

# coast

## Lesley Gillilan

When Jason and Annie Robinson opened Swain House last year, they brought a dash of London life to time-warped Watchet. Above their converted 19th-century shop – a junk shop before they turned it into the region's first boutique B&B – they offer four stylish rooms.

All feature king-size beds, digital wallpaper (a floor-to-ceiling detail from a National Portrait Gallery masterpiece) and the kind of luxury bathrooms you'd expect to find in an expensive hotel (think indulgent slipper baths and walk-in power-showers).

Rates include a hearty Somerset breakfast, home-baked cakes and a wealth of local knowledge.

Doubles from £125 per night  
(01984 631038, swain-house.com).

## WEEKEND in...

# WEST SOMERSET

From show-stopping *views*, wild moorland and vintage steam trains to *boutique B&Bs*, intimate cafés and *spectacular sunsets*, this idyllic part of the UK is the ideal retreat

WORDS *Lesley Gillilan*



At Exmoor, the views across coastal farmland towards Porlock Bay are inspiring

Sandwiched between the Quantock Hills and the wilds of Exmoor, this quiet corner of the Somerset coast extends an open invitation to step back in time. A place without motorways, mega-stores or much in the way of urban life (the seaside Minehead is the region's largest town), its attractions include thatched tea rooms in pretty villages, ancient mineral harbours, a classic steam railway and miles of long and sometimes challenging woodland walks and giddy cliff-top vistas from hills that swoop down to the sea. In April, the area wakes up to the inevitable crowds of visitors (most of them heading for Porlock Bay); a walking festival ([exmoorwalkingfestival.co.uk](http://exmoorwalkingfestival.co.uk)) begins at the end of the month; and there are emerging signs of 21st-century living, like foodie restaurants and a boutique B&B. But even in summer, you will find lonely corners – just you, a gaggle of Exmoor ponies, a whisper of wind in the trees, or the Bristol Channel tide washing over pebbles.

## STAYING OVER...

### SWAIN HOUSE WATCHET

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indulgent slipper baths and walk-in power-showers). Rates include a hearty Somerset breakfast, home-baked cakes and a wealth of local knowledge. Doubles from £125 per night (01984 631038, [swain-house.com](http://swain-house.com)).

### MILLER'S AT THE ANCHOR PORLOCK WEIR

Martin Miller (the man behind the famous Miller's Antiques Price Guides) is clearly in love with the area because he keeps opening hotels here. Part of his so-called 'Exmoor Collection', the Anchor is right on the harbour at Porlock Weir. Like most of Miller's many



### SHELL HOUSE PORLOCK WEIR

Within spitting distance of Porlock's pebble beach, this award-winning contemporary house gazes at the sea from glassy, open-plan spaces that extend out onto a waterside deck. You could spend all day here just watching the birds, the boats,

ventures, it's flamboyant, eccentric, crammed with antiques and furnished with a jumble of books and curios, shabby-chic sofas, open fires, four-poster beds and a palette of vivid colours. Doubles from £90 (01643 862753, [millersuk.com](http://millersuk.com)).