

# SOUTHWEST BEST

It's all happening in Devon and Cornwall this summer – from naughty tea parties to high-speed zip wires. Susan d'Arcy checks out the region's hottest new attractions



## CORNWALL

### PLAY

**Kayak near St Agnes:** get up close to basking sharks, grey seals and dolphins with Koru Kayaking (07794 321827, korukayaking.co.uk), which runs guided paddles beside dramatic cliffs and secluded beaches near St Agnes, past the oak-lined banks of Port Navas Creek and on to Frenchman's Creek, which inspired Daphne du Maurier. Two-hour tours cost €40.

**Forage in Tregothnan:** Thom Hunt, who co-presented the Channel 4 foraging show *Three Hungry Boys*, has launched wild-food courses at a centuries-old smugglers' den, accessible only by boat. Students learn

how to identify edibles, and gut and fillet fish and meat, before tucking into a feast foraged on site. Day courses start at €110 (www.7thrise.co.uk).

**Electric skating in Padstow:** Segways are for sissies. The fearless now travel on electric skateboards, at speeds of up to 25mph. Adventure Temples (00 44 843 508 5005, adventuritemples.com) has just brought the battery-operated boards to Cornwall, and is organising tours along the Camel Trail from Padstow to Wadebridge. The sessions last up to two hours and start at €173.

**Pro surfing in Perranporth:** if you're serious about surfing, or serious about giving it a go, this looks like a good deal. A former British champion, Sam

Lamiroy, has set up the members-only Lamiroy Surf Academy (07926 581500, lamiroysurf.com) on Perranporth beach. For €139 a year, you get three three-hour coaching sessions, suitable for all ages and abilities, thereafter, half a day's coaching costs €35, unlimited board hire and a T-shirt.

**Maze in Launceston:** if it rains, the Hidden Valley Discovery Park (00 44 1566 86463, hiddenvalleydiscoverypark.co.uk; €10, children €9) has opened the Forbidden Mansion, an indoor twist on the classic garden maze. Visitors navigate a labyrinth of rooms in a mad professor's home, discovering secret passageways, climbing through hidden cupboards and solving clues to get out.

**Fly a plane in Newquay:** play captain for the day on the flight simulator



at Classic Air Force (00 44 1637 860717, classicairforce.com; entry €10/€6, simulator €3.50/€2), an aircraft museum near Newquay. It has one of the world's largest collections of 1950s and 1960s planes, including a Nimrod, a Sea Hawk and a Vampire.

**Chill out in Looe:** Millendreath Valley, near Looe, was a popular holiday spot in the 1950s, but fashions changed and it didn't, and its pub and pool closed in the 1990s. Now there's an ambitious regeneration plan for the 75 spectacular acres, starting with the opening of the Black Rock Beach Club (00 44 1503 264390, blackrockcornwall.co.uk), which offers paddleboarding and kayaking. Its beachside cafe should prove popular with walkers on the South West Coast Path.

**Wakeboarding near Liskeard:** this mix of waterskiing, snowboarding and surfing is one of the fastest-growing sports in Britain, and the new cable system at Siblyback Lake should make enthusiasts go weak at the knees, not least because of all the ramps to jump. One hour starts at €23/€17 through South West Wakeboarding (00 44 1579 346522, www.swlakestrust.org.uk).

**Thrills in St Austell:** want to know how a peregrine falcon feels? SkyWire, at the Eden Project, now reaches speeds of up to 60mph — almost double its previous best, and about the same as our favourite bird of prey at level flight. There's plenty of time to scare yourself stupid, too — at just shy of half a mile, it's England's longest zip wire. More chicken than falcon? Stick to the new Rainforest Aerial Walkway (00 44 1726 811911, edenproject.com; Skywire €17, or €12 with entry fees of €23/€10; walkway free with entry).

**EAT**

**Crab feast near Truro:** the Hidden Hut (hiddenhut.co.uk), a cafe overlooking cute Porthcurnick Beach, is planning Crab Landings all summer. Local fishermen will deliver their catch for Simon Stallard to cook in huge beachfront cauldrons. There's no standing on ceremony: diners sit on the sand to eat the freshly cooked crab meat with lemon quarters, lashings of aioli and rustic sourdough rolls.

One crab costs €14 and should feed two.

