

## Frequently Asked Questions

### The Concept

#### **Q: What is Retreat East?**

Retreat East is the smart way to own a country retreat and a trouble-free alternative to having a full-time second home. It allows you to have a bolthole in the country in the form of a stunning 35 acre private members club and spa, with accommodation provided in a range of beautiful designer barns. It's set in organic meadowland in the Suffolk countryside and is 70 minutes from London Liverpool Street by train. It's located at Brick Kiln Farm in the village of Hemingstone.

You take a stake in Retreat East by buying an asset-backed debenture. This creates an independent legal charge over the 35 acre property that is registered at Companies House in favour of the debenture holder. Unlike debentures at for example Wimbledon, the debentures last indefinitely. Just like other assets they can be sold, gifted or bequeathed.

Debenture holders at Retreat East (and your guests) may visit as often as they wish throughout the year for day visits. In addition you have ten nights included every year, forever, to stay over (with the option to purchase more).

Retreat East offers much more than most second homes. Facilities include a stunning double-height Great Barn with large Club Room and restaurant. There's a spa wing with Finnish sauna, Turkish Hammam, outdoor hot tub, gym and massage treatment facilities; and an entertainment wing with bar, private screening room, private dining and billiards room.

The 35 acres of meadowland will include a kitchen garden, organic orchard, our own hens for freshly laid eggs, beekeeping, plenty of room to spread out and picnic, and direct connection to miles of public footpaths through the glorious Suffolk countryside. All maintenance and upkeep is completely taken care of for the debenture holders.

Retreat East answers multiple issues: the problem of second homes that are left empty for much of the year; the hassle factor of maintenance and upkeep for owners of having a full-time second home, and the considerable outlay in buying and refurbishing a traditional second property. With Retreat East you can have it all: a slice of a multi-million pound dream farm, where everything is taken care of for you - for the price of a garage in London.

### How Retreat East Works

#### **Q: Is Retreat East open to the general public?**

No, it's in effect a private members club. In order to gain access, to use the facilities and to stay over you take a permanent stake in the property and become a debenture holder.

### **Q: How do I become a debenture holder?**

You purchase a debenture from Retreat East Limited. This is a one-off payment and gives you a direct stake in the entire 35 acre property, in the form of an asset-backed security. In return for your owning a debenture you have the right to use Retreat East on an unlimited basis for day visits. In addition every year, forever, you have ten nights included to stay over.

Debentures are a widely used method of owning a right such as the use of seats at the Royal Albert Hall, Wimbledon, Twickenham or indeed golf course memberships all over the country. The Royal Albert Hall first began selling them in 1871.

### **Q: Are there different types of debenture?**

Yes, there are two types of debenture. The difference between the two types relates to staying over: If you own a barn debenture you may stay in any of:

- the dairy barns (which are mainly two bedroom properties), or
- in any of the field barns (which are all two bedroom properties),
- as well as in the Cow House, which is a stunning three bedroom double-height barn. There's a £250 per night extra charge for the Cow House because it's larger and sleeps more people.

With a studio debenture you may only stay over in one of the studios. These are wonderful 550 sq feet barns with four-poster beds, but they only sleep two people.

You get exactly the same use of all the facilities on an unlimited basis with the studio debenture as the barn debenture holders do.

### **Q: Does a debenture last for a fixed period?**

No. Our debentures don't expire after five, ten or fifty years: they last indefinitely. You can sell it freely, leave it in a will, gift it, or terminate your involvement with Retreat East at any time if you wish, in accordance with the debenture provisions.

### **Q: Am I tied to staying in any particular barn, or to staying at any fixed week of the year?**

No. If you have a Barn Debenture, you may stay in any of the barns you wish to at Retreat East (subject to the nightly surcharge for the Cow House). Choose a different one each stay if you like. If you have a Studio Debenture, you may stay in any of the studio field barns that you wish to.

