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a restaurant: but, this being a converted hamlet, you stay in one of proper cottages (some date from 12th century), all neat and freshly washed, with character, beams and gorgeous views over the cliffs of Anglesey Island. The beaches are terrific, too. Perfect. A cottage sleeping two costs £650/£995.

Kevin's own cottage in Co Mayo

££££
The west coast of Ireland was surely heavily inspired, so it's appropriate to stay in a converted church. Not just any old church, either: the property owner, Kevin McCloud, has named the Kilgallon Chapel "the church conversion I have ever seen" (and he's seen a few). Sure, it's a revelation: the village was aged to convert an 1836 chapel into a stylish four-bedroom home without losing an iota of its quiet charm or smoky atmosphere. The place is so nice you can drag yourself away, but on a short stroll, you're near the beaches of New Bay and the county's cutest town, Westport, and there's excellent fishing, riding and surfing round about. Sleeping eight with ease, it costs £1,524 with Pure Holiday Homes (01373 728730, pureholidayhomes.com). The nearest airport is Knock, served by Ryanair and BMI Baby (bmibaby.com).

Live the dream in Herefordshire

££££
They've all done it: stayed at a gorgeous farm in the country; considered rustic loveliness, the gentle grazing of the rare-breed sheep outside the window and the lack of belligerent staff from middle management; thought, "You know, I could live like this." Now you can find out if it's a pipe dream or a life plan. Herefordshire Farm is running half-day Smallholding courses for guests of all ages: grown-ups learn the theory of the finances, while the kids go out collecting and feeding the lambs. To tempt you that bit more, you can stay in a 16th-century barn conversion with slate floors, beamy ceilings and a crackling fire. Sleeping four, it costs £1,780 with Premier Cottages (01286 6884362, premiercottages.co.uk).

Bring the gang to Gwynedd

££££
A great plan: a big bunch of you staying in three or four cottages together to have a week-long house(s) party where the kids can play, adults socialise, and you've got your privacy, too. The bit should be eating together... There are a few properties that have a dinner table. Here's one that does, and



Net a tiddler, and a nice cottage, on Anglesey (11)

it's a cracking place, too. Beach Farm, on Wales's wonderful cliff- and cove-lined Llyn peninsula, has three cottages, all done up a treat with smart kitchens and bathrooms. The children have five acres of grounds to run in, with a pretty stream and a path down to a private beach; adults can follow the path a little further to the pub. To cap it all, there's an ample table for 20 in the main cottage, so you can all come together at dinner. Sleeping 14, the whole place costs £1,750/£2,650 with CV Travel (020 7401 1086, www.cvtravel.co.uk).

10 Snug in Angus

££££

We don't care what the shivering Sassenachs say, Scottish beaches

are brilliant — but you do need somewhere snug to warm up afterwards. The Ice House is ideal. Okay, the name's against it, but hear us out. It was built in the early 19th century by the local salmon fishermen to keep their catch frozen, so insulation was all — it's built into a low slope, with a grass roof. It has been thoroughly warmed now, and stylishly converted into this year's oddest but snuggest holiday home, with stone walls, high vaulted ceilings, a cosy log-burner and glass doors — which give straight onto the superb stretch of St Cyrus Sands, the best bit of beach on the east coast. Glorious. Sleeping eight, it costs £900 with Cottages and Castles (01738 451610, cottages-and-castles.co.uk).

11 Chez Kate in Anglesey

££££

Apparently, there's a wedding this year. Haven't heard much about it, but we understand the happy couple will be setting up home in Anglesey, which is very sensible of them. It's beautiful, it's uncrowded and it has some terrific beaches — not least Lligwy, a dune-backed expanse of golden sand, bang on for swimming, crabbing, sea kayaking and castle-building. Back up the hill, with panoramic views over the sea to Snowdonia, Redshank Cottage is fit for a prince, a princess and a couple of princelets: we like the deep leather sofas, the log-burner and the hot tub. It costs £909/£1,044 with Rural Retreats (01386 701177, ruralretreats.co.uk) — book it before Wills makes an offer.