

Sunday 17th May 2014

The Telegraph

Swain House Watchet, Somerset

Jason and Annie Robinson opened Swain House two years ago in the centre of Watchet, a little harbour town on the Bristol Channel, about 15 miles north-west of Taunton. The couple originally bought the Georgian townhouse next door (now their home), before acquiring this place, which had a shop at street level, now the guest living-dining room with big communal table, comfy sofas and industrial-looking lamps. The four bedrooms are simple and stylish and each has a wall emblazoned with a detail from a famous portrait from the National Gallery, and spacious ensuite bathrooms with freestanding roll-top baths. Swain House offers cooked breakfasts, home-baked bread and cakes, and light charcuterie suppers with local wines, beers and ciders. Be sure to do the Mineral Line walk, along a disused railway that once brought iron ore down from the mines in the Brendon Hills, or the three-mile cliff scamper to the seaside village of Blue Anchor. There, you can catch the charming West Somerset Steam Railway back to Watchet.

All rooms cost £125 including breakfast (01984-631038; swain-house.com).

Four of the best West Country seaside B&Bs, by Francesca Syz

TRAVEL

Trevose Harbour House St Ives, Cornwall Pottery down the Warren, a pedestrianised cobbled street lined with unrecognisably chintzy cottages that leads into town from the railway station in St Ives, it is a challenge to imagine you are about to arrive at a chic six-room B&B run by two graduates of the world-renowned Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland. But then you do. After meeting at college, Angela and Olivier Noverat spent a decade working their way round some of Europe's best hotels, before settling in St Ives to pursue their dream of opening the sort of guesthouse that they would like to stay in themselves, which they did early last year. The result is an elegant, art-filled home in a style that is part Cornish seaside, part retro mid-century modern, but also friendly and relaxing. Angela and Olivier go the extra mile on every level, from the organic breakfasts in the light-filled dining room and the aperitifs served in the freit snug (or sunny terrace, depending on the weather), to organising picnics for the beach and tickets to private views in the best galleries in town. **The details** Doubles from £140 (01736-793267; trevosehouse.co.uk).



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Strate Barton House Dartmouth, Devon There is an un-B&B-like decadence about 16th-century Strate Barton House in the seaside village of Strate in the South Hams area of Devon, five miles from Dartmouth. Owned and run by Stuart Ulster and Kevin Hooper, who moved down from London six years ago, it has six bedrooms, each with its own striking colour scheme, Graham & Brown wallpaper, sleigh beds and Asian artifacts including wall sculptures from the Far East. While five of the rooms are in the main house, the sixth, the two-floor Cottage Suite, has its own private entrance, with a bedroom and living room with a log-burning stove. Tea and home-made cakes are served in a drawing room with an open fire on arrival, and there is a dining room where the full English breakfast is served. There is also outdoor seating on the terrace and in the garden overlooking the sea. The South West Coastal Path is a two-minute walk away, with Blackpool Sands a 20-minute walk in one direction and Slapton Sands a 20-minute walk in the other. **The details** Doubles from £106 (01473-822058; walseyloft.com).

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Westcroft Kingsand, Cornwall Sarah and Dylan McLeese Taylor, the owners of this stylish, characterful B&B, housed in a restored 1760s coaching inn 20 yards from the beach in the former fishing village of Kingsand on the Rams Peninsula, both worked punishing hours as London-based social workers in previous lives, so they know just what burnt-out city dwellers need from a precious weekend away. A short ferry hop from Plymouth (so a car isn't essential), the B&B has three eclectically furnished bedrooms. One, with a large four-poster bed, can be rented on its own for £90 or with a living room next door for £140; another has hand-painted wallpaper and a claw-foot bath, and the third, the thrillingly named Clock Tower Suite, takes up the whole top floor. Hearty breakfasts, served in-room or in a small dining room downstairs, are available at a time to suit you. The B&B also has an art gallery in a converted boathshed behind. Guests can visit the gallery out of hours and even borrow artwork to hang in their rooms during their stay. **The details** Doubles from £90 (01752-823216; westcroftguesthouse.co.uk). Next week: children's camps in the UK.