

1 Family Highlights of Devon & Cornwall



It's hard to pinpoint quite when my love affair with Devon and Cornwall started. I think it all began long ago with family holidays on a farm in the countryside near Mevagissey, days on the beach at Caerhayes and Gorran Haven, and memories of stopping for a picnic on Dartmoor on the way home. When I was a little older we spent family holidays in a caravan near Woolacombe in north Devon, then in a cottage at Constantine Bay near Padstow in north Cornwall. Trips with friends to explore Penwith and Exmoor followed; then there were weeks of conservation work on Lundy Island and sailing holidays in Salcombe. I was lucky enough to move to Devon in my early 20s and have lived on the eastern edge of Dartmoor for more than 20 years, along with my two sons. Together we have cycled the Camel Trail, walked on Dartmoor and camped on Bryher on the Isles of Scilly. Over the last 10 years my work has concentrated on researching (mainly on foot) and writing about the southwest peninsula for a number of books and articles, and it's clear to me why Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly – and Exmoor – together provide ideal locations for all kinds of family holiday, from simple bucket-and-spade fun on the beach to more active pursuits such as walking, cycling or sailing on the Salcombe estuary. A stunning coastline, some of the best beaches in the country, tranquil wooded estuaries, wild moorland, picturesque villages, historic fishing ports, ancient castles, colourful local customs, and an equable maritime climate give this region an edge. Add to that good family attractions, a huge choice of places to stay, from beachside camping to top-class family hotels, sunshine, ice cream, pasties and clotted cream – what more could any family want?

DEVON & CORNWALL FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

Best Family Events **Sidmouth FolkWeek** brings together singers, dancers and musicians to this elegant east Devon seaside town. You don't have to go to an official concert: musicians, dancers and street theatre perform for free all over town, especially along the seafront. Special children's events are held all day every day in Blackmore Gardens. See p. 23.

Best Cities Cities are pretty thin on the ground, but visit **Exeter** for its shops, museum, underground passages and historic quay, and **Plymouth** for the Barbican and amazing National Marine Aquarium. See p. 24 and p. 109.

Best Natural Attractions Where to start? The **Valley of Rocks** on Exmoor; Dartmoor's tors; **Lundy Island** (p. 48); the **Penwith Moors**; the **Helford River**; the **Isles of Scilly** (p. 219); and just about the whole of the 1000-km **Southwest Coast Path**.



Plymouth Barbican

Best Animal Parks **Paradise Park** in Hayle: a myriad of exotic birds, small animals for toddlers, plus indoor play for wet days – and a strong educational element. **Living Coasts** in Torquay: all manner of seabirds in a virtually natural environment. **The Big Sheep** near Bideford for animal fun and frolics for all ages. See p. 205, p. 115, and p. 50.

Best Aquarium **The National Marine Aquarium** in Plymouth:

Paradise Park, Hayle



the biggest and best aquarium in the country. See p. 110.

Best Beaches There are dozens, from quiet sandy coves to wide surfing beaches: **Blackpool Sands** near Dartmouth; **Rickham Sands** near Salcombe; **Lantic Bay** near Polruan; **Sennen Cove, Gwithian Towans, Watergate Bay** at Newquay; **Widemouth Bay** near Bude and so on. See area chapters.

Best Islands **Lundy Island** off the north Devon coast for those looking for adventure; **St Agnes** on the Isles of Scilly, the most southwesterly island in the UK. See p. 48 and p. 224.

Best Boat Trips Three hours along the **World Heritage Jurassic Coast** from Exmouth on a Stuart Line cruise, spotting peregrine falcons and dolphins. See p. 30.

Best Forest **Haldon Forest** near Exeter: cycle tracks and walks, sculptures, special events for children – and good refreshments. See p. 96.



Land Ahoy!

Best Outdoor Activities

Cycling along the Camel Trail from Wadebridge to Padstow; **sailing** on the Salcombe estuary with the Island Cruising Club; **horse riding** on Exmoor. See p. 115, p. 118, and p. 51.

Best Museums The **Wayside Museum**, Zennor – memorabilia of life in rural west Cornwall; **Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre** near Launceston; Falmouth's **Maritime Museum** has a huge range of hands-on activities for children. See p. 203, p. 90, and p. 174.

