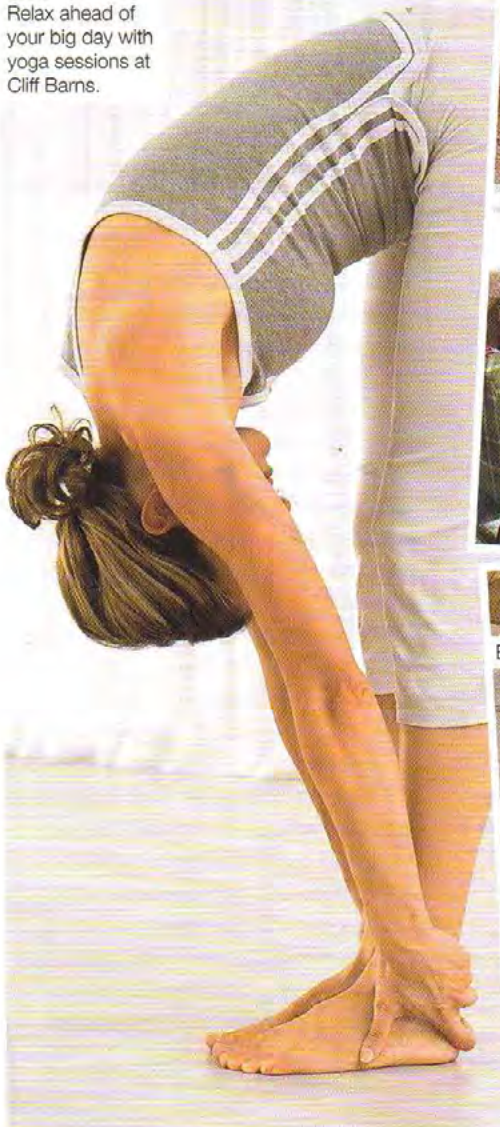


Sedate or *raucous?*

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Wondering what to do for that hen or stag party? How about tucking yourselves away in a luxury house for the weekend, with plenty of treats? Jo Malone has some ideas.

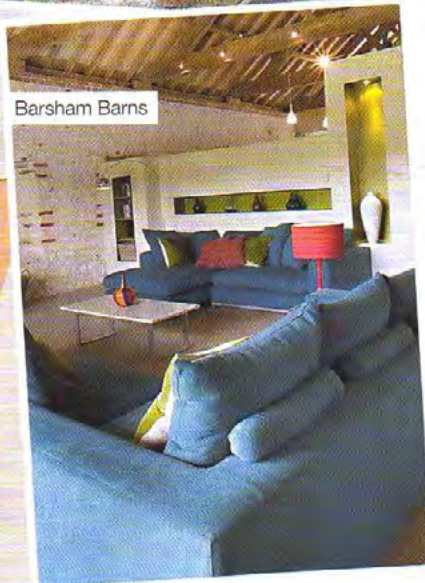
Chill.
Relax ahead of
your big day with
yoga sessions at
Cliff Barns.



Cliff Barns



Barsham Barns



An afternoon on the kart track followed by an extended bar crawl and few hours on the dance floor is a great hen or stag party – for some. If something a little more intimate is more your style, a Norfolk hideaway could be fun for you.

Perhaps friends are coming from far and wide and a night on the tiles isn't really right. Renting a large property for a few days is absolutely ideal. How about...

Cliff Barns

Hen party style without having to step outside! That's the promise at Cliff Barns, known as much for its individual weddings as its spectacular style. It's set in four acres of beautiful north Norfolk countryside and almost anything can be organised too, depending on your taste.

So if you fancy feather boas and butlers in the buff, it's possible.

Likewise if you want yoga sessions, pampering and a relaxing time sipping champagne in the hot tub it's all here too.

Loved for its exuberant décor, a cool mix of Mexican fused with American hunting lodge, it has seven double bedrooms, a bunkhouse and a really good kitchen. From expert chefs creating banquets, breakfast and more, a dressing up box, board games and table tennis to zip wires and clay pigeon shooting nearby, the aim here is your party your style.