You're absolutely not fixed to any particular week or time. You choose when you want to come, simply subject to availability. If you know there's a particular date you want to come on, book in advance - otherwise decide on a Thursday to come up on the Friday for a much needed break.

### **Q: Is there a per stay or per visit fee?**

No. You can come up for as many day visits as you like, and all of your ten annual night visits are entirely without charge. The only exception is if you the extra charge if you'd like to stay in the Cow House (see above).

## Debenture Holder Benefits

### **Q:What is the full list of the facilities at Retreat East?**

The facilities at Retreat East include:

- Double-height oak framed Great Barn Club Room with inglenook fireplace
- Restaurant serving quality predominantly local, organic produce
- Bar
- Private air-conditioned cinema screening room
- Billiards and private dining room
- Air-conditioned gym (running machine, rowing machine, exercise bicycle, free weights, cross-trainer)
- Spa treatment rooms (massage, body wraps, facials)
- Hammam (wet Turkish steam room)
- Sauna (dry Finnish sauna)
- Outdoor multi-person Jacuzzi hot tub
- Club bicycles
- Four Paws Spa (outside dog washing station)
- High speed Wi-Fi throughout the barns
- 35 acres of private meadowland to stroll and picnic in
- Organic kitchen garden
- Network of public footpaths direct from the site leading directly into the Suffolk countryside

In addition there is a whole range of deliciously beautiful "rural chic" accommodation provided for overnight stays in the range of dairy, field and studio barns. These are designer, luxury barns suitable for all-year round use, which are completely fitted out and ready to go.

### **Q:What is provided in the dairy, field and studio barns?**

The barns are fitted out with everything you need for your stay, including self-catering facilities if you decide not to eat in the Great Barn. They all feature full under-floor heating and either double or triple glazing. Every barn has a private outdoor space with seating and a table for al fresco enjoyment.

Fittings include:

- Oversized beds with luxury Egyptian cotton bedding and goose-down quilts
- High pressure oversized showers
- Smart TVs
- Miele appliances (hob, integrated dishwasher)
- Smeg 50s style fridge/freezers
- Wood burners in all of the dairy barns and 2-bedroom field barns
- Roll top baths in several of the dairy barns
- Skylights directly over the beds in all of the field and studio barns with a remote control blind that closes at a touch of a switch
- Heated mirrors and towel rails in bathrooms
- Clever low-level automatic lighting in all loos

### **Q: Is use of the spa wing free?**

Yes. Use of the facilities is entirely complimentary, and the spa wing can be accessed 24/7. You just pay for any private treatments such as massages. These must be booked 24 hours in advance.

## Guest Policy

### **Q: Can I bring guests?**

Yes, you're welcome to bring guests with you for day visits, or to have them stay overnight with you if the barn you've selected has the appropriate number of beds. You're even able to book out multiple barns (see below) to give you flexibility to bring more guests.

### **Q: Do I have to be present if my guests visit?**

In general, you do have to be present when your guests are here, and you can't send unaccompanied guests to Retreat East on their own.

However, there is an exception for a group of your loved ones whom we call your "associates" in the Club Rules. They can effectively enjoy the property as if they were you. They include your spouse/partner, your siblings, your parents, and your adult children (aged over 25).

They can make use of your debenture holder rights unaccompanied at any time - including using your annual overnight entitlement - and they may also bring their own guests, as if they were debenture holders themselves.

### **Q: Is there a maximum number of guests I can bring?**

Yes, to keep things fair and so that one member doesn't just repeatedly "take over the place" there's a limit of up to five guests that may come up with you for a day visit - so a party is limited to six in total.

If you have a special event, such as birthday, or you'd like a creative away day for example, we will consider permitting larger parties to accompany you on a case-by-case basis depending on what else is going on at Retreat East.

### **Q: Can I book more than one barn at the same time?**

Yes, you're welcome to show off your slice of Suffolk by booking multiple barns to accommodate your friends and loved ones at the same time. Each barn booked will simply come out of your annual overnight entitlement; so if you take three barns for two nights, that is six nights accommodation usage out of your annual ten nights.

