

Cornwall



And gorse turns tawny orange, seen beside
Pale drifts of primroses cascading wide
To where the slate falls sheer into the tide.

Sir John Betjeman, Cornish Cliffs

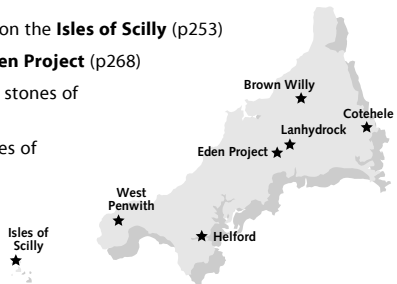
Jutting out into the churning sea and cut off from south Devon by the broad River Tamar, Cornwall (or Kernow, as its usually known around these shores) has always seen itself as a nation apart from the rest of England – another country, not just another English county.

This slender sliver of land was one of the last great bastions of Celtic culture, and there's no doubt that there's something different in the air this far west. It's a place that mixes artistic inspiration and natural majesty in equal measures: heather, gorse and wildflowers blanket the craggy headlands; tiny fishing villages huddle in the lee of granite bluffs; cackling gulls and kittiwakes cut ribbons across an open sky. Far from being a cultural boondocks, Cornwall has recently garnered a reputation as one of Britain's most creative corners, a place where you can feed your brain, your appetite and your soul all at once: world-class museums and groundbreaking greenhouses sit side-by-side with designer restaurants, hugger-mugger pubs and surfers' bars, and every twist and turn in the coast offers a fresh panorama of postcard views.

With so much scenic splendour, it's hardly surprising that Cornwall is also one of the nation's favourite getaways, and on sunny summer days it can seem like half of Britain is jostling for that last patch of unclaimed sand. Better to visit during the quieter shoulder months, or most atmospheric of all, during the roaring surf and bitter winds of Cornwall's feral winter.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch a gig race or stroll the Abbey Gardens on the **Isles of Scilly** (p253)
- Marvel at the architectural audacity of the **Eden Project** (p268)
- Explore the spooky monuments and standing stones of **West Penwith** (p241)
- Play lord of the manor around the great estates of **Lanhydrock** (p275) and **Cotehele** (p277)
- Top the summit of **Brown Willy** (p275), Cornwall's highest point
- Savour a pint at a creekside pub on the **River Helford** (p252)



■ POPULATION: 501,267

■ ANNUAL HOURS OF SUNSHINE
ISLES OF SCILLY: 1500

■ PASTIES PRODUCED PER
WEEK: 3 million

Orientation & Information

Cornwall stretches from the River Tamar and the granite hump of Dartmoor in the east all the way to mainland England's most westerly point at Land's End. The principal administrative town, Truro, sits bang in the middle of the county; to the north are the lofty cliffs and surfing beaches of the north coast, while the south coast is a gentler landscape of fields, river estuaries and quiet beaches. The main A30 road cuts through the middle of the county, running roughly parallel with the main-line railway between London Paddington and Penzance; a second major road (the A38) runs east from Plymouth across the Tamar Bridge and along Cornwall's southern edge. See p291 for more

detail on ways to get to and from the county and p295 for countywide travel.

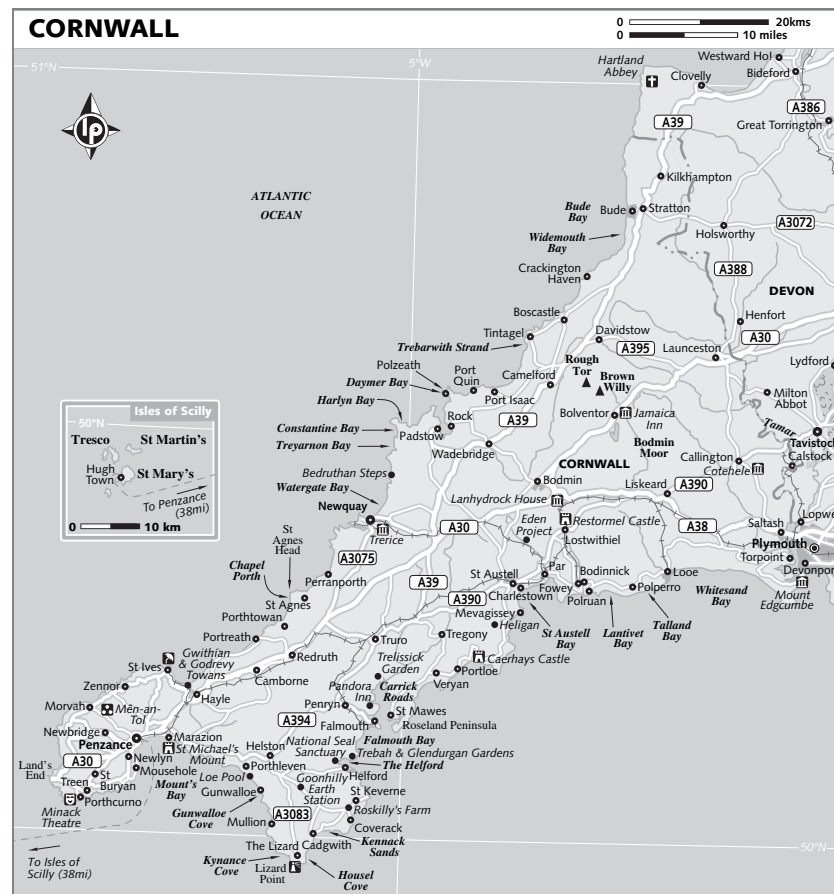
Cornwall 24 (www.cornwall24.co.uk) Lively (and usually heated) Cornwall discussion forum.

