

# The beach boys



More than 30 years after his idyllic childhood holidays by the sea, Iain Duff re-visits North Cornwall with his own sons and finds it's still a glorious family camping destination

For many of us, Cornwall is forever associated with long, hot seaside holidays. Many of my childhood summers were spent on the rugged north coast, where Atlantic breakers crash onto glorious golden sands against a backdrop of craggy rock faces and rolling dunes. While surfers tried to tame the waves, we preferred to spend our time lazing around on the beach, doing very little apart from digging holes in the sand. We'd cool off by eating ice cream or, if we felt particularly energetic, by racing into the ocean and throwing ourselves into the rolling waves.

The more things change, the more they stay the same, as they say. Thirty-odd years later, this still sounds to me like the best holiday imaginable. And I'm glad to say, it turns out it's exactly how my own children like to spend their holidays too.

Cornwall is as popular now as it's ever been, particularly for campers. And there's

no doubt that camping is easily the best way to enjoy a stay in the West Country. There are campsites everywhere – from tiny corners of muddy grass at the back of country pubs to massive holiday parks with every facility you can possibly imagine.

It was one such holiday park that we stayed on during our most recent trip to the Cornish peninsula. With mum staying at home, this was a boys holiday – dad and two sons – so Trevornick Holiday Park was perfect. It is a lively five-star site, a short walk from Holywell Bay beach, and it crackles with excitement from early in the morning until late at night – so don't come here expecting peace and tranquillity, particularly at the height of summer. You can certainly relax and recharge here, but the emphasis is very much on having fun.

Onsite, there's a heated outdoor pool, golf courses, three fishing lakes, an adventure playground, Holywell Bay Fun Park, a spa, sauna, amusement arcades and

live evening entertainment. Kids can enjoy outdoor bushcraft adventures under the supervision of expert tribe leaders or simply hang-out with pals in the Shed – fitted out with sofas, Wi-Fi and a TV. You can eat at one of the onsite restaurants, grab a takeaway or stock up for the barbecue at the farm shop. Basically, you could enjoy a wonderful family holiday without ever leaving the site.

But to be honest it would be madness to visit Cornwall and not take advantage of everything this fabulous part of the country has to offer... particularly as it takes so long to get here! Yes, let's get that subject out of the way first of all. The drive. To be honest, geography means getting to Cornwall is a bit of a nightmare to reach, no matter where you're coming from. On our marathon trips from Scotland in the '80s, it felt like every car in Britain was stuck on the A30, each overflowing with eager holidaymakers and packed with suitcases and buckets and spades.



Holywell Bay School of Surf



The roads have improved since those days, but in peak season they can still be clogged up with traffic from dawn to dusk. Unfortunately you just have to live with it – treat it as part of the adventure and console yourself with the thought that it’s well worth it when you reach your destination. And it really is.

We arrived at Trevornick late in the day after spending eight tiring hours on the road – and the decision to cheat and go for a pre-pitched Eurotent rather than bring our own suddenly looked like a very good one indeed. This is a truly stress-free camping lifestyle, with everything you need from a fully equipped kitchen to a spacious living room with a TV. You’re under canvas and it still feels like “real” camping, but all you need to pack is a sleeping bag and a change of clothes.

After quickly unpacking, we made the most of the late evening sunshine with a walk around the site, before enjoying



## DID YOU KNOW?

Hundreds of Lego pieces are still being washed up on the beaches around Cornwall, almost 20 years after a container carrying the toys fell from a cargo ship into the sea. Scouring the sands for the little pieces of plastic has become a big thing – you might not find any but it's a good way of helping clear other rubbish from the beach. To find out more about how you can help visit [www.beachclean.net](http://www.beachclean.net)

## NEED TO KNOW

[www.visitcornwall.com](http://www.visitcornwall.com)  
[www.letsgocornwall.com](http://www.letsgocornwall.com)

## EATING OUT



You can eat at one of Trevornick's onsite restaurants, which include the stylish family restaurant Fodders. It's open for breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as takeaways. The American-themed Diner and Woody's terrace bar are also popular options.