◆ Cliff Barns

0870 850 5468, www.cliffbarns.com

Barsham Barns

The five barns at North Barsham near Walsingham sleep from four to 14 people, or if booked together, up to 48 people. Or the two sister barns at Haveringland, near Aylsham, sleep from six to 17. Wonderful food, stunning rooms, great views and a relaxing feel create a fantastic >>



Beach House



Barn Drift

<< atmosphere for hen parties here. There are themed breaks too, such as yoga and beauty midweek breaks combining pampering treatments, relaxation, fine food and Nordic walking, along routes with truly stunning sea views. What's more, for those wishing to totally relax, picnic hampers are available and meals can be prepared in advance by a local chef and delivered ready to be warmed, or he can come to the barns to cook for you.

◆ **Barsham Barns**
01328 821744, www.barshambarns.co.uk

Blo Norton Hall

This magnificent Elizabethan manor house tucked away in the south Norfolk countryside welcomes parties by arrangement.

With its grand oak staircase, antique furniture, family portraits and seriously impressive dining hall, it's a genuine opportunity to feel like Lord – or Lady – of the manor.

Unwind and amuse yourselves with plenty of privacy, or head to nearby Knettishall Heath Country Park, Bressingham Gardens, Banham Zoo or Wyken Hall Vineyards.

Diss is close enough for a taxi ride with a good selection of pubs and restaurants.

Sleeping 18 in eight bedrooms, there are two barn conversions nearby so groups up to 32 are welcome.

◆ **Blo Norton Hall**,
Diss, 0207 592 7660
www.blonortonhall.co.uk

Beach House

Owner Imogen Swallowe specialises in luxury hen parties at this seaside house at Mundesley for up to 14 guests, and welcomes 'hag' weekend parties too when hen and stags typically organise separate activities during the day and meet back for supper, film watching, sauna, a hot tub and sleeping.

"We particularly like hen parties as a group. We find they are much better than

any other group. When we started we were expecting drunkenness and outrageousness but we have had none of that.

"Often hen parties are so grateful to have somewhere so lovely that accepts hen parties. It is very pretty here and girly. It looks really nice but it is designed to be bombproof too," says Imogen.

There's a mini spa complete with scented candles and white robes, and French doors open to an attractive suntrap garden.

"The hen girls leave the house tidier than any other group. We can organise surf school, chocolate or cocktail making workshops, yoga classes and things like that, but they seem to enjoy just pottering around," adds Imogen.

Pamper parties can be arranged, along with bookings for dinner party style with Chef to Dine4, complete with smart table linen and silver candelabras.

◆ **Beach House**
www.beach-house-mundesley.co.uk

Norfolk Country Cottages

Why not use the hen or stag party as an excuse to try something completely different? If you thought barn conversions were small, dark and stuck in the middle of nowhere, Barn Drift at Cley could help you change your mind. It's not in the busiest spot, but it has the charm of uninterrupted views over the Glaven Valley one side and the sea the other. Use it as a base to explore Cley village with its pub, deli and smokehouse, or to see the seals from Blakeney Point.

Sleeping 15 in seven bedrooms, this 17th century barn has lots of character and modern comforts – from a simply enormous kitchen with two dishwashers, island and enormous dining area, plus a stunning living area with wood burner. There's table tennis in the cart shed, walled gardens, huge TV, Sky, DVD, WiFi, and so on.

Those wanting to be a bit more in the thick of it will love another Norfolk Country Cottages house, the Old Vicarage in Cromer which sleeps 12 and is close to the beach, pubs, shops, restaurants, golf and tennis of the town.

◆ **Norfolk Country Cottages**
Barn Drift, Cley, 01263 715779,
www.norfolkcottages.co.uk



Serenity Charter

If you fancy something with more movement, but not necessarily involving more effort, why not try...

