



# inspiring UK getaways

If ghost-hunting is your game, or perhaps you just enjoy a bit of history and a good poke around a stately home, **Jason McCarthy** has a few suggestions for a spine-tingling day out.



**H**alloween is approaching and supernatural vibes are well and truly in the air, so a trip to Blickling Hall in Norfolk, one of the top 10 most haunted mansions of the National Trust, is in order for the brave and the curious. For a certified hair-raising time, make your visit on Halloween weekend.

Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife, lived at Blickling Hall and is said to return, along with her father Thomas, on the anniversary of her execution on 19 May. Thomas is said to arrive by carriage followed by shrieking demons – a curse for not saving his daughter from her fate. This is a fright that can inspire deep thought; even deeper thoughts than Anne Boleyn's as she has been seen carrying her head below her waist! Ghosts aside, the mansion is stunning and well worth a visit, day or night. For further information visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) and step into a world of history and intrigue.

In one of the most haunted cities in Britain, Chester in Cheshire, trick or treating isn't too difficult for the spirit of a lovelorn girl who scatters chocolates around from a shop in Eastgate Street. More than 80 instances of ghostly activity have been recorded in Chester and all of these paranormal visits are due to the city's

spooky history. The narrow streets, alleyways and defensive-looking walls have been the setting of pivotal moments of British and Roman history, such as Edward I's medieval warriors fighting the Welsh. So a visit to Chester might include the sighting of soldiers on the city's walls, a simultaneous history lesson and spiritual wonderment.

Another location that has reported supernatural sightings is nestled in the Staffordshire countryside. Beautiful Tamworth Castle ([www.tamworthcastle.co.uk](http://www.tamworthcastle.co.uk)), it is rumoured, has two wandering souls within its walls, ghosts known as the Black Lady and White Lady. The castle's staff have reported eerie footsteps and moving furniture, supposedly at the hands of the ghost of a nun and also of the White Lady lamenting her murdered lover. Ghost hunters have visited here. Once, on the stroke of midnight, a picture was taken of a shadowy hooded figure descending the stairs. So, if you head into the castle, remember to keep your camera close at hand, just in case.

There are many reportedly haunted mansions to explore across the UK. The magic of any ghost's supposed existence is that you will never know the truth unless you see it for yourself.

## Enjoy the journey, not just the destination



by Louise Benson James

What image does a holiday in the UK conjure up? You may well picture lines of cars crawling along hot motorways, or lugging overfilled suitcases onto overfilled trains. The modern need for immediate gratification paints our destination as the Holy Grail, and travelling as an aggravating nuisance. With a small shift in perspective, why not consider the journey as an enjoyable feature in itself? Rid yourself of the notion of destination-jubilation and view your trip as a pilgrimage, acquiring along the way relaxation and enlightenment, meeting like-minded people travelling similar paths, and fully absorbing your surroundings.

If you have to follow the road most travelled, car-sharing is a great option – go with friends, use a car-sharing scheme or place an ad. One of my fondest holiday memories is rocking out in an old banger for 8 hours with friends. I don't even remember where we were going! Do that cycling or walking holiday, take a magical mystery tour of bus or train networks, hire a canal boat. You may even begin to shun all notion of a destination. The five-star hotel room is not nearly as enticing as the moving wallpaper en route. Being hemmed in in a crowded city is less appealing than the freedom of the open countryside. Remember to relish the scenery and experiences en route. Bon voyage!

## Walk on the wild side on a bushcraft break

by Amelia Williams

We've all felt the call of the wild at some point, or watched a documentary that has made us yearn to be totally self-sufficient and live off the land. On an organised bushcraft holiday, you'll receive guidance that will ensure that the benefits go beyond that of the simple fulfilment of a dream. You'll have a real chance to get back to basics and connect with nature.

Meet like-minded individuals as you practise the ancient art of whittling, or create your own raft. Survival techniques can be real lifesavers. Make fire by friction and build make-shift shelters – a fun and unique way to spend quality time with family and friends. And you never know when these skills might come in handy!

Once you've worked up an appetite building a blazing fire, you'll need something to cook on it. Camp instructors can teach you how to identify useful and edible plants, all used by our ancestors for food, medicine and textiles. These days these plants are often dismissed as weeds, but you can discover ways to prepare and cook them. Knock money off your future weekly shopping bills with all you learn! A day out to the countryside can be like a trip to the supermarket, and much more rewarding than a Tesco run.

Similarly, take to the water in a canoe to catch and cook the tastiest treats from the sea. Get fit and enjoy the great outdoors at the same time. Choose from a wide range of bushcraft camp holidays and specialist instructors. One thing's for sure, you'll return to your day-to-day life enlightened with a new-found admiration for all that the natural world has to offer.



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