Best Castles **Berry Pomeroy** near Totnes for places to hide – and ghosts; **Castle Drogo** on Dartmoor – the youngest in the country – for location. See p. 112 and p. 88.

Best Gardens **Trebah Gardens** on the Helford river: gunnera tunnel, bamboo maze, Tarzan's Camp, beach, children's trails and activities; **Tresco Abbey Gardens** in the Isles of Scilly

features sub-tropical splendour. See p. 179 and p. 225.

Best Farmers' Market/Shop

Tavistock – farmers' market and huge daily pannier market. **Trevathan Farm Shop** at St Endellion, plus café and children's play area. See p. 102 and p. 165.

Best Miniature Train Rides

Take a ride on the **Lappa Valley Steam Railway** near Newquay to all sorts of family fun; the **Beer Light Railway** trundles through beautiful gardens at Pecorama above the sea in east Devon. See p. 177 and p. 27.

BEST ACCOMMODATION

Best Family-Friendly Option

For the best hands-on experience with small animals **Torrige House** in north Devon is pretty well unbeatable. See p. 76.

Best Grand Hotels Fowey Hall

Hotel in southeast Cornwall is totally committed to the needs of families, with very flexible accommodation options. See p. 141.

Best Seaside Hotels For the best indoor and outdoor facilities for children – and parents are well catered for too – try the **Bedruthan Steps Hotel** near Newquay. See p. 187.

Best B&Bs **Trevone Beach House** near Padstow: bright, cheerful, environmentally aware; **Mincarlo** on the Town Beach, St Mary's on the Isles of Scilly. See p. 161 and p. 227.



Torrige House, North Devon

Best Self-Catering

Accommodation Masses! **North Bradbury** at Chittlehampton for that personal touch, **Bosinver** near St Austell for large groups of children and mass animal feeding; **Gitcombe** near Totnes; **Burnville Farm** in West Devon and **Cot Manor** near St Just for peace, tranquillity and a spot of luxury. See p. 76, p. 186, p. 121, p. 100, and p. 212.

Best Campsites Gwithian

Farm and **Kenneggy Cove Holiday Park** in southwest Cornwall for straightforward camping and good facilities near the beach; **Wooda Farm Park** near Bude if you're after a little more onsite entertainment; **Westermill Farm** on Exmoor for wildlife and landscape. See p. 209, p. 209, p. 158, and p. 56.

BEST EATING OPTIONS

Best Child-Friendly

Restaurants Cap'n Flint's in Salcombe is deservedly popular; **The Springer Spaniel** near Launceston genuinely welcomes children; the **Wheelhouse Restaurant** in Mevagissey has life-size pirate models! See p. 123, p. 143, and p. 190.

Best Child-Friendly Cafés

Mother Meldrum's on Exmoor serves *Witches' Fingers*; **The Old Dairy Café** at Downes Traditional Breed Centre has a good family room – and animals; **Channel View Café** in Exmouth has an indoor play area. See p. 60, p. 79, and p. 35.

Best Vegetarian Food

Willow Vegetarian Garden Restaurant in Totnes (with dedicated family room); and **Herbies** in Exeter – both long



Traditional Cream Tea

established and brilliant. See p. 122 and p. 38.

Best Teashops Particularly good are the **Quay Café** at Fremington (turn up by bike); **The Corn Dolly** in South Molton; and **Anne of Cleves** in Totnes. See p. 61, p. 78, and p. 111.

Best Ice Cream **Roskilly's** on the Lizard; **Salcombe Dairy** in south Devon; and **Callestick Farm** in mid Cornwall. See p. 213, p. 109, and p. 177.

Best Outdoor Eating

The Three Mackerel, above Swanpool beach near Falmouth; **Juliet's Garden Restaurant** on St Mary's; **Stein's Fish & Chips**, Padstow; BBQ at the **Smugglers' Rest**, Tolland Bay. See p. 192, p. 233, p. 166, and p. 142.

Best Views **The Porthgwidden Café Bar** in St Ives; the **Seabreeze Café** at Torcross; the **Turk's Head** on St Agnes; the **Beach Café** at Sennen Cove, looking out across the Atlantic Ocean. See p. 218, p. 122, p. 234, and p. 214.

Enjoying a bite to eat