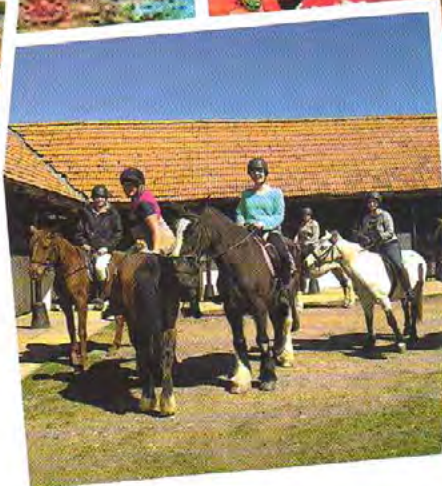
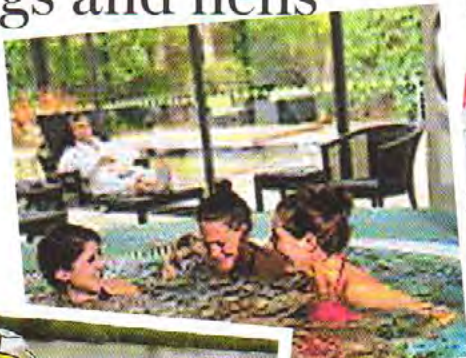
A Norfolk Broads party with Serenity Charter. Its 35-foot super luxury sports cruiser comes complete with champagne, qualified skipper and music of your choice. That's anything from live musicians to your favourite rock or dance tracks.

She carries up to nine people, and the idea is a luxurious party afloat, lazing on the white leather seats, eating delicious food and enjoying the views of Norfolk from the water.

The Serenity Charter team has great experience in the party treats field, and can organise everything from cakes and balloons to flowers. Groups can choose anything from a one hour cruise to a full day and keep the party going by asking Serenity Charter to organise accommodation.

◆ 01603 713430
www.serenitycharter.co.uk

stags and hens



Stags and hens

Brides are trading city for country and noisy nights out for luxurious nights in. Lucy Wright explores the sophisticated hen do.

Kate Bartlett wanted a hen party that catered for a mix of ages and was more than a night on the town.

Helped by Imogen Swallowe, owner of Beach House at Mundesley, Kate and her hens enjoyed a weekend by the sea, horse riding, walking on the beach and sipping afternoon tea.

"My partner is a keen surfer and I love the beach so wanted to be near the sea. I also love interior design and was blown away with the house, the fact it's designed to entertain as well made it perfect!"

They began with a champagne and strawberry reception. Next morning some went horse riding while others enjoyed a beach walk, browsing local shops and a meal at The Ship.

"On Sunday we were feeling a little fragile so some opted for the steam room and hot tub, while myself and others decided to go for a walk on the beach. When I returned I found an absolutely stunning vintage tea party complete with bunting had been set up as a surprise," Kate explained.

"I can truly say I had the most perfect hen weekend that everyone loved," Kate said.

"I loved the house so much, especially as it now holds great

memories, that I'm going back for my first anniversary with my husband." www.beach-house-mundesley.co.uk

There are several perfect pampering spots in Norfolk and Suffolk, such as Imagine Spa in Blofield with packages for treatments including a facial, manicure, pedicure and massage. Hen parties can laze by the hydrotherapy pool or chat in the relaxation pods.

Head therapist Jess Riding said: "Some brides have a party with their friends and then another one closer to the wedding day."

www.imaginespa.co.uk/blofieldheath

Luxury rules on Serenity Charter, the bespoke Broads cruiser. The skipper takes the boat along the hidden waterways of the Broads, leaving hens free to sip champagne indoors or out. Complete with flowers, music and nibbles, the Horning-based Serenity Charter caters for up to nine people.

www.serenitycharter.co.uk

For something really different, Pole Fusion, led by fitness professional Kathy Buller, offers weekly classes and hen and birthday party experiences. Experienced in dance,

choreography, gymnastics and theatre studies, Kathy also runs burlesque classes - and do ask about aerial hoop lessons.

Pole Fusion is based at the Oasis Sports and Leisure Club, Thorpe, Norwich, 07798 781099. www.polefusion.co.uk

Another favourite is No 1 Boot Camp. Based at Heacham, near Kings Lynn, it's one of the UK's most popular weight loss boot camps.

With 7am wake up calls and a day packed full of training, residents lose an average of 1lb a day. Co-owner Deena Reynolds said: "There won't be any wild nights out boozing but they can have a lot of fun working with our military trainers on the beautiful north Norfolk coast."

She said hen parties often come to them in a panic: "I recall a bride from Norwich coming with her hens just five weeks before her wedding. She had chosen a wedding dress that was two sizes too small for her and she was terrified that she wouldn't be able to fit into it," Deena said.

"She came to us with a size 14 body and a size 10 dress and our trainers worked flat out to get her into shape for the wedding."

www.no1bootcamp.com

