

The Telegraph

The best hotels in England for a murder mystery party



Interiors at Burgh Island inspire a Twenties backdrop to the hotel's well-known murder mystery weekends

- [Charlotte Johnstone](#), TRAVEL WRITER

‘Ladies and gentlemen, introducing the bride and groom, Zoe and Mike!’ a man in a suit announced to a room of about 60 of us. Everyone clapped, but no one had a clue who Zoe and Mike were. It was a most bizarre beginning to an evening, but then I wasn’t at a “real” wedding: I was a character at “Zoe’s Second Wedding”, a murder mystery night held at The Old Swan, a grande dame hotel in [Harrogate](#). And though it was night of high drama, with a murder, dinner and a huge plot twist, I found it absolutely hysterical – especially the eccentric characters such as Aunt Gladys, a colourful whirlwind of a woman who fawned her way across the room.

I’ve been to a few immersive dinner experiences but you can’t really beat a good old murder mystery; there is something about participating in a story and pretending to be someone else for the night, getting to know the lead characters and deducing like a Poirot, that sets it apart. Add in an eerie setting, perhaps an old [castle](#) with a gruesome history, an [Art Deco hotel](#) on an island or a draughty manor house with a big Agatha Christie connection, and you can see why events like these draw a crowd – a few people I met at The Old Swan attend them regularly.

As I channelled my inner Miss Marple and mapped out the evidence over dinner and plenty of wine (you can see why they call it a party), I scribbled my conclusion. I got it wrong, but it didn't matter. It certainly made a change from a night in front of the television. With *Knives Out*, the Christie-inspired, Cluedo whodunit film, hitting cinema screens last week, now's the time to consider a drama-fuelled experience to mark the occasion. Here's our pick of the best hotels for murder mystery events in the UK.

Burgh Island Hotel, Devon

Agatha Christie stayed at Burgh Island in its post-war heyday and penned *Evil Under the Sun* and *And Then There Were None* here. The glamorous four-star sits on its own tidal island just off the coast of Devon, with a coastal setting and interiors that inspire a Twenties backdrop to the hotel's well-known murder mystery weekends. Aside from the views, Palm Court Lounge with its glass dome roof is particularly striking – in fact the original architecture dates back to 1929 and much of the interior has been restored to its former Art Deco glory. Weekends begin with Friday-night introduction before cocktails and canapes on the Saturday, when guests get ready for an evening of clue-hunting and mystery-solving.

Prices start from £1,100, based on two guests staying for two nights, including dinner, bed and breakfast, and entertainment. Upcoming dates: Jan 24-25; March 13-14; Nov 6-7 (01548 810514; burghisland.com).

Read the full review: [Burgh Island, Devon](#)



Guests and actors solving clues in the beautiful setting that is Burgh Island

The Nare, Cornwall

For an adventurous twist on a classic, head to The Nare. Short thriller *To Snare a Spy* by acclaimed spy author (and Telegraph alumni) Jon Stock was set on the Roseland Peninsula and the south coast of Cornwall, and has a huge part to play in the hotel's mysterious events. The hotel's spy mystery experience 'The Nare's Espionage Adventure' brings the book to life as aspiring spooks can follow Noah's journey, gather intelligence and report their findings from the story's locations – maybe even undertake an excursion on the hotel's boat – before they solve the mystery and complete their mission.

Rooms from £299. Espionage Package £25, including book and background briefing documents; boat is extra (01872 501111; narehotel.co.uk).

Read the full review: [The Nare, Cornwall](#)



Guests at The Nare can undertake a clue-solving excursion on the hotel's boat

The Old Swan, Yorkshire

The Old Swan hotel in Harrogate is where crime novelist Agatha Christie was found after disappearing for 10 days in 1926. Legend has it she had discovered her husband having an affair and knew his mistress liked to stay here. The abandonment of her car in the countryside led the public to believe she had tried to fake her own death before being outed after one of the biggest searches in history and so, with this epic backstory, amateur dramatic society 'Murder 57' host immersive whodunits here every month.

Package including dinner, bed and breakfast from £110 per person. Upcoming dates: Dec 6, 27; Jan 24 (01423 500055; classiclodges.co.uk).

Read the full review: [The Old Swan, Yorkshire](#)



The Old Swan hold immersive whodunits every month

Zetter Townhouse Clerkenwell, London

A princely sum of £20,000 will get you and your group exclusive use of the entire hotel for a murder mystery party like no other, including an immersive theatre production, meals and a bed for the night. Guests arrive in character, with a well-acquainted knowledge of their backstory already. After check-in, guests are assembled for afternoon tea with champagne cocktails before a four-course dinner with wine. Breakfast is also included, along with a butler. For those who'd prefer to forego the stay, murder mystery experiences in the Games Room of the Clerkenwell townhouse with dinner for 20 guests costs £4000, which works out at £200 a head.

