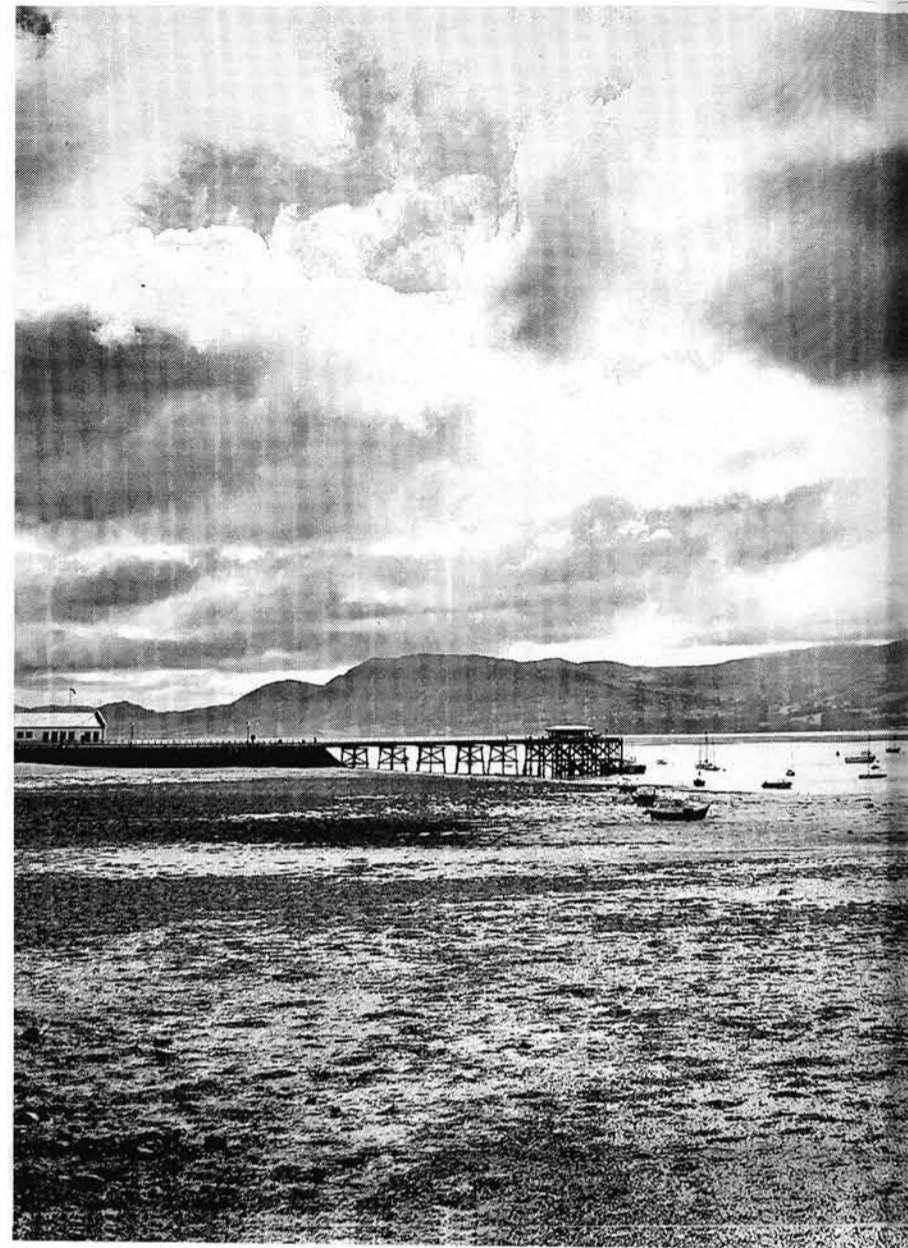


TOP 10 B&Bs BY THE SEA

Aren't seaside guesthouses the stuff of naughty postcards? Not these fine examples, they chucked out the chintz long ago. **Ian McCurrach** picks the best from Antrim to Cornwall