**Camper van cuisine:** Sam's (samsfowey.co.uk), a popular foodie haunt in Fowey, is now a moveable feast. Sam's on the Road serves pop-up dinners at various venues from two renovated vintage VW camper vans. Jon Leighton Jones, who trained with Gordon Ramsay and Fergus Henderson, is at the stove. Mains start at €9; bring your own blankets. Check the website or follow @samscornwall for details.

**Naughty vicar in Falmouth:** for an afternoon cuppa with a kick, try the Vicar's Tea for Two at Dolly's Tea Room and Wine Bar (00 44 1326 218400, dollysbar.co.uk; €27). Dainty sandwiches and homemade scones are accompanied by something a bit stronger than Tetley — your choice of cocktail, including flapper's delight (Zubrowka vodka, vanilla syrup and apple juice).

**Crallops near Truro:** bag a ticket for the hot new Thursday-night supper club at Philleigh Way Cookery School (00 44 1872 580893, philleighway.co.uk). The menu is either Muster (mussels followed by lobster; €29) or Crallops (crab and scallops; €23), all locally caught and served at a communal farmhouse table, where the chefs will talk you through recipes handed down four generations of Cornish cooks.

**Rum in St Ives:** the Rum & Crab Shack (00 44 1736 796353, rumandcrabshack.com; mains from €9), by St Ives harbour, is the sort of bar you dream about. Informal and friendly, it has 35 types of rum, as well as an imaginative array of crab dishes, and at high tide, all you will be able to see through the windows is sea.

**Affordable Watergate Bay:** the food at Fifteen Cornwall (00 44 1637 861000, fifteencornwall.co.uk) has always been top-notch, but in the evenings the only option was the €60 tasting menu. It has now been revamped, with more sophisticated decor and a welcome relaxation of that rule. Mains start at €21.

**SLEEP**

**St Ives openings:** boutique pads are like No 10 buses here, none for years, then two come along at once. First, the Tide House (00 44 1736 791803, thetidehouse.co.uk; doubles from €134, B&B), which has a walled garden for sunny evenings, unveiled six chalk-white rooms. Then, in March, came Trevoise Harbour House (00 44 1736 793267, trevoisehouse.co.uk; doubles from €157, B&B), decorated in jaunty navys, which has a snug with an honesty bar.

**New look for Newquay:** Fistral Beach is Newquay's pride and joy, and its hotels are sharpening up their act. The Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa (00 44 1637 852221, fistralbeachhotel.co.uk; doubles from €115, B&B), formerly the Bay, has had a revamp. Rooms are bigger, down from 90 to 71, with a zingy aquamarine colour scheme. It has a chic bar, too. The Headland (00 44 1637 872211, headlandhotel.co.uk; doubles from €115, B&B) has a new spa that uses the Cornish skincare brand Spiezia. Its 80-minute Dreaming treatment includes a facial, a body scrub and a massage, and costs €80 until September 30, after which it'll be €115.

**Green Truro:** Tim Kemp has gone from oil broker to ecowarrior with the unveiling of the Emerald: five zero-carbon properties tucked into five acres of woodland near Truro. Glossy interiors, hot tubs and smart TVs with Netflix are serviced by an on-site solar farm and a rainwater harvesting scheme. Perfect Stays (00 44 1208 895570, perfectstays.co.uk) has

properties sleeping two from €871 a week and houses for six from €1,400. **Swanky St Mawes:** After a nine-month "budget, what budget?" renovation bankrolled by David Richards, the chairman of Aston Martin, the Idle Rocks (00 44 1326 270270, idlerocks.com; doubles from €209, B&B) is sparkling in pole position on the harbour. The rooms have a chic but unpretentious seaside decor, while diners on the terrace can almost touch the boats that caught the fresh fish on their plates. Alternatively, a new company, St Mawes Retreats (00 44 845 319 0412, stmawesretreats.co.uk), has a portfolio



of self-catering houses with all the five-star trimmings: Hypnos beds, a concierge service, chefs and play dens kitted out with toys. A summer week in a four-bedroom house starts at €1,741.

## DEVON

### PLAY

**Wave-catching in Croyde:** Devon's answer to Newquay, but with better manners and a surf hotspot that shows them off. Croyde Surf Academy (00 44 1271 320218, croydesurfacademy.com; 2½-hour lessons from €41) promises beginners a free second lesson if they don't stand up first time round.

