



fellow cycle tourers, in everywhere from tiny back bedrooms to grand annexes to houseboats. Most hosts are in the Netherlands but there are a few dozen in Britain, too.

Caveman chic

No joy so far? Keep Googling. Try pub rooms; some aren't on listings sites. Out of term time, some universities let out student rooms for a night. More rurally, there are caving clubs: many have basic bunkhouses intended for troglodytes but which welcome cycle tourers (for instance, northernpennineclub.org.uk, £10 per night). Naturally, they'll be in remote, limestone areas. You might just find some one-offs as well: Fife and Kinross CTC has a cyclists' hut by the side of Loch Earn in Fife (cyclinguk.org/kinross-hut), at just £3 a night. Alternatively, your bike tour might be a good reason to look up an old friend who lives nearby – and who might put you up.

On a (genuine) pilgrimage? The British Pilgrimage Trust's Sanctuary Network can help put you up in churches or monasteries, and also advise on routes (britishpilgrimage.org/sanctuary-network). Some Buddhist monasteries allow overnight stays to travellers, such as Samye Ling on the River Esk in Scotland (samye ling.org) – although they may not be impressed if you watch TikTok videos or wield a corkscrew. Rather wonderfully, if not cheaply, church fans can choose from

Above: Bunkhouses can be in some super locations: Broadrake Bunkbarn is next to Ribbleshead Viaduct in North Yorkshire
Top right & right: Some specially chosen historic churches let you 'camp' inside, such as here at St Mary's, Arkengarthdale, North Yorkshire: a special experience

50-odd historic examples to stay at through the Churches Conservation Trust (see 'Champing at the bit').

Hut trick

Free but very basic are bothies: former (real) shepherd's huts in remote country, left unlocked as travellers' shelter. No booking, no fee, just turn up. No facilities either: the 'bed' is a bare wooden platform, water is from a stream, it's BYO wood for the fire, and your 'toilet' is a shovel. Plus you might well be sharing with others. There's no definitive list but try mountainbothies.org.uk, or join the Mountain Bothies Association Facebook group. Most are in Scotland; great ones for off-road cyclists are Kervaig on

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the way to Cape Wrath, and Melgarve on the An Turas Mor route.

Finally, here's an accommodation trick of York Rouleurs. Once a year the club rides to Hull for a special-offer mini-cruise on the overnight ferry to Rotterdam. There they leave luggage in their cabin, ride round Holland for day, then sail back overnight. For the cycle tourer, there's often an inventive way round the accommodation challenge! 🌟

Champing at the bit

I stayed in a church last August: the wonderful St Mary's in Arkengarthdale in the Yorkshire Dales. No, I wasn't on the run or seeking asylum. I had it all to myself thanks to the Churches Conservation Trust (champing.co.uk). You can do the same at 50 or so others around England.

Luxury isn't. There's no shower, it probably won't be heated, and you kip on the provided camp bed. (Bring your own bedding or rent it for the night.) Facilities might vary from an electrical socket and not much else, to indoor flushing loos, a well-appointed kitchen area, and zippy fast wi-fi (all of which I enjoyed at St Mary's). Nor is it cheap.

But it's a unique experience with a genuine goosebump factor: a place that's touched thousands of lives is all yours. St Mary's was left open for me when I arrived there about seven. A camp bed was laid out ready, by a table with plates, cutlery, mug and wine glass. Before making dinner there, I nipped down to the Red Lion at Lanthwaite, five minutes' walk away, for a pint of local IPA. My bike stayed inside in the porch, and I could bolt the door from the inside.

In the (ahem, literally) wee hours, I had another uplifting experience: this is Dark Sky country, where scant light pollution means velvety black backdrops for stargazing. Awesome!