



Top: Fife and Kinross CTC's hut: yours for £3 a night
Top right: Birdwatching hubs sometimes offer bunkhouses, like this one at Spurn Point, East Yorkshire
Above: Rural and farm bunkhouses can be basic, but cheap. You may well need a sleeping bag, as here in Kildale, North Yorkshire

Discount stays at YHA

Cycling UK members receive a 50% discount on YHA membership, which entitles you to a 10% discount off accommodation and any pre-booked meals. If there are any under 26-year-olds included in the booking, there's an additional 5% off. These two reductions stack together, so a 15% discount will be applied to a Cycling UK member booking that includes an under 26-year-old. cyclinguk.org/yha

Previous page: Getty Images. Others: Rob Atinsley

the lot. And there are astonishing offers through the year. I've stayed for £10-£15 a night in Whitby on the Yorkshire Coast; at Hartington in the Peak District; and at Hawkshead and Coniston in the Lakes. You don't need to be a member but see the sidebar, 'Discount stays at YHA'.

Like the YHA, independent bunkhouses and hostels have been clobbered by Covid, energy prices, staffing issues and more. Many have disappeared, but some new places are springing up. In the Yorkshire Dales, Reeth's Black Bull Inn opened a bunkhouse room last August. For landlord Dave it was a good way to utilise a non-ensuitable room which, nevertheless, has commanding views over the village green and surrounding fells. Single travellers are welcome at £30, including breakfast.

Nests for the night

Finding such niche places isn't straightforward. Listings websites are never comprehensive and often out of date. I find it best to Google 'bunkhouse' or 'hostel' plus place or area name. It's hit-and-miss, but can yield places otherwise unlisted. You might have to email or phone for availability and prices.

Unfortunately, again, many are groups only. And you might need a sleeping bag; check before you

arrive. Nevertheless, I've found cracking and agreeably priced rural places by such sleuthing: birdwatching hostels in Rutland Water and on Spurn Head in East Yorkshire (both welcomed non-spotters); a super bunkhouse (Broadrake) by the Ribbleshead Viaduct in the Dales; and a very basic but sub-£10 farm shack outside Leek, with sweeping Peak District views and visiting hens...

A recent phenomenon is peer-to-peer hospitality, through apps or websites. Warmshowers.org (\$30 joining fee for new members) is a favourite of many: you stay for free in a fellow cyclist's house on the understanding you'll return the favour for someone else later on. Nothing's guaranteed, however. Of a dozen potential hosts, six might be away

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touring, five don't reply to you in time, and the one that does already has a guest. Still, I've had many lovely encounters, swapping travellers' tales over dinner or a glass of wine. It's usually two way: both guest and host get something

positive out of the experience.

A similar scheme is the Dutch Vrienden op de Fiets ('Cycling Friends'), though this one charges a flat rate of €25 for B&B. Annual membership is €10 (vriendenopdefiets.nl/en). I've had some terrific overnights with →