1 Blackpool gets the wow factor

When you open the whizz-bang website of **Number One Blackpool** it looks like a flash five-star hotel. Except it's not. It's a three-room deluxe b&b, complete with contemporary furniture in muted tones, 42in plasma-screen TVs, DVD recorders, Sony PlayStations, bathrooms with LCD TVs, remote lighting systems – the whole upmarket

shebang. This wow factor comes courtesy of hosts Mark and Claire Smith who wanted to challenge the perception that b&b's, especially in Blackpool, resemble the set of *Rising Damp*. And Number One has been short-listed for Best B&B in England in the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence 2007. Sybaritic night-time snoozing is aided by Siberian goose-down pillows and king-sized beds with Egyptian bed linen. It's set two blocks back from Blackpool's South Shore, on a quiet street, and the clientele tends to be people on business looking for a

more personal stay or couples seeking a romantic bolthole.

The location: In years gone by Blackpool was synonymous with Doddy, his Diddymen, donkeys and doughnuts. Today this former seaside special is trying hard to reinvent itself as a stylish resort. But can there really be enough here to keep cool-hunters happy? The local tourist board is doing its darnedest to have us believe there is, with highlights including the Great Promenade Show, displaying 10 pieces of cutting-edge public art, including the first public work by Sir Peter Blake, entitled *Life as a Circus*. **Cost:** £120.

Details: Number One, St Lukes Road, South Shore, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 2EL (01253 343901; numberoneblackpool.com).

2 A little piece of Padstow history

Mother Ivey Cottage, an isolated slate-built property a stone's throw from the Atlantic, was converted in the early 1920s from a working pilchard

cellar. Hosts Antony and Phyllida Woosnam-Mills cherish the place – well, it has been in the family since the 1940s. The Cornish coastal footpath runs directly behind the property and a semi-private beach can be accessed from the house. The two twin bedrooms have dramatic sea views and the decor is simple and traditional. Guests tend to be walkers, families looking for seaside action or those who simply want some peace and quiet.

The location: Fish lovers head for Rick Stein at Padstow, less than 10 minutes away. If you want to flash it with the sailing set, take the ferry from Padstow to Rock. Or, for surfing, Constantine Bay and Boobies Bay are within walking distance. **Cost:** £70.

Details: Mother Ivey Cottage, Trevoise Head, Padstow, Cornwall, PL28 8SL (01841 520329; antony@trevoisehead.co.uk).

3 Georgian style in Scotland

The three light and airy rooms at **Glebe House**, Gwen and Jake Scott's

imposing former manse in North Berwick, have original Georgian period features such as fireplaces and picture windows. This 1780s property has one double bedroom with a fine sea view, one twin, which overlooks the secluded garden, and a master bedroom with a four-poster bed. The sea is only a two-minute walk and the whole of historic North Berwick is right on the doorstep.

The location: This is golfing nirvana. There are 18 courses within a short driving distance and the beaches along this stretch of coast are some of the best in Britain. In either direction you can walk for miles on yellow-sand beaches such as Dirleton and Gullane. A regular train service puts Edinburgh only 30 minutes away. **Cost:** £90.

Details: Glebe House, Law

Road, North Berwick, East Lothian, Scotland EH39 4PL (01620 892608; glebehouse-nb.co.uk).

4 Spiritual healing in Anglesey

Cleiflog means house of healing in Welsh and this Grade II-listed property began life as a hospice for monks; see the painted Latin inscription over the front door which reads "peace to those that enter, health to those that leave". Sounds like a pretty good selling point, but if that doesn't do the trick then host Liz Bradley claims to welcome large numbers of returning guests who come from as far afield as London in search of big-chill weekends by the sea. The station at Bangor is a handy five-minute cab ride away for weekenders. There are three traditionally decorated rooms, all with antiques, (one double, and two which can be double or twin) with panoramic views of the sea or Snowdonia. Rooms are always full of flowers, and Floris toiletries in the bathrooms add a classy touch.

The best modern living



How to keep it cool

In a world of flowery wallpaper, stylish, contemporary **Church House** comes as a breath of fresh air. Situated in Kewstoke village, next to a Norman church, it's only two miles from the centre of **Weston-super-Mare**. The house is mainly Georgian with Norman origins. **Cost:** £75 per room per night including cooked breakfast. Church House, 27 Kewstoke Road, Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare BS22 9YD (01934 633185; churchhousekewstoke.co.uk).

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