

SOMERSET'S HEART



Glastonbury Tor



South Cadbury



Wells

Somerset's Heart, north and south: dairy cows in lush water-meadows, huge rolling cornfields, immense views, dark chocolate ploughed fields, luxuriant cottage gardens (roses), orchards, and the hedgerows alive with songbirds. Here, in the **Vale of Taunton**, between **Exmoor**, the **Quantocks** and the **Blackdown Hills**, is some of the richest farmland in England, wonderfully unspoilt and peaceful. **Taunton** (two terrific church towers and good county cricket ground), **Wellington** (good looking small town) and **Milverton** (extremely pretty large village) are its main centres. To the north are the limestone **Mendip Hills**, splendid for walking, containing caves and **Cheddar Gorge**. In Somerset's middle is the positively un-English flatness of **Sedgemoor** (where Monmouth enticed the West Country's farmers to be slaughtered for him) with cattle at sunset as in a classical painting, villages on low hills like islands above streams lined with willows for baskets, a bird sanctuary, and Athelney where the cakes were burned. Nearby are **Glastonbury** with its tor and legends (and festival) and **Wells** with its tremendous cathedral. And to the south is the **Hamstone country** - beautiful rolling dairy farmland where almost every house/cottage is of the golden stone from **Ham Hill**, and every few miles you come across magnificent houses/gardens (some Nat. Trust) open to the public and glowing villages with old pubs and splendid churches. It lies mainly between the A30 and A358; **Hinton St George** is perhaps the loveliest Hamstone village. At **Yeovilton** is the excellent Fleet Air Arm Museum (including Concorde); **Ham Hill** has an Iron Age/Roman fort on its top, and **Cricket St Thomas** has a wildlife park. Few beautiful-country areas are so rich in interesting and splendid man-made things to see.



SOMERSET'S HEART: grand Mendips range . . .



Compton Bishop: tiny village (fine church) in a horseshoe bowl of farmland nestling into the southern slopes of the **Mendips** - that grand range of limestone hills, **splendid for walking**, with views across the spectacular flatness of the Somerset Levels. **Axbridge** (ancient and still attractive small town (shops) from which medieval kings went hunting), 2 miles; **Cheddar Gorge** and caves, about 4; sea/sandy beaches at **Weston-super-Mare**, 8, or **Burnham** (good golf), 9. Riding locally; **Blagdon Lake** trout fishing, 6-7 miles. **Bristol**, 18 miles. Nearest pub, 1½ miles.



... standing on its own, with **good views** down the valley and 200 yards from **Compton Bishop** church, is **Compton House**, a **comfy family home**. At the front, a south-facing terrace running the length of the house with Magnolia grandiflora and other interesting plants, table/chairs and barbecue. Surrounding it, a large, enclosed garden with **children's 'adventure playground'**, trampoline and outdoor heated **swimming pool** (seasonal use). The Mendips rise directly behind with good walks up to Crook Peak and fine views over the levels.

Entrance hall (for coats/boots) into kitchen (**dishwasher, microwave, fridge-freezer**) with table seating 8. Off this, larder and utility room (**washing machine, tumble drier**); larder and utility room with table seating 10 and large living room (**open fire**). Hall with **table football**. Loo (washbasin). Children's playroom with PlayStation 2 and large TV.

Upstairs, four bedrooms, all with **good views** - a single (washbasin), a double, a double with en suite bathroom (suite plus hand-shower), and a children's room with three singles. Bathroom (suite plus hand-shower).

At the rear of the house is **the annexe**: two bedrooms, a double and a single, bathroom (suite) and small living room with TV/DVD.

Also to the rear, lots of parking and, in the garage, **table tennis**. **Phone** for incoming calls. **No smoking**. Fun **coarse fishing** available on 1 mile of rivers Axe and Yeo, up to 15 March and after 15 June (licence required). **Arrival after 5pm**. A **super place for a gathering, efficient, comfy, homely**.



★ ★ ★ ½	Sleeps: 10	Fri	Price: RR	Ref: E620
Bedrooms: 6	Bath/shower: 3			

. . . Wookey Caves and Cheddar Gorge



Wookey: sleepy village (pubs, working watermill with tearoom and adventure playground) on the edge of the **Mendip Hills** (splendid walking, bird-watching). Famous **Wookey Hole Caves**, 2 miles; **Cheddar Gorge** and caves, 8. **Wells**, 3 miles; **Glastonbury**, 8.