**Steaming in Dartmouth:** the sleepy River Dart has this summer's best bit of nostalgia. The Kingswear Castle (00 44 1803 555872, dartmouthrailriver.co.uk;

from €17/€6), which is the only working coal-fired paddle steamer in Britain, has started sailing between Dartmouth and Totnes again, having stopped in 1965. It's part pleasure cruise, part floating museum: passengers can look down into the engines, made in 1904. See the paddle wheels circling as well as quintessential English sights such as Greenway, Agatha Christie's former home.

**Coast walk in Plymouth:** locals have already dubbed the striking €290,000 contemporary staircase that has just opened along the South West Coast Path (southwestcoastpath.com) the Stairway to Devon. It allows walkers to hike all the way around the Stonehouse peninsula, linking the trendy cafes and shops in the historic naval docks of Royal William Yard with Devil's Point Park, which has glorious views over the Tamar and the English Channel.

**Bike through Dartmoor:** for those after rest as well as recreation on a cycle through Dartmoor, Mill End Hotel (00 44 1647 432282, millendhotel.com; doubles from €105, B&B), on the banks of the Teign, has the answer — electricity. Guests can negotiate the moors with guided tours on electric bikes; from €35 for half a day, non-guests welcome.

**Scale the heights in Exeter:** at Europe's first Clip 'n Climb centre (00 44 1392 422559, clipnclimbexeter.co.uk; €20/€9), you can scare yourself

stupid on indoor walls, scramble commando-style over the jungle gym's log, ladder and cargo net, take a speed-climbing challenge or brave the Stairway to Heaven. It's like Total Wipeout, minus Richard Hammond.

### EAT

**Cookery school in Axminster:** last year, fire wrecked the 17th-century barn at Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's River Cottage HQ (00 44 1297 630300, rivercottage.net). Now, though, it has been rebuilt, and is offering communal dinners at weekends (from €81 for four courses and one drink) and cookery lessons. Courses start at €174 for a day, including instruction from a chocolatier.

**French in Plymouth:** Royal William Yard was built by the Royal Navy between 1825 and 1835, its purpose was to feed the troops. These days it has turned into a foodie haunt for civilians, and flavour of the month is the new Le Bistrot Pierre (lebistrotpierre.co.uk; mains from €11), which serves authentic French dishes. Check out the farmers' market on the first Sunday of the month, too.

**Thai in Westward Ho:** Morans (00 44 1237 472070, moransrestaurant.co.uk; mains from €11.50) has beefburgers and battered fish on the menu, but also serves a mean pad thai and spicy, succulent satay chicken for those who fancy a touch of the Orient in this surfers' haven.

**Seafood near Kingsbridge:** the chef Thomas White has swapped west London, where he had a restaurant in Notting Hill, for the southwest, and the three-month-old Restaurant at Gara Rock (00 44 1548 844810, gararock.com; mains from €12). Expect sardines, crab, line-caught pollock or lamb, served with views of a rugged coast and inky Devon seas.

### SLEEP

**Harbour views in Salcombe:** the big opening in Devon is the Salcombe Harbour Hotel (00 44 8448 589187, salcombe-harbour-hotel.co.uk; doubles from €244, B&B). Its 50 bedrooms, many with balconies, have really cool beach-inspired interiors. Highlights to sample include the coastal spa, which has an indoor pool, and food from award-winning chef Alex Aitken, served on a terrace overlooking the estuary.

**Self-catering in Gittisham:** Combe House (00 44 1404 540400, fihotels.com), an Elizabethan manor in Gittisham, is one of the county's best bolt holes; and from next month you can mix its services with self-catering. Combe Thatch House is a four-bedroom cottage tucked away amid gardens with a stream and an orchard. If you don't fancy cooking on the Aga, simply book a table at the hotel's fancy restaurant. The cottage sleeps eight and costs €837 a night (minimum stay two nights).

**Facelift in Chittlehamholt:** set in 125 acres between Dartmoor and Exmoor, the Highbullen Hotel (00 44 1769 540561, highbullen.co.uk; doubles from €75, B&B) has had its Arts and Crafts style updated to the tune of €1.7m. The room names reflect the place's history, with one paying homage to its most famous guest, the actor Laurence Olivier. Golf, shooting and fishing are all available.

**A yurt in Totnes:** for glampers, Classic Cottages (00 44 1326 555555, classic.co.uk) has the new Poppy Yurt, set on a deck above 4½ acres of wild-flower meadows. Feeling energetic? You can explore the nearby lake in a rowing boat. It sleeps five and costs €910 for a summer week.

