

Accessible luxury

Exploring The Granary at Larkbeare Grange, a wheelchair accessible luxury holiday cottage nestled in the East Devon countryside

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What do you consider when booking a holiday cottage? Location, size and style, probably. Perhaps a place that feels like a home away from home, but better? Add wheelchair accessible to your list of needs and your options will shrink dramatically. Fortunately, the situation is not as bad as it once was. Around the country, businesses are picking up on a need for quality, accessible holiday lets like The Granary at Larkbeare Grange, a wheelchair accessible luxury self catering cottage owned and operated by Charlie and Julia Hutchings. The experienced hoteliers, who have been running the Larkbeare Grange B&B for 17 years, opened The Granary in 2015 and it's been busy ever since. Julia explains: "We were getting an increasing number of people requesting ground floor bedrooms in our B&B because they had mobility issues. We realised that there was a need, and the idea for The Granary was born. We started doing research in the area and discovered that there was a dearth of good quality luxury accommodation that answered these issues. There seemed to be some that were accessible but they were lacking in luxury, and we rather feel there is no reason why if you have an issue with mobility or some other disability that you should drop your standards."

After months of research and back and forth with a friend who uses a wheelchair, Julia and Charlie felt confident that they had everything they needed to create an accessible base for disabled holidaymakers. The Granary is a timber framed modern minimalist escape, with an expansive open plan interior perfect for those navigating via wheelchair. The bright



and airy self catering cottage features height adjustable beds, a wet room with a shower tray designed to take the weight of a wheelchair and an induction hob on an adjustable rise and fall system, among other features. It was important to Julia and Charlie that The Granary be accessible without appearing utilitarian, so rather than installing the usual grab rails,

ABOVE: Nestled in the East Devon countryside, The Granary makes for the perfect holiday spot

BELOW: The open plan interior was designed with wheelchair users in mind

they followed the advice of a friend and used self-suctioning rails, which have the advantage of being moveable, so people can place them at their desired levels, while keeping the walls clear and maintaining the style of the house.

It's been a rewarding enterprise, Julia tells me: "One guest that sticks to my mind is a lady who came with her husband, who had recently become a wheelchair user, and at the end of their stay she said this was a wonderful holiday for her, and we'd never really thought of it from that angle. But she said because of the way that it was laid out it was actually very restful for her to be there, which was lovely."

With the cottage nicely booked up for the foreseeable at the time of our conversation, its success shows no sign of slowing down. ♦ larkbeare.net