... peacefully tucked away on the edge of **Wookey**, a **semi-detached, limestone glebe cottage**, smartly renovated, facing a meandering garden (shared with owner) that leads through gates to the river. Inside, comfortable living room (some beams retained) with large fireplace (**woodburner**), polished wooden floor and French windows to open-sided porch (bench seating), perfect for morning coffee; excellent fitted kitchen/dining room (**dishwasher, washing machine, tumble drier, microwave, fridge-freezer**) with Shaker-style units, richly coloured tiles and stone floor. Loo (washbasin). Upstairs, **two bedrooms** - double and twin, both with beams and en suite shower-room (suite). **Phone**. **No smoking**. **Extremely comfortable, much appreciated cottage at any time of the year**.



★ ★ ★ ½	Sleeps: 4	Sat	Price: EE	Ref: E64
Bedrooms: 2	Bath/shower: 2			



Henstridge: conservation village (church, PO/shop, good pub, noted Indian restaurant) on the Somerset/Dorset border, overlooking the **beautiful Blackmore Vale**. **Stalbridge**

(good shopping), 1 mile. **Sherborne** (very attractive old town with superb medieval abbey, two castles), 6½ miles. Mainline **railway station**, 2 miles. Golf, riding and fishing within 5 miles and many fine houses and gardens, including Stourhead (Nat. Trust) and Longleat, within easy reach.

... on the outskirts of **Henstridge** is Quiet Corner Farm. At the end of its 200 yard drive with cider apple orchards and paddocks on either side grazed by sheep and miniature Shetland ponies (bred by the owner), is a **most attractive single-storey, mid 18th cent., stone built cottage**. It nestles at the end of a large lawn and adjoins the owners' converted barn, close to the former farmhouse. Lovely suntrap garden (barbecue, table/chairs) with two adorable guinea pigs. The cottage has lots of character with beams, some exposed stone walls, leaded windows, wood doors and wooden floors with rugs. Hall, off which are the living (**woodburner**)/dining/kitchen (**microwave, washer-drier**) with high ceiling and an enormous exposed beam, overlooking the garden; a bathroom (suite with corner bath plus hand-shower and bath-shower); and two pretty, pink floral bedrooms - a small single (Velux window) and a double looking into a garden room. **No smoking**.



★ ★ ★	Sleeps: 3	Fri	Price: BB	Ref: E7
Bedrooms: 2	Bath/shower: 1			



Butleigh Wootton: hamlet of locally quarried blue lias stone cottages in unspoilt countryside on the **Somerset Levels**, 1½ miles from the village of **Butleigh** (pub, good shop/PO, church containing a monument to the Hood family). **Glastonbury** (famous for its Tor, legends, festival), 3 miles; **Street** (Clark's Village), 2; the cathedral cities of **Wells** and **Bath**, 10 and 30 miles respectively; Wookey Hole Caves, 11; **Cheddar Gorge**, 17; the **north Somerset coast**, 20. In the area are several **Nat. Trust houses/gardens** including Montacute House, Stourhead, Lytes Cary, Barrington Court. Excellent walking, cycling, golf and horse riding on the Somerset Levels and the nearby **Mendip Hills**.

... **Wootton House is a fine country house** with a Queen Anne facade on the edge of **Butleigh Wootton**, overlooked by the monument of Admiral Sir Samuel Hood high on Polden Ridge. The house has evolved since its original construction in the 18th cent. for the Hood family. It sits on a **1,000 acre estate** comprising gardens, woods, lake, parkland and working farms. It has a large mature garden (all yours) with **croquet lawn** and **hard tennis court**; across the fields are fishponds, and there's a small lake in the woods. At the end of the drive is the Home Farm, where riding can be arranged with the tenant farmer and where fresh 'Tor Beef', grazed on the slopes of Glastonbury Tor, is sold.

The house is comfortable, elegant, delightful - if a little frayed around the edges - and has recently been renovated and modern facilities introduced.