## Children and Dogs

### **Q: Are children permitted?**

Children under the age of 14 are welcome during all official UK school holidays, as well as during independent school half-terms (which may differ from those dates). These dates will clearly be marked on our availability calendar. Children above the age of 14 are welcome at any time.

### **Q: Can I bring dogs?**

Up to two well-behaved dogs per unit are welcome. Outside washing facilities (the Four Paws Spa) are provided, as will be throws for the sofas, dog bowls and some lovely Lily's Kitchen treats. Debenture holders are of course strictly required to clean up after their dogs. An excellent network of public footpaths leads directly from the farm across the Suffolk countryside.

### **Q: How about other pets?**

Drop us a line and we'll discuss with you whether your beloved bearded dragon, cat, goldfish or rabbit would be a suitable pet to bring along or not.

## Debenture Fees

### **Q: How much does a debenture cost?**

The initial pricing is:

- Barn Debenture - £20,000
- Studio Debenture - £10,000

### **Q: Is there stamp duty to pay?**

No. There is no stamp duty, VAT, or other taxation to pay.

With the changes to the Stamp Duty regime for second homes that's particularly relevant: as of 1 April 2016 you're paying 8% on the purchase price of a holiday home in the £250,001 to £925,000 category. At a stroke that's increased the stamp duty payable on a £300,000 second home from £5,000 to £14,000 - which is pretty much cash straight down the drain. And that's for a place you'll statistically end up using less than two weeks a year.

### **Q: Is there an annual fee and how much is it?**

There is an annual fee that covers all utility costs (electricity, water, WiFi, TV licensing), local rates, waste collection, cleaning, maintenance, plus a sinking fund for repairs and furniture renewal. That means everything will be kept tip-top going forward. There are no other hidden charges.

- Barn Debenture - £949 annually
- Studio Debenture - £882 annually

Fees are payable on 1st of January each year in full.

Debenture holders who join during a calendar year will have their first year's annual fee charged on a pro-rata basis to the end of the year.

### **Q: What happens when furniture and furnishings wear out and everything needs decorating?**

That's exactly what the sinking fund is for. It's been calculated so that we can replace everything when it needs to be done to keep the place looking utterly wonderful and up to date.

### **Q: Can you just increase the annual fee whenever you want?**

No. The annual fee will go up in line only with the RPI. In addition we can increase it by only up to 5% if we need to, but only once every five years.

### **Q: What kind of financial security is offered?**

You are buying an actual asset-backed security in the form of a legal charge over the entire 35-acre property. This security is registered with the Land Registry. Independent trustees (a solicitors firm in Swansea) hold the charges for the benefit of the debenture holders. Please note that the charge ranks behind any senior debt registered against the property.

**Q: Can I sell my debenture?**

Yes, you can freely sell, transfer or bequeath your debenture. There will only be a limited number of debentures sold, so once they're gone, we will keep a list of interested parties and put them in touch with you if you do ever decide to sell. There's a £3,000 transfer fee for us to register the change of debenture ownership and club membership.

## Practical Stuff

**Q: Can I store my personal effects at the farm?**

No. It would be wonderful to have this facility, but with each debenture holder even storing one box of effects we would need a huge amount of storage space. The barns contain everything you need for the weekend, so just bring up a bag with your necessities.

**Q: Are any of the barns disabled friendly?**

Dairy Barn 5 is specially equipped with barrier free access and a disabled friendly shower and WC. There are also disabled WCs in the Great Barn. If a debenture holder has special needs or requests please let us know in advance and we will do our best to accommodate them.

**Q: Is housekeeping/maintenance provided?**

Yes, each time you arrive for an overnight stay the barn you are staying in will be spotlessly clean with fresh linen on the beds. Bed linen and towels will be changed every three days. In addition, of course all of the grounds maintenance and upkeep is taken care of too.