In the local area you'll find the Treguth Inn, a 13th Century pub in Holywell Bay, complete with thatched roof and whitewashed walls. Lunch, evening and takeaway menus are available and it's especially renowned for homemade pizzas. Fish and chips at St Piran's Inn, right on the beach at Holywell Bay, is great or try the stylish Offshore Bar and Bistro nestled in the dunes at Cubert.

Newquay has loads of options, including the Fish House and Rick Stein's place at Fistral Beach. Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Cornwall is at Watergate bay.

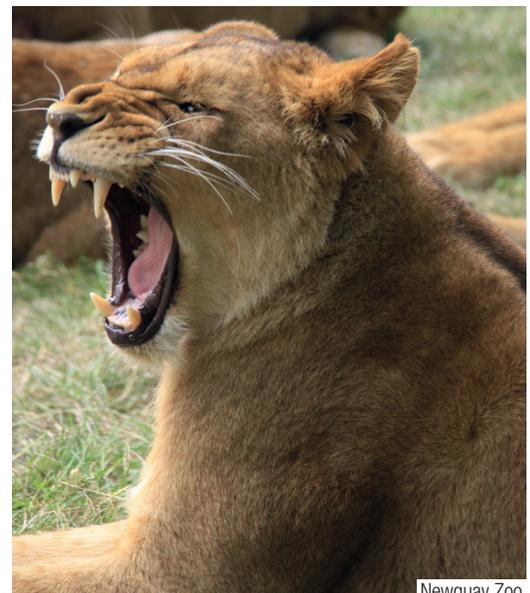
A visit to Cornwall wouldn't be complete without a traditional pasty or a cream tea and there are dozens of places offering these local delicacies



One of the beaches at Newquay

a tasty meal at Fodder's restaurant where we drew up our plans for the coming days. The only problem with holidays in places like this is working out how to fit everything in. You have accept that you probably won't be able to do all the stuff you'd like to, so decide at the outset what activities are top of your wishlist and set time aside for them.

Of course, a visit to Cornwall is incomplete without giving surfing a go; most of the beaches on the north coast have their own surf schools and Holywell Bay is no exception. Unfortunately our eldest son was in plaster with a broken arm and my own surfing days have long since gone, so on this occasion it was only our seven-year-old who got to don a wetsuit and take the plunge. It was his first time and he loved it, not least because of the patience and enthusiasm of his expert instructor at Holywell Bay School of Surf. By the end of his lesson, and after more than a few wipeouts, he'd pretty much got the hang of it. He was exhausted but happy.



Newquay Zoo



Wheal Coates Picture: Matt Jessop

Holywell Bay beach, which is operated by the National Trust, is instantly identifiable, thanks to the two distinctive islands in the bay, which jut out of the water like giant shark fins. They create an impressive backdrop to this fantastic beach – and if you look closely you might just spot a dolphin or two.

The beach isn't just for surfers. You can slide down the giant sand dunes, paddle in the stream, swim in the sea or explore the caves. And with the sun beating down, there are worse ways of spending a Sunday than just sitting on the beach, watching the sun glinting on the waves and digging holes. The beach stretches for more than a mile at low tide, so you'll always have plenty of room, although if you're driving, do make sure you arrive early to get a space in the car park, because on hot summer days it fills quickly.



Eden Project

## NEED TO DO

### SURFING

You can't go to this part of Cornwall without giving surfing a try. For the beginner, Holywell Bay School of Surf is the place to go. They are based right on the beach and the expert instructors will have you hanging ten in a matter of minutes.

[www.holywellbayschoolofsurf.com](http://www.holywellbayschoolofsurf.com)

Fistral Beach, in Newquay, is the Wembley Stadium of UK surfing, its long, straight sandy beach home to many international competitions. Until I visited last year, the last time I had been here was in 1986 to see the Radio 1 Roadshow with Gary "Ooh, Gary Davies" Davies. Back then it was basically just a sandy beach with great waves, but now there's a swish-looking complex with a cafe, pizzeria, beach bar and surfie clothes shops like Quiksilver, Fat Face and Animal. [www.fistralbeach.co.uk](http://www.fistralbeach.co.uk)

### THE BEACH

Even if you don't fancy catching some waves, the beach is the place to be in the summer. The National Trust owns the sandy beach at Holywell Bay – get there early in the day if you want a space in the car park. Just up the road from Trevornick, Newquay boasts 11 golden beaches for families. It's also a lively tourist resort with loads going on throughout the summer.