Cornwall Beach Guide (www.cornwallbeachguide.co.uk) Online guide to the county's finest sand.

Cornwall Online (www.cornwall-online.co.uk) A community-based site with guides to accommodation, walks, attractions, villages and activities.

THE NORTH COAST

If it's the classic Cornish combination of lofty cliffs, sweeping bays and white-horse surf you're after, then make a beeline for the north Cornwall coast. Battered by Atlantic



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CULINARY KERNOW

Cornwall's cuisine has undergone a renaissance in recent years, with celebrity chefs setting up everywhere you look and gourmet shops springing up across the county. But while Jamie Oliver, Rick Stein and chums take all the plaudits, Cornwall's real stars are its small local producers. Here's a list of our favourite places; for more suggestions check out www.foodfromcornwall.co.uk and www.foodtrails.co.uk, or swing by the annual **Cornwall Food and Drink Festival** (www.cornwallfoodanddrinkfestival.co.uk) held every November in Truro.

The Cornish Classic

The best countywide suppliers of traditionally made pasties are **Rowe the Bakers** (www.wcrowe.com) and **Pengenna Pasties** (www.pengennapasties.co.uk), while Ann Muller's **Lizard Pasty Shop** (p251) on the Lizard and **Chough Bakery** (☎ 01841-533361; www.thechoughbakery.co.uk) in Padstow have both received the seal of approval from Mr Stein.

Seafood

If it's seafood that floats your boat, the best place for fresh fish is straight from the docks. In Newlyn, **WH Harvey & Sons** (☎ 01736-362983) specialises in crab and lobster, while the **Pilchard Works** (☎ 01736-332112; www.pilchardworks.co.uk) is the king of the 'Cornish sardine', aka the pilchard. Elsewhere in Cornwall **Wing of St Mawes** (☎ 01726-861666; www.wingofstmawes.co.uk) and **Fowey Fish** (☎ 01726-832422; www.foweyfish.com) are well-known local fishmongers.

Wine & Beer

Cornwall also specialises in its own local brews. The **Camel Valley Vineyard** (p275) has an award-winning range of reds and whites, as well as a sparkling wine that's champagne in all but name. The **Cornish Cyder Farm** (☎ 01872-573356; info@thecornishcyderfarm.co.uk) produces traditional scrumpy on a working farm in Penhallow. Cornish ale-brewers include **Skinner's Brewery** (☎ 01872-245689; www.skinnerbrewery.com; Truro) and the **St Austell Brewery** (☎ 01726-66022; www.staustellbrewery.co.uk); both supply pubs across the county. Downing a pint of Storm or Tribute is an essential Cornish experience and not to be missed.

breakers and whipped by year-round winds, the stretch of shoreline between Bude and St Ives is arguably the county's most dramatic. Unsurprisingly, this was John Betjeman's favourite corner of Cornwall, but it's far from a well-kept secret these days; the north coast has become a magnet for everyone from beach babes and wannabe surfers to gourmet chefs and celebrity second-homers.

BUDE

☎ 01288 / pop 9242

Travelling west along the grandiosely titled Atlantic Hwy (aka the A39), the first town across the Cornish border is Bude. Nestled at the end of the River Neet and a 19th-century canal (currently undergoing a £3.8 million face-lift), Bude has established itself as a popular family getaway and surfing hangout thanks to its fantastic nearby beaches. Closest to town is **Summerleaze**, a classic bucket-and-spade affair with bags of space at low tide, and just to the north is **Crooklets**, a stretch of sand that often

has decent surf, but gets crowded. For quieter waves try the little cove at **Duckpool**, a couple of miles north. Three miles south of town, **Widemouth Bay** (pronounced widmouth) is another family favourite that's usually jam-packed when the weather's fine, while 5 miles beyond the cliff-backed beach of **Crackington Haven** is Bude's most eye-catching stretch of sand. A little further south is **The Strangles**, where you'll need to break out your birthday suit – it's one of Cornwall's best-known naturist beaches.