Forget arriving at your second home and spending all your time mowing the lawns, cleaning out the guttering and the rest of the grind.

**Q: Is the club open all year round?**

With double or triple glazing throughout, underfloor heating, extremely high levels of sheep's wool insulation, wood burners and a huge inglenook fireplace in the Great Barn, you are more than welcome to visit at any time of year. Watching the seasons change across our land from inside a super insulated, snug barn is one of the major attractions of Retreat East.

**Q: Is everything built and ready for use?**

Pretty much. The Great Barn is ready for use, and in terms of accommodation all six dairy barns and six of the field barns (four two beds and two studios) are completed. We will be adding the final nine field barns at the far end of the field barn site, as the number of debenture holders expands.

**Q: What's the broadband situation?**

WiFi is provided throughout all the barns, along with Smart TVs with Internet connectivity. If you would like a "digital detox" let us know and we can switch it off for you.

### **Q:What happens if I damage something?**

We'd like you to report it as soon as possible! We of course understand sometimes accidents happen, but if there's a cost associated to repairing any damage, this will of course be passed on to you.

## Booking Overnight Stays

### **Q:What is the mechanism for ensuring fair usage amongst all the debenture holders?**

There are two ways in which we ensure that those booking in advance don't hog all the good dates - and to make sure there's availability for those times you decide on a Thursday that you just want to escape the following day for the weekend at short notice.

The first is that your debenture entitles you to two weekends a year which can be booked up to six months in advance. Other weekends can be booked a maximum of seven days in advance. That prevents people from simply booking a block of weekends up months ahead, in effect pushing other debenture holders to mid week stays.

The second is that certain periods of peak demand are designated "holiday periods". You may only stay for one of these periods in any given year - so if you come over Easter one year, you can come up over the August Bank Holiday the following year etc. The holiday periods are any stay that includes one of the following:

- Good Friday and Easter Monday
- All English Bank Holidays
- Christmas Day or Boxing Day
- New Year's Eve or New Year's Day

### **Q:Are there minimum or maximum stays?**

There is a minimum 2.5 night stay at weekends, which is designed so that a weekend is actually a weekend - it means you get to have a 5pm check out on the Sunday, rather than cutting your weekend short by having a mid-morning check out. You are automatically entitled to book two of these weekends up to six months in advance (see above) if you wish - which would use five nights of your ten days annually. You may book more weekends at short notice.

There is a one-night minimum stay mid-week (i.e. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday nights)

You can buy up to five extra days subject to availability each year (see below). This means you could stay for a full fifteen nights in one go if you wanted to, by using your ten days in one go and the five additional ones you purchased.

### **Q: How far in advance can I book and when is check in / check out?**

The booking window is in general from one day to six months in advance, though you can only book two weekends in this way. Additional weekends can be booked up to seven days in advance, as explained above.

Check in is 4:00pm and check out is 12.00 noon (unless you are staying over a weekend, when check-out is 5:00pm on the Sunday).

### **Q:What happens if I cancel my days?**

If you make a booking, but are then not able to come, you can cancel up to fifteen days before your stay and the days concerned will be added back to your annual allowance.

### **Q: Can I carry days over from one year to another?**

No. On the anniversary of your joining you automatically receive ten nights to use that year.

### **Q: If I use up all of my days, can I buy more?**

Yes, you may buy up to five additional nights accommodation per year, over and above your ten included days, at the following rates

- Studio Barn weekday - £150
- Studio Barn weekend or bank holiday - £200
- Dairy or Field Barn weekday - £200
- Dairy or Field Barn weekend or bank holiday - £250
- Cow House weekday - £325
- Cow House weekend or bank holiday - £375

These additional days may only be booked seven days or less in advance of arrival.

Please note that Studio Debenture holders may only purchase additional days accommodation in Studio Barns, and not in other types of accommodation.