Downstairs: a large front hall (wood floors, oak panelling, ornamental fireplace) and equally large back hall (**Steinway grand piano** and **upright piano** - both tuned) with French

windows to paved terrace and the garden (table/chairs, gas barbecue). Off the front hall, with views across the parkland to the Hood monument, one step down to the drawing room (**open fire**) with its original silk wallpaper and French windows to garden, and the sitting room (marble **open fireplace**, fine paintings). At the back, overlooking the garden, a large formal dining room (beautiful oak dining table, enormous carved wood and stone Jacobean-style ornamental fireplace); large kitchen/diner (**dishwasher, microwave, fridge-freezer**, original Edwardian butler sink and terrazzo flooring, Sheila maid, 4-door **Aga** plus electric cooker, farmhouse kitchen table, door to garden) and pantry (**washing machine, tumble drier**, Sheila maid, another original Edwardian butler sink). (Partially adjoining the kitchen, but completely private from the house, is a cottage inhabited by a single person.) From the back hall, a passage leads to a downstairs bathroom and the Abbot's Room (an enormous **games room** with table tennis, small pool table, darts, PlayStation, Hammond organ).



Upstairs: oak stairs from the front hall lead up to the landing (original William Morris wallpaper, library area with window seats) off which are **eight bedrooms** - four double, one with en suite bathroom (suite), two with four-poster beds (one a 5' wide bespoke hand-carved mahogany bed with beautiful drapes, the other 6' wide); and four twin, two with zip-linked beds, one with en suite shower-room (suite), and two with washbasins; two bathrooms (suites, one with roll-topped bath) and one shower-room (shower, washbasin).

Altogether, eight bedrooms, six bath/shower-rooms, six loos. No smoking. Phone and Broadband. Cautionary Deposit £250. Arrival after 4pm. A magical place that has been in the same family for generations, with extensive grounds that children, and adults, will enjoy exploring.



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★ ★ ★	Sleeps: 16	Fri	Price:	Ref:
Bedrooms: 8	Bath/shower: 6	See page 237	E12	

SOMERSET'S HEART: the Gingerbread House . . .



Ilminster: small town at the heart of the 'Hamstone country' (see 'Somerset's Heart', page 215). Nearest sea, about 15 miles (Dorset coast). **Yeovilton** air base nearby. **Very easy to reach:** M5, 8 miles; A303 straight there.

... about a mile outside Ilminster, within a **great country estate of much history**, is the **Gingerbread House** – thatched, hexagonal, **Grade II listed**. On the edge of woods, about 300 yards down a farm track, 100 yards from farm-buildings and approx. 300 yards from the busy A358 road (visible), it was built c1800 as a game-keeper's home and has been restored. **You are welcome to walk the 500 acres of farmland** (sheep), **park and woodland by arrangement**.

The cottage has good-sized, secluded lawn (table/chairs, barbecue), leading to woods and fields. Leaded gothic windows, pine-shuttered. Studded front door; little hall; downstairs loo/washbasin (**washing machine, tumble drier**); two living rooms, one with **open fireplace**; and kitchen/diner (**dishwasher, microwave**). Steepish curved stairs (rope rail) up to **three bedrooms** – one double, two twin – and big bathroom (suite plus bath-shower).



★ ★ ★	Sleeps: 6	Sat	Price: H	Ref: E66
Bedrooms: 3	Bath/shower: 1			



... and on the edge of the same estate as E66 (above) and E67 (above right) and also fairly close to the busy A358 road (visible), is **The Smithy**, once the original forge for the estate, but now a **modern cottage**. It has fields on two sides and is just detached from the farmhouse next door. Outside, a little garden and patio (table/chairs, barbecue).

Light and airy living room, open to the rafters and with windows on three sides, which leads into the Shaker-style fitted kitchen/dining room (**microwave, washing machine, larder fridge**). On the ground floor, a bedroom with two single beds overlooking fields and with a glazed door to the garden, and large shower-room (suite). Upstairs, overlooking the living room, a gallery (no windows) with twin beds. **Best for maximum 2 adults. Suitable for partially disabled.**



★ ★ ★	Sleeps: 2/4	Sat	Price: D	Ref: E68
Bedrooms: 1/2	Bath/shower: 1			

. . . peaceful acre of mill pond



... and in the middle of the same 500 acre estate (see left), ½ mile from 'the Gingerbread House' (same owners, see left), is a **miller's house attached to a mill reputed to be the oldest (c1620) in Somerset with still working machinery**. The whole building is Grade II* listed, and has been **marvellously restored in conjunction with English Heritage. It won the Somerset Building Preservation Trust award 2000**. It stands proudly beside a mill race, overshot mill wheel and waterfall, and a still, peaceful acre of mill pond with island: rowing boat for your use (your risk), duck, geese, occasional swans, coarse fish.