Murder mystery house hire from £20,000 (020 7324 4560; thezettertownhouse.com).

Read the full review: [The Zetter Townhouse Clerkenwell, London](#)



Staying at The Zetter Townhouse is akin to crashing upstairs at a very upmarket house party

Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire

In 1605, the infamous Guy Fawkes tried (and failed) to kidnap Princess Elizabeth from Coombe Abbey and put her on her father's throne following his assassination. Rooms echo the atmosphere, with roll-top baths, thick gold and amber curtains and elegant four-poster beds. Furthermore, the hotel celebrates its historic charm by hosting medieval and themed banquets alongside murder mystery nights every month. The next one follows the story of the Craven family who, while celebrating 100 years of living at Coombe with the servants, discover the head gardener has been killed.

Tickets from £45 include a three-course dinner, glass of wine and post-show disco. Upcoming dates: Jan 24 (024 7645 0450; coombeabbey.com).

Read the full review: [Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire](#)



Coombe Abbey celebrates its historic charm by hosting medieval and themed banquets alongside murder mystery nights



USUAL SUSPECTS
Coombe Abbey, left; Agatha Christie in 1946, below; Jamie Lee Curtis in *Knives Out*, bottom; Zetter Townhouse, below right

Let your inner Poirot step up to the plate

MURDER MYSTERY

Fancy a spot of light sleuthing after dinner? Charlotte Johnstone reveals the best hotels for whodunit intrigue

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And though it was night of high drama, with a murder, dinner and a huge plot twist, I found it absolutely hysterical - especially the eccentric characters such as Aunt Gladys, a colourful whirlwind of a woman who fawned her way across the room. I've been to a few immersive dinner experiences but you can't really beat a good old murder mystery: there is something about participating in a story and pretending to be someone else for the night, getting to know the lead characters and deducing like a Poirot, that sets it apart.

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THE OLD SWAN, YORKSHIRE

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seems fitting that amateur dramatic society Murder 57 hosts immersive whodunits here every month. **Package including dinner, bed and breakfast from £110 per person. Forthcoming dates: Dec 27; Jan 24 (01423 500055; classiclodges.co.uk).**

BURGH ISLAND HOTEL, DEVON

Mrs Christie also stayed at Burgh Island, in its post-war heyday, and wrote *Evil Under the Sun* and *And Then There Were None* here. The glamorous four-star sits on its own tidal island



just off the coast, with interiors that offer a Twenties backdrop to the hotel's well-known murder mystery weekends. Aside from the views, the Palm Court Lounge with its glass dome roof is particularly striking - in fact the original architecture dates to 1929 and much of the interior has been restored to its former Art Deco glory. Weekends begin with Friday night introductions before cocktails and canapés on the Saturday, when guests get ready for an evening of clue-hunting and mystery-solving.

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PLOT TWISTS
High drama at Burgh Island, main; crime scene at The Old Swan, above



they complete their mission. **Rooms from £299. Espionage Package £25, including book and background briefing documents; boat is extra (01872 500111; narehotel.co.uk).**

ZETTER TOWNHOUSE, CLERKENWELL, LONDON

The princely sum of £30,000 will get you and your group exclusive use of the entire hotel for a murder mystery party like no other, including an immersive theatre production, meals and a bed for the night. Guests arrive in character, already well acquainted with their back story. After check-in, they are assembled for afternoon tea with champagne cocktails before a four-course dinner with wine. Breakfast is also included, as are the services of a butler. For those who would prefer to forego the stay, a murder mystery experience in the Games Room of the Clerkenwell town house with dinner for 20 guests costs £4,000, which works out at £200 a head. **Murder mystery home hire from £20,000 (020 7324 4560; thezettertownhouse.com).**

COOMBE ABBEY, WARWICKSHIRE

In 1605, the infamous Guy Fawkes tried (and failed) to kidnap Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King James I, from Coombe Abbey, in the hope of putting her on the throne after blowing up her father at Parliament. And the rooms here have a royal atmosphere, with rolltop baths, thick gold and amber curtains and elegant four-poster beds.

The hotel celebrates its historic charm by hosting medieval and themed banquets alongside murder mystery nights every month. The next one follows the story of the Craven family who, while celebrating 100 years of living at Coombe with the servants, discover the head gardener has been killed. **Tickets, from £45, include a three-course dinner, glass of wine and post-show disco. Forthcoming dates: Jan 24 (024 7645 0450; coombeabbey.com).**



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