### **Q: What happens if I decide at very short notice that I'd like to come up and stay?**

We live in a world where many people don't plan their breaks months in advance, and we don't expect our debenture holders to either. We very much see people deciding on a Thursday evening to take a break that weekend. This is why you are not tied to a particular unit at the farm; you can simply use the app to check availability and take any barn that is still free. If you want a particular barn that you've fallen in love with, you might book further in advance - or you might discover a new barn that you haven't stayed in before.

## The Area and Car Usage

### **Q: How do I get there?**

Retreat East is easily accessible for the North and East-of-City crowd, via the A12 trunk road or the 70-minute regular train service from London Liverpool Street. It is just 5.9 miles from Ipswich main railway station, but is located in a world of its own within a designated Special Landscape Area in the Gipping River Valley. We are 60 minutes from Cambridge and 2.5 hours from Birmingham.

Our address is Brick Kiln Farm, Sandy Lane, Hemingstone, Suffolk IP6 9QE. Enter "Retreat East Suffolk" (all three words) into Google Maps and it will give you directions to the door.

### **Q: How large is Retreat East?**

The property is 35 acres in size and is made up of a collection of organic meadows and pastureland, separated by hedgerows and bordered by trees. At the heart of the complex there is a 16th century farmhouse, six dairy barns, the Great Barn and a final total of fourteen field barns. The field barns are either detached two-bedroom units or semi-detached one-bedroom studios. In total there are 39 double bedrooms within all of the barns.

### **Q: Are there things to do near by?**

Absolutely. Retreat East is located in a wonderful area of natural beauty. Country walks and public footpaths lead off direct from the site, including a five mile signposted circular walk that takes in a couple of country pubs. We are located directly behind the 1,300 acre Shrublands Hall estate with its handsome, deer filled parkland, all accessible by public footpath. The area is perfect for cycling on quiet country lanes with gently rolling hills.

The farm is some eight miles from Woodbridge and the Suffolk Heritage Coast, which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Deben Yacht Club (founded 1838) provides sailing lessons and moorings.

Newton Hall Equestrian centre is six miles from the farm and is the one of the largest and best regarded riding centres in the east of England. It has a 60 x 30m indoor arena and between 50-60 horses and ponies available for riding.

There are several local golf courses - Fynn Valley is just over ten minutes drive away. The 6,500 yard Par 72 golf course at Hintlesham Hall is nine miles away. The exceptional, award winning historic Links course at Thorpeness is a 25 mile drive on the coast near Aldeburgh.

Suffolk contains some of the most picturesque and unspoiled villages in the entire country. Southwold, Dunwich, Aldeburgh (with its world class music festival) are all within easy reach on the coast. Lavenham, Clare and Long Melford are a similar distance inland.

Cambridge is an hour away; the handsome Cathedral market town of Bury St Edmunds is 20 miles, and closer to home Coddensham (one of Suffolk's largest Roman settlements) is a picture-postcard, perfect English village less than a mile away by footpath.

### **Q: Do I need a car?**

No. The farm is 70 minutes away from London Liverpool Street on the main intercity line to Norwich with its regular services. Simply take the train to Ipswich and then grab a cab for the 5.9 mile, fifteen minute journey to the farm.

When on site you're welcome to use one of the bikes provided for debenture holders if you want to venture off and explore the area.

If you do bring your car, you may drop off outside your barn (if staying over) but all parking is at the entrance to the farm so that the peace and beauty of the built environment is maintained. The car park is less than 5 minute's walk and the driveway is lit at night.

## **Green Credentials**

### **Q: What are the environmental credentials of the farm?**

Concern for the environment has been built in at every stage of the development of the concept of Retreat East. It goes far beyond installing energy saving bulbs and dual-flush loos.

The very nature of the site is "socially sustainable". Land and housing are precious, limited resources. Second homers on average use their property just 10 days a year. Instead of taking multiple homes out of the valuable local housing stock, the farm provides a purpose built country retreat for those people on one property. This "sharing economy" concept is an inherently far more environmentally and socially responsible use of resources.