There's not that much to Bude itself, other than a smattering of surf stores, cafés and pasty shops, but it's worth strolling down to the town **museum** (☎ 353576; adult/child £1/free; ☎ noon-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct), by the old sea lock, to see its exhibits on Bude's industrial and seafaring heritage.

The **Bude visitor centre** (☎ 354240; www.visitbude.info; The Crescent; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, plus 10am-4pm Sun in summer) is in a car park at the end of town, near the rather extravagantly named **Bude Castle**. This small faux-fortress was built in 1830 by the

Cheese

Cornwall's most famous cheese is yarg, a strong, semihard cheese, traditionally wrapped in nettles to develop its distinctive greeny rind. Other local cheeses include Cornish Blue, Cornish Brie and several delicious goat's cheeses; contact **Lynher Dairies** (☎ 01872-870789; www.lynherdairies.co.uk; near Truro), the **Cornish Cheese Co** (☎ 01579-363660; www.cornishcheese.co.uk; Liskeard) or the **Cheese Shop** (☎ 01872-270742; 29 Ferris Town, Truro).

Farm shops

Not just for veg but also organic and traditionally reared meat and eggs, organic cheeses, fruit from private orchards, homemade jams and cakes. Among the best:

Trevelyan Farm (☎ 01736-710410; Perranuthnoe; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9-5pm Sun) It's located near Penzance.

Gear Farm (☎ 01326-221977; www.lizardleaves.com; St Martin, near Helston)

Cornish Organics (☎ 01209-202579; Four Lanes, near Redruth)

Trevathan Farm (☎ 01208-880164; www.trevathanfarm.com; St Endellion, near Port Isaac; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm summer)

Lobbs (☎ 01726-844411; www.lobbsfarmshop.com; St Ewe, near Heligan Gardens; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun)

Indulgences

On the gourmet side, **Trenance Chocolate** (p251) in Mullion produces delightful handmade chocolates, while **Roskilly's Farm** (p251) in St Keverne makes award-winning ice creams, yogurts and sorbet. The **Halzephron Herb Farm** (☎ 01326-240652; Gunwalloe) specialises in herbs, marinades and sauces, while the **Buttermilk Shop** (☎ 0845 644 4251; www.buttermilkfudge.co.uk; St Eval), near Wadebridge, still uses traditional copper pans to make its Cornish fudge.

There is a tea plantation in the region – **Tregothnan Estate** (☎ 01872-520000; www.tregothnan.co.uk) near Truro, which sells four brands including afternoon, green and Earl Grey – as well as a coffee producer, **Origin Coffee** (☎ 01326-340320).

crackpot Cornish inventor Sir Goldsworthy Gurney, whose contraptions included a steam-powered carriage, an oxy-hydrogen blowtorch, a musical glass piano and the pioneering 'Bude Light', a super-bright oil-lamp, which later found fame illuminating the House of Commons and Trafalgar Square in London.

Sleeping & Eating

Dylan's Guesthouse (☎ 354705; www.dylansguesthouseinbude.co.uk; Downs View; s/d £40/60) Our favourite Bude B&B, with nine fresh, uncluttered rooms decked out in white linen, chocolate throws and pleasant pine, plus Freeview TV, sea prints and groovy chrome-tinted bathroom fixtures. Cheap, sweet and contemporary.

Falcon Hotel (☎ 352005; www.falconhotel.com; d £60; ☎) This white turret-topped hotel opposite Bude Canal began life as an 18th-century lodging house, but depressingly few traces of its Georgian heritage remain. The plain, peach and pistachio flavoured

rooms are comfy enough, with the odd frill and four-poster, and some have views over the canal.

Camelot Hotel (☎ 0800-7812536; www.camelot-hotel.co.uk; Downs View; s/d £49/98; ☎) A more traditional option with cheery rooms snuggling behind a whitewashed, garden-wrapped façade. Few surprises, but the simple spic-and-span rooms won't break the bank and the brekkie is stuffed with local produce.

Life's a Beach (☎ 355222; Summerleaze Beach; lunch £4-6, dinner mains £15-17; ☎ Mon-Sat) By day a chaotic California-style beach café churning out ciabattas, coffees and ice creams for the Summerleaze crowd; by night something altogether slinkier – a snazzy bistro serving whole bream, wok-fried tiger prawns and slow-cooked lamb.

Getting There & Away

Bus 595 (three hours, six daily Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday) travels from Bude along the coast via Widemouth, Crackington