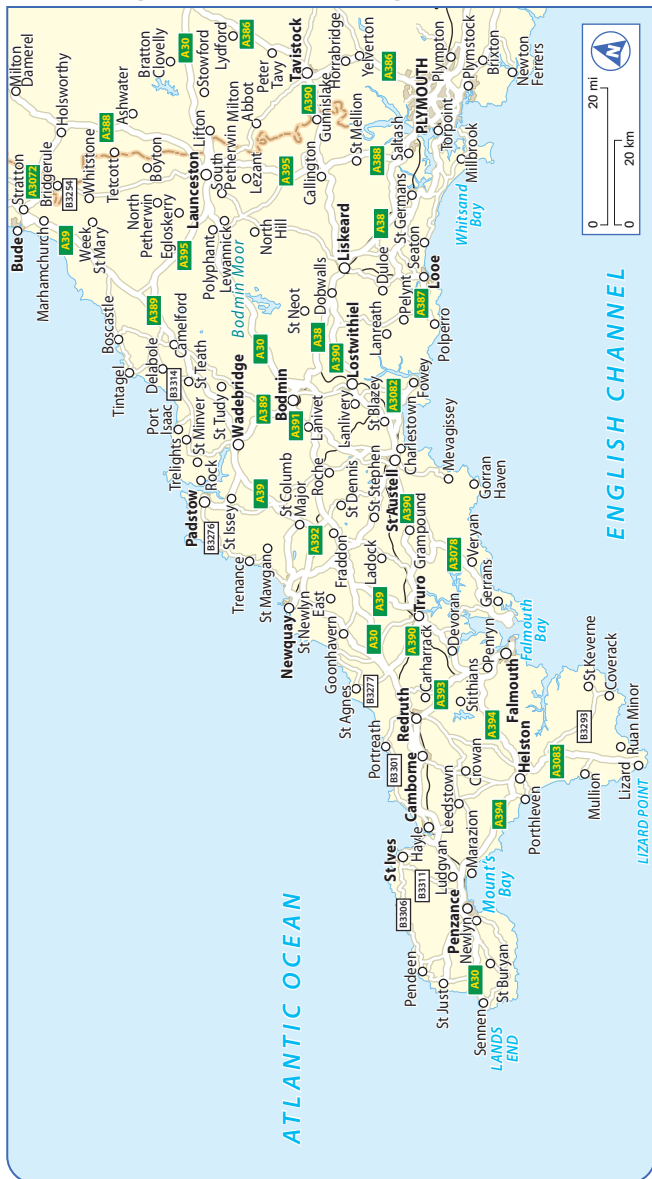


# 1

## Strategies for Seeing **Cornwall**



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Previous page: The beach at Porthcurno.

**A** glance at any map shows that Cornwall isn't a very large county—it's much smaller than neighbouring Devon, for example. It measures just 1,375 sq miles (3,563 sq km) in area, and 80 miles (129 km) from the Devon border at the River Tamar to Lands End. Therefore, you might think it would be easy to explore in a day or so; after all, public transport links between larger towns are fairly frequent. But train services away from the main Paddington–Penzance line are very limited and buses to small villages sporadic. If you want to explore Cornwall in depth within a limited time-frame, the only practical way of getting around is by car.

### Rule #1: Time your holiday

The tourist season in Cornwall is no longer restricted to the traditional Easter and summer holidays: short breaks are popular all year round. That said, Cornwall's resident population of 500,000 or so still increases by 50% during the main school holidays: Easter, May half-term and from mid-July to early September. If you have children there's no way round this problem; if you don't, it's best to avoid these periods.

### Rule #2: Allow enough time to get around

The two main access roads leading into Cornwall are the A30 running over Bodmin Moor to Penzance, and the A38 from Plymouth in Devon, which meets the A30 at Bodmin. In winter, most roads will be relatively quiet, but at weekends in high season traffic can be very heavy on the main holiday routes. Many accommodation bookings run from Friday or Saturday, and on those days many holidaymakers travel to and from Cornwall. Allow plenty of time for your journey; expect delays; travel at night if feasible; and take food and drink for the trip. If at all possible, find accommodation that doesn't have a Friday or Saturday changeover.

### Rule #3: Consider a multi-centre holiday

If you're planning to spend a week on the beach a one-centre holiday is

fine, but if you're interested in delving into the county's history, archaeology, landscape and so on, you may want to move around. Note, however, that it can be difficult to make 1-night accommodation bookings in high season (from Easter to end of September). Cornwall can be split into four regions: south-east (p 149), Bodmin Moor and the north coast (p 143), central (including the Roseland and Lizard Peninsulas, p 155) and the far southwest—including the Isles of Scilly (p 163). Each area has a distinct character and different appeal (see Chapter 6).

*Tintagel Island, north Cornwall.*





*View across Crooklets on a rough day.*

Cornwall's large estuaries make exploring Cornwall more time-consuming than you might expect, and ferries can be surprisingly expensive.

#### **Rule #4: Make use of local transport deals**

Unless you're staying in a very remote area, it's worth asking about local transport facilities. You can't reach everywhere in Cornwall by public transport, but you can save motoring costs by using discount parking deals or park-and-ride schemes. Some district councils offer week-long parking tickets (typically costing around £30), which can be used in any of their car parks, otherwise standard municipal parking charges can add up fast: many car parks charge for 24 hours, 7 days a week, and tariffs range from £1 per hour to £6–8 for 3 hours at some privately-owned car parks. Visit local Tourist Information Centres for information.

In addition, National Trust (NT) members can save money on parking and entrance charges. English Heritage, The Royal Horticultural

Society (RHS) and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) cards are also good value. Lastly, take binoculars if you're keen on birds, and perhaps specialist guides for identifying flora and fauna.

#### **Rule #5: Brush up your driving and navigation skills**

You need to get off the main roads to get the most out of a visit to Cornwall. Many of the best beaches, more picturesque villages and interesting historic houses lie off major routes. Remember, though, that remote parts of Cornwall may have patchy mobile phone coverage, and sat-nav systems may not be 100% reliable either. Get hold of up-to-date Ordnance Survey Explorer (OS) or Landranger maps for the areas you want to visit, and learn how to use them accurately and efficiently ([www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/leisure](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/leisure)). Many of Cornwall's minor roads are single track, and you will inevitably meet oncoming vehicles from time to time: brush up on your reversing skills. Many of the tours recommended in this book involve negotiating narrow country lanes. ●