

St Agnes has four beaches, each with its own character



Cool, calm Cornwall

Andrew Ditton says England's westernmost county is a tranquil treat during the off-season



DON'T FORGET
You can book your pitch online at caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook, by calling our Advance Booking Service on **01342 327490** or, for AS sites, calling them direct.

Firmly established as one of the most popular holiday destinations in England, Cornwall is a county with a split personality. Summer holidays bring forth the bucket-and-spade brigade, attracted by the miles of sandy beaches, a veritable smorgasbord of attractions for less clement days and a vibrant, buzzing atmosphere that will keep the kids on the go from morning till night. Outside the summer holidays, a very different Cornwall quietly emerges.

A feeling of calm gently descends, lending the county a distinctly relaxed and chilled-out ambience. Walkers survey the coastline and countryside from a diverse pick-and-mix of trails and pathways. Surfers and kayakers become at one with the ocean. Style gurus soak up the latest in seaside chic. And as for foodies... welcome to gastro heaven! I kicked off my out-of-season Cornish odyssey with a stay at Looe Club site. A swimming pool and snack shack during the hottest months, crazy golf and a brilliant play area all add up to make this site utterly >>

FOR THE FAMILY



Dome draw

An incredible day out can be had at the **Eden Project**. 'Biomes' house exotic gardens and rainforest in this ever-changing, evolving, living attraction. Wheelchair and buggy friendly but no dogs allowed.

T 01726 811911
W edenproject.com

Behind bars

Bodmin Jail is an interesting combination of museum, bar and restaurant. Visit the Execution Shed and the Naval Prison ruins for no cost, or pay to visit the main six-floor exhibition centre.

T 01208 76292
W bodminjail.org



SHIP SHAPE



Time travel

On the waterfront at Falmouth, the **National Maritime Museum** covers five floors and houses numerous galleries and exhibitions.

T 01326 313388
W nmmc.co.uk

Crealy great

Cornwall's **Crealy** in Tredinnick is a brilliant little theme park that allows younger members to get wet and pump up the adrenaline on some exciting rides. There are also fluffy animals to pet.

T 01841 540276
W crealy.co.uk



THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SITES

LOOE
See p78 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2011/12*

MERROSE FARM
See p83 of the *Directory*

ST AGNES BEACON
See p82 of the *Directory*

VALLEY TRUCKLE
See p74 of the *Directory*



Looe Club site

FOOD + DRINK

Five star

5 Degrees West is a relaxed venue in Falmouth with an imaginative menu and friendly service. There is wheelchair access via the beer garden.

T 01326 311288
W 5degreesfalmouth.co.uk

TASTYTREATS



Local delights

Falmouth Farmers Market, every Tuesday near the ferry pier, is a one-stop shop for delicious home-made cakes and pasties, local cheeses, fresh fish, seasonal veggies and some lovely artisanal deli products.

T 01326 376244
W trurofarmersmarket.co.uk

Court success

The Courtyard in East Looe prides itself on its use of fresh, local produce. It's not cheap but it remains great value given the quality of the food. Dog-friendly.

T 01503 264494

Spied a good pub?

The Cobweb Inn in Boscastle extends a warm welcome to locals and tourists alike. Expect good food (including vegetarian fare) and local real ales.

T 01840 250278
W cobwebinn.co.uk



Falmouth is easily reached from Merrose Farm



“The waterside town of Falmouth is an absolute delight”

perfect for families on a summer holiday. Off-season, it's an incredibly peaceful place where the majority of all-weather pitches afford superb views across the valley, some even yielding a glimpse of the sea. The recently-refurbished facility block is the last word in luxury and a fenced-off field allows your pooch the space to play ball and have a romp off the lead.

Once you've arrived, you don't need to go far to get a food fix. A few yards along, you'll find friendly folk at the Cuddy Shack, serving what many members consider to be the best fish and chips in Cornwall.

A steep 40-minute walk (or five-minute drive) takes you into the sweet town of Looe, which offers a melange of independent shops and eateries set back

from a pretty quayside and sandy beach. A warm welcome was received at the dog-friendly Daisy's Café, where the ginger scones tasted divine.

POOCH PERFECT

Serious beach fans drive the few miles from the site to Seaton Beach – be sure to check the tides first if you're a sand lover though. And, unlike at Looe, your dog can come with you, too.

For an even more dog-friendly holiday experience, and a beach you can walk to in 20 minutes, head to the peaceful Roseland Peninsula, and another members-only site, Merrose Farm. Everything from a games field to a wetsuit shower is provided, and a state-of