient woodland and along the River Boyne. Electric bike tours of the Boyne Valley are also available. The yurts and shepherd's huts themselves are simply but elegantly furnished and sleep two to six people. Washing and self-catering kitchen facilities are found in a smart sociable hub called Le Shack, while food packages that include Rock Farm's own organic beef and pork range, as well as organic fruit and vegetables, can be ordered for guests' arrival. *Hare's Leap at Rock Farm Slane is open April to November. From €666 per week, for a family of four. 00-353-41-988 4861; www.rockfarmslane.ie*



Garden party

With its dramatic location, garden full of camellias in bloom in March and close proximity to the Lost Gardens of Heligan, Trebah Gardens and the Eden Project, Cornish self-catering home Moonrakers makes a fine choice for a spring break for an extended family. Part of the St Mawes Retreats collection of five contemporary coastal properties on the Roseland Peninsula, Moonrakers sleeps up to 12 people and has a raft of activities for families, from the trampolines in the garden, archery lessons, paddle-boarding and kayaking, to egg hunts during the Easter holidays. Moonrakers offers a three-night weekend or a four-night midweek self-catering break for £2,000, sleeping up to 12 guests. Chef, boat charter, art teacher, outdoor activities, spa treatments and childcare can be arranged on request. 08000-886622; www.stmawesretreats.co.uk

NEW FOREST FOR FAMILIES

Lime Wood hotel near Lyndhurst has recently converted an old woodman's cottage and stable block in its grounds into two cosy cottages and a 'forest cabin', all with self-catering facilities but with the benefit of access to all of the luxury hotel's amenities including the Herb House spa and Hartnett Holder & Co restaurant. Sleeping up to four people each (up to eight when the two cottages are linked), the hideaways, all with real log fires, have been beautifully decorated in a rustic grown-up style (pictured below, left) by Robert Angell and are surrounded by forest and meadow. *From £650 per cottage per night. 023-8028 7177; www.limewoodhotel.co.uk*

Close by, New Park Manor near Brockenhurst has received a multi-million pound refurbishment to transform it into the New Forest's first luxury hotel for families. A former hunting lodge of King Charles II, New Park Manor (below, right) has been remodelled as a stylish home from home and, with just 21 rooms, it offers a relaxed and attentive service. Children will love the heated outdoor pool, 'fairy garden' and lawn games, while supervised activities can be found in the Den (for children up to eight years old) - which offers two hours of complimentary childcare per day - and, for older ones, the Blue Room. Parents will find peace in the spa or on a sofa in one of the lounges. *New Park Manor is part of the Luxury Family Hotels collection. Family rooms cost from £205 per night, B&B, based on two adults and two children (under 16) sharing. For older children, Family Suites, from £345, each have two rooms. 0844-482 2152; www.newparkmanorhotel.co.uk*

