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West Dorset Conservatives hold pasta and quiz evenings.

The traditional atmosphere may be a result of its remoteness: there is no station, and it's 45 minutes to Dorchester on the A35, a bottleneck blackspot. Detached houses typically cost £458,000.

Seaview, Isle of Wight

You can tell it's summer in this resort on the Isle of Wight's northeast coast when the varnished dinghies and Mermaid day boats in the yacht club bob uncovered at their moorings. The same families have been coming here for decades, learning to sail, rock-pooling on the sandy beaches and watching the fireworks at the annual regatta. Sir Ben Ainslie, the quadruple Olympic champion and America's Cup winner, has reportedly bought a turreted mansion on the fringes of the village.

Seaview is less than three hours from London: take the train to Portsmouth, then a catamaran to Ryde. Prices range from £350,000 for a dated village house to £1.5m for a detached waterside property.

Dorchester, Highland

Last year, the crime novelist Ian Rankin mocked the cathedral town (population 1,200) on Twitter for a macabre street sign



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listing its must-sees as "toilets, doctor, museum, abattoir". The council soon replaced it with a signpost highlighting its true virtues: the 400-year-old golf course, ranked fifth in the world, the sandy Blue Flag beach and the wildlife haven of the firth beyond. The surrounding shooting and fishing estates include Skibo Castle, which is where Madonna married Guy Ritchie. A villa overlooking the golf course will top £1m, but prices in Dornoch average £184,000.

Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Visitors have flocked to Britain's oldest seaside resort since the 1660s: this part of the coast attracts more staycationers than anywhere outside London. The ruined castle separates twin bays lined with beach huts and old-fashioned amusements respectively. A £14m water park opens this week, the Queen launched the revamped open-air theatre in 2010 and a direct rail link to London may come by 2018. There's an annual cricket festival and the North York

Moors are only 10 minutes away. If that's not enough, the average property here costs £148,000 – 32% below the county average.

Additional reporting by Martina Lees and Hugh Graham