### WHEAL COATES TIN MINE

You tuned into the BBC's remake of Poldark and swooned over the rugged good looks of Cornwall's landscapes, so you might want to visit some of the beautiful filming locations. The series was filmed in various locations across the county including the stretch of coast around St Agnes Head, where you can see deep mineshafts cut into the cliffs, along with the scattered remains of engine houses above. There are endless footpaths of different lengths that will get you to the former tin mine at Wheal Coates, though they all end up on the stretch of coast path between St Agnes and Porthtowan. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

### EDEN PROJECT

Bodelva, Cornwall PL24 2SG  
01726 811911 | [www.edenproject.com](http://www.edenproject.com)

### NEWQUAY ZOO

Trenace Gardens, Newquay TR7 2NL  
01637 873342 | [www.newquayzoo.org.uk](http://www.newquayzoo.org.uk)

### WATERWORLD SWIM PARK

Trenace Park, Newquay TR7 2LZ  
01637 853828  
[www.tempusleisure.org.uk](http://www.tempusleisure.org.uk)

### BLUE REEF AQUARIUM

Towan Promenade, Newquay TR7 1DU  
01637 878134  
[www.blureefaquarium.co.uk](http://www.blureefaquarium.co.uk)

## STAY AT

### TREVORNICK HOLIDAY PARK

Holywell Bay, Cornwall, TR8 5PW  
01637 830531 | [www.trevornick.co.uk](http://www.trevornick.co.uk)  
Trevornick is the perfect destination for a fun-filled family holiday as the park offers a range of things to do. For starters the sandy beach is within walking distance of the park, so children can build sandcastles and play in the sea. On-site there are a multitude of facilities and activities (some of which are seasonal) which include a heated swimming pool, health spa, kids club, golf course, fishing lakes and outdoor play area. The swimming pool is fully enclosed and manned by lifeguards so you can be assured that children can enjoy the water safely. There's also a splash pool for the younger children to enjoy too. The Jacuzzi, spa, sauna and solarium provide somewhere for adults to relax too. There are six different pitch options for campers – but for a change we decided to go for a ready-pitched Eurotent. These have a spacious dining and living area complete with fridge, TV and cooker as well as individual camp beds and bedrooms.

### PERRAN SANDS HOLIDAY PARK

Perranporth, Cornwall TR6 0AQ  
01872 573551 | [www.haven.com](http://www.haven.com)  
This clifftop holiday park is spread across high sand dunes with great views of the sea. There's an extensive grassy touring area with plenty of facilities to match – an indoor pool with flume and outdoor fun pool, a sports court, kids' clubs and evening entertainment. You can even take paddle boarding and surfing lessons on the park.

### TREVELLA PARK

Crantock, Newquay, Cornwall TR8 5EW  
01637 830308 | [www.trevella.co.uk](http://www.trevella.co.uk)  
 The emphasis at Trevella park is on guests using the vast open space to enjoy ball games, picnics and time in the outdoors together as a family. Crantock beach is a short walk away and surf-capital Newquay a little further on. Trevella Park has an outdoor pool, paddling pool, adventure play area and fishing lakes. During the summer holidays there are also ranger-led activities.

### TRISTRAM CAMPSITE

Polzeath, nr Wadebridge, Cornwall  
PL27 6TD | 01208 862215  
[www.polzeathcamping.co.uk](http://www.polzeathcamping.co.uk)  
A well-known holiday destination located on the Camel Estuary in North Cornwall and boasting beautiful coastline is Polzeath. Tristram Campsite is set on the cliffs above the village, a few minutes' walk to the beach. There are several surf hire shops nearby, and you can hop on the ferry to Padstow to enjoy fine dining.



