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Party houses for Christmas and New Year

From seaside cottages to hunting lodges we pick perfect holiday hideaways for gathering together a crowd of friends or family

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Norfolk's Carrington House sleeps 18 in boutique style.

HISTORIC

1. THE TOWER HOUSE, NEWBIGGIN-ON-LUNE, CUMBRIA

Rich in history – the house was once home to Elizabeth Gaunt, the last woman to be burnt at the stake, and a principal hiding place of Bonnie Prince Charlie – the Tower House was used as a lookout for raiders from the Borders. Comfortable furnishings with many personal touches blend well with original oak panelling, flagstone floors and exposed stonework.

• **Sleeps nine**

• **One week from 28 December, £2,240. Cumbrian Cottages (01228 599960; cumbrian-cottages.co.uk)**

2. GARGUNNOCK HOUSE, STIRLING

The frontage of this imposing Scottish country house looks Georgian, but the rooms are built

cornishcottagesonline.com)

LUXURY

6. THE OLD VICARAGE, MALBOROUGH, DEVON

Recently restored, this gothic-style Victorian vicarage has a mix of luxury doubles and child-friendly bunkbed rooms. The house is littered with goodies; an iPod surround-sound system, three 50" plasma TVs, a PlayStation and a four-oven Aga, while the grounds include a spacious private terrace and lawned garden with lovely views. The owner also owns the nearby Lodge Hotel, which offers breakfast or full meals that can be warmed in the Aga.

• **Sleeps 22**

• **Five nights, any time from 5 to 27 December, £6,250. The Wow House Company (01452 715373; thewowhousecompany.com)**

7. CHURCH ELMS FARM, WOODCHURCH, KENT

An elegant farmhouse surrounded by four acres of land, Church Elms comes complete with its own tennis court and a games room with pool table and table tennis. The four bedrooms (and three bathrooms) are sleek and comfortable, with period touches and designer furniture, and there are three TVs, a DVD player, wireless broadband (payable) and a small conservatory.

• **Sleeps eight**

• **One week from 22 December, £2,334. Rural Retreats (01386 701177; ruralretreats.co.uk)**

8. CARRINGTON HOUSE, SNETTISHAM, NORFOLK

More boutique hotel than country cottage, Carrington House offers nine luxury bedrooms, resplendent in vivid wallpapers, rococo beds and hot-pink armchairs. The cosy kitchen has an Aga, but catering – and staff – can be arranged, to help make the most of the 60s-chic dining room and the "leisure lounge" – a soundproofed disco in the basement with decks, and an adjoining dressing-up room. There's a delightful walled garden, and Snettisham village lies just beyond the door. The property even comes with a beach hut on Old Hunstanton Beach, 10 minutes' drive away. It is booked up for for Christmas Day and New Year's Day, but there is availability for the period between the two, meaning you can do you family duties and then get all your friends together for a party.

• **Sleeps 18 plus sofa bed**

• **Three nights from 27-30 December, £2,600. Carrington House (0870 850 5468;**