The mill was last operated in 1949. All machinery is secured and locked off. However, the mill machinery can be seen on changeover day by arrangement with the owners. Immediately in front is an open-sided **games barn** (table tennis). Paddock for football kicking nearby and you are welcome to wander the estate.

The miller's house is flagstoned on the ground floor, carpeted upstairs, its walls mainly white or colour-washed, beams, window seats, original shutters. Front door to long hall divided by a fine oak screen (c1620) from the original 'dwelling room', now the dining room, with gigantic fireplace - 10' wide with Victorian cast iron stove. Next door, a utility room (**washing machine, tumble drier, freezer, back door**). Also on ground floor, fitted kitchen (**dishwasher, microwave**) and bathroom (suite). On first floor (steepish stairs, handrail), big, beautiful living room with cast iron Victorian **open fireplace**, windows both sides, lovely oak screen, and two twin bedrooms, one right above the mill race (you can see the mill wheel and mill pond from bed) with low beams and en suite shower-room (suite), both with lovely **views**. Steep stairs to the second floor landing, and huge, beautiful master bedroom (5' bed) with low doorway. Also loo/washbasin.

We would very much like to stay here, but it **could be dangerous (outside) for children: sensible children welcome under careful supervision**.



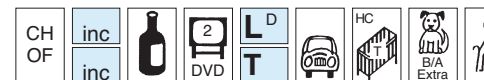
★ ★ ★ ½	Sleeps: 6	Fri	Price: KK	Ref: E67
Bedrooms: 3	Bath/shower: 2			



... and 2 miles east of Ilminster, on a country lane in the small farming hamlet of **Hurcott** (pub/shops, 2 miles), this attractive attached **local stone-built cottage** sits at the end of a row of three. With good-sized gardens to the front and side (raised patio with table/chairs, barbecue), a gravelled courtyard and 1½ rambling acres of cider apple orchard (picnic bench) to the rear, this is a lovely peaceful location with **far-reaching views** over the surrounding open countryside.



Curving drive up to large, gravelled parking and turning area. Sympathetically added to the original part, this end of the cottage has a utility room (**washing machine, tumble drier, butler sink**) and a well-equipped fitted kitchen/dining room with wood floor (attractive handmade distressed units with granite worktops, modern gas range with double ovens, **dishwasher, microwave, fridge-freezer**). The large dining table is perfectly positioned in the window (wooden, built-in window seats all round) for those great time-wasting **views**. Downstairs twin bedroom (doors to garden) and, next door, a shower-room (suite, power-shower). From the kitchen, arch through to cosy living room with fine-looking stone fireplace (**open fire**); stairs up to two more bedrooms (both with long, rolling countryside **views**) – one double (5' wooden sleigh bed), and one single. Smart bathroom (suite plus hand-shower). Outside: garage/store, now a **games room** and a brick-built dog kennel and run. **No smoking**. Good mobile phone reception (one provided for emergency use). **A peaceful retreat, comfortable, well-equipped and good quality throughout. Suitable for partially disabled.**



★ ★ ★ ★	Sleeps: 5	Sat	Price: G	Ref: E14
Bedrooms: 3	Bath/shower: 2			

... last battle in England ...

North Curry: friendly conservation village (PO/shop, pubs, fine medieval church) on a ridge within **Sedgemoor**, that great and beautiful expanse of flat farmland and marshland where the last battle in England was fought. **Taunton** (Somerset's capital), 7 miles; the M5, 5 miles. Very good base for visiting the area's exceptional number of superb houses/gardens, Nat. Trust and other, including Montacute, Hestercombe, Barrington Court, Knightshayes, Lytes Cary, East Lambrook Manor. The Quantock Hills, about 9 miles, the Dorset coast at **Lyme Regis**, 35 miles.