Cricket on the beach

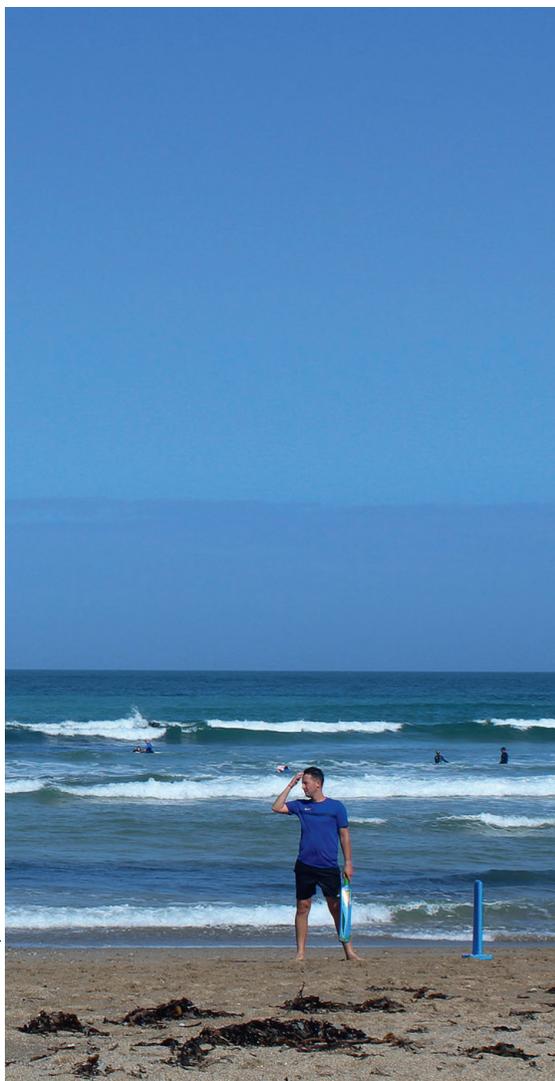
Beaches are all well and good when the sun is shining, and even though Cornwall does tend to get better weather than the rest of the country, it's not always fine. You'll need things to do and places to go when it clouds over. Thankfully that's not a problem. Holywell village itself has a handful of shops, a cafe and a couple of pubs serving locally produced food. The fun park next to the campsite is great entertainment for kids of

all ages, with rides ranging from bouncy castles to go-karts. Entry is free and you pay as you go to use the rides – there are various deals available but the best value option is to buy a Star Card in advance online for an extra 10% off.

Five miles north of Holywell Bay, is the brash seaside resort of Newquay. Our day out here was a nostalgic trip for me, having spent several family holidays there. Even back then



Fishing Pool at Trevornick



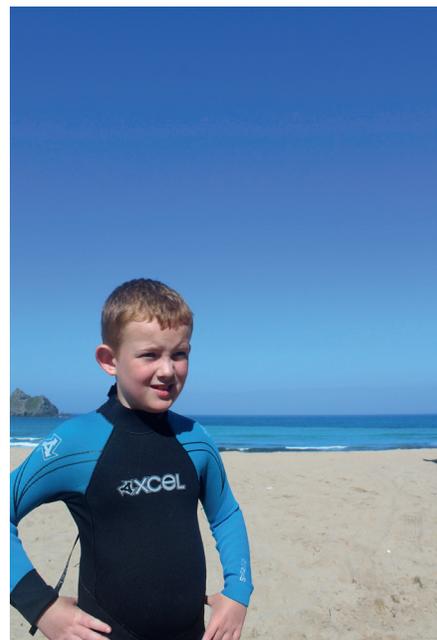
it had been a lively resort, but the last decade or so has apparently seen it turn into “Britain’s Magaluf”, certainly if you believe the lurid tabloid headlines. It is where the surf industry grew up in the UK. There are loads of surf schools and shops here – including the famous Fat Willy’s Surf Shack – and undoubtedly plenty of after-surf fun and action to



Eurotent interior

be had too. But despite its reputation as a hedonistic haven for stag and hen parties, Newquay hasn’t completely lost its family appeal and there is plenty to do here, especially when the weather isn’t great. Newquay boasts a really friendly zoo, that makes up in atmosphere for being relatively small in size – the staff are genuinely interested in helping visitors to understand the wildlife, and the animals are obviously well looked after. Other attractions include Blue Reef Aquarium and the WaterWorld Swim Park.

Further afield, the Eden Project is a must-visit, no matter where you are in Cornwall. It’s about 40 miles from Trevornick and well worth another day out. We were lucky enough to enjoy almost uninterrupted sunshine during our stay, which of course meant lots of time on the beach. And then, before we knew it our holiday was over and it was back onto that road again, heading home exhausted but with Cornish memories that will last forever.



Trevornick Holiday Park