In terms of the buildings at the farm, only natural breathable materials (lime render, reclaimed bricks, wood from sustainable sources, sheep wool insulation) have been employed using traditional skills and craftsmanship. The barns are extremely highly insulated and extremely efficient with double or triple glazing.

Finally we are Soil Association certified as a fully organic site. In the ten years of stopping intensive farming on our land it has become a complete natural haven once again for butterflies, songbirds, voles, badgers, pheasants, bees owls and even deer.

The farm is a complete exemplar of responsible, sustainable rural regeneration and we are extremely proud of it indeed.

## Wrapping Up

### **Q: Is this a hotel, timeshare or a second home? I've still not quite got the concept.**

It's not really any of these. It's a private members club, with accommodation provided. Membership is by debenture, which is a tried and tested manner of enjoying an asset. It's a private club that's run for its debenture holders, who can also stay over. It's therefore not such a revolutionary concept at all.

The reason it's not a **hotel** is that it's not generally open to the public and it doesn't charge a per night stay. Our debenture holders will be coming time after time and we want them to have a real sense of ownership, belonging and love for Retreat East. You could of course just stay in a hotel instead of Retreating East, but you'll rarely if ever get the same sense of ownership. Ten nights a year in a £500 a night hotel would also set you back £5,000 a year. That would pay for one of our debentures in four years. At the end of that time you'd have nothing, whereas with us you'd still have your debenture (which can be freely sold on, gifted or bequeathed) and the use of the place to keep enjoying.

**Timeshare** is extremely broadly defined under EU law and covers the sale of any right to use overnight accommodation for more than one period of occupation, where the right lasts longer than a year. That means the legal definition excludes hotel stays, but catches virtually any other scheme where overnight accommodation is sold, even our debenture membership.

However, outside the technical EU definition, timeshare is generally understood to be a contractual right to stay in a particular piece of holiday accommodation, often for a fixed week or weeks every year. That right generally expires after ten or fifteen years and it's a contractual right seldom if ever backed up by an independent asset-backed security. Retreat East may be visited as often as you like, with or without guests, for day visits. Your debenture is asset-backed, lasts forever, and you're free to sell, gift or bequeath it. In terms of staying over, with timeshare you're normally tied to a particular room or apartment that you buy a "share" of, whereas at Retreat East debenture holders can choose any of the barns to stay in. This is your club: your pad, your permanent private retreat in the Suffolk countryside.

The closest thing it is, therefore is a smart alternative to a full time **second home**. A full-time second home involves considerably higher outlay, far greater annual expenditure, you don't have everything taken care of for you, and you don't (generally) have private luxury spa and entertainment facilities on your doorstep, nor are you taking valuable local housing stock out away from local families with Retreat East. And if you didn't read the question above about stamp duty, it's worth pointing out you'll now be paying £14,000 just to buy a second home, which statistically you'll end up using less than two weeks a year.

## Q: Who is behind Retreat East?

The directors of Retreat East are Dominic Richards and Peter Ede.

Dominic was raised in Australia and England, and graduated from King's College, Cambridge and the Prince of Wales' Institute of Architecture. He has enjoyed success rescuing and finding new uses for wonderful buildings in the UK. The former Vice Chairman & Executive Director of The Prince's Foundation for Building Community, Dominic's enterprises now comprise of Architekton, a UK sustainable development company; Prosper Education, a digital education initiative in China; and Retreat East.

Peter was raised in Germany and England, and graduated from Girton College, Cambridge and York College of Law. He spent a number of years working in International Litigation at the City law firm, Clifford Chance, before teaming up with Dominic to work on a number of projects related to the built environment. He eventually moved out from London to the fresh air of Suffolk, where Retreat East is the embodiment of his passion for beautiful spaces and environmentally responsible design.

## Is it time to Retreat East?

Most definitely. This is the smart solution for having a retreat in the countryside in a way that suits your needs, provides a boost to the local economy, is completely hassle-free and is intrinsically socially sustainable.