... in the centre of **North Curry**, adjoining the PO/shop, a **Grade II listed, Georgian terraced cottage**, formerly a bakery, set back from the village square behind wrought iron railings with flower tubs in its small gravelled front garden. Small courtyard (table/chairs, barbecue) at the back. Inside, slate floored hall and large oak fitted kitchen (8-burner gas range, **dishwasher, washing machine, microwave, fridge-freezer**, CD player) with glazed door to courtyard; dining room and living room (**woodburner**) overlooking the square and, from the living room, door to windowless snug (previously the baker's enormous oven with fireplace recesses and bread oven door). Steepish curved stairs (handrail) up to **three bedrooms** – one double with en suite shower-room (suite), another double plus single bed, and a twin – and bathroom (suite plus bath-shower). All refurbished, smart, comfortable but retaining many original features (beams, low ceilings, sloping bedroom floors, oven recesses). **Phone. No smoking. Excellent countryside for walking and cycling.**



★★★★	Sleeps: 6	Sat	Price: EE	Ref: E8
Bedrooms: 3	Bath/shower: 2			



Hatch Beauchamp: little conservation village (pub, restaurant, garage, pretty church where Colonel Chard of Rorke's Drift was buried) in beautiful, rolling farmland between **Taunton** (6 miles) and **Ilminster** (see page 218), 5 miles. **A very central base** for visiting great houses/gardens, hamstone villages, Exmoor, the Quantocks and Mendip hills, **Sedgemoor**; north and south coasts, both within 20 miles.



... ½ mile from **Hatch Beauchamp** and near to Hatch Court (beautiful Palladian country house with deer park) is Belmont Farm with its 200 acres of wood and farmland. On a hill (superb views) is the **former cider barn**, attached at right angles to the farmhouse.

In front of the Cider House is your own private part-walled patio and you share the owners' lovely garden with summer house and pond (occasional kingfishers and herons), and are welcome to wander the farm and woodland with its romantic remains of an 18th cent. landscape garden and the historic 2 mile Line Wood woodland walk with dramatic views and abundant wildlife. Inside, the Cider House is spacious, comfortable, light, with antiques, pictures. Downstairs, good-sized twin bedroom with en suite shower-room (suite), **washer-drier**. Upstairs, exceptionally nice, big, beamed, open-plan living (**woodburner**)/dining/fitted kitchen (**dishwasher, microwave, fridge-freezer**) with fine views, and large, pretty L-shaped double bedroom (5' bed) with en suite bathroom (suite plus hand-shower). **Phone and Broadband. Peaceful, civilised** with lots to see and do nearby. **Everything included. No children under 8 years, but pre-crawling babies welcome.**



★★★★½	Sleeps: 4	Sat	Price: GG EE	Ref: E70
Bedrooms: 2	Bath/shower: 2			

... 'To the Manor Born'

SOMERSET'S HEART



Cricket St Thomas: private estate (church, renowned **wildlife park**, hotel – Grantleigh Manor in 'To the Manor Born' – and a few cottages) within a pretty valley below Wind whistle Hill on the A30, 2 miles east of **Chard** (small town). Pub and golf/country club about 2 miles away, and all around are fine houses and gardens (Forde Abbey, 2 miles) and glowing, golden stone villages. Yeovilton Fleet Air Arm Museum, 14 miles; cider mill, 3 miles. The sea at **Lyme Regis**, 15 miles.

... within the **1,000 acre Cricket St Thomas Estate** (yours to roam) is an **attractive, stone-built cottage**, one of three around a gravelled courtyard. A mile away is **Cricket St Thomas Wildlife Park** (discounted entry, wild animals/children's farm), and the hotel with restaurant/evening entertainment. You have use (nominal charge, over 21s only) of its **indoor heated swimming pool** (55' x 16' x 3'9" to 5'8"), **spa pool** (both pictured left), **sauna, steam room, beauty therapy, sports facilities.**



On three sides of the cottage are lawns, a terrace and a decked area (furniture, barbecue) overlooking countryside; adjoining on the other is the owners' cottage. Close by is the owners' private equestrian centre. Downstairs, a simple pine kitchen/breakfast room (**dishwasher, washing machine, microwave, Belfast sink**), larder (**fridge-freezer**); snug (stone-flagged floor, inglenook fireplace with **open fire**, CD player and **piano**) and light, airy living/dining room with **woodburner** and French windows to the decked area, garden and equestrian training ring; loo (washbasin). Upstairs, **three bedrooms** – two double (both with TV), one (5' bed) with en suite shower-room (suite), one smallish, and a narrow twin overlooking the garden; bathroom (suite plus bath-shower). **WiFi Broadband. Stabling** by arrangement and riding nearby.



★★★★½	Sleeps: 6	Fri	Price: NN	Ref: E15
Bedrooms: 3	Bath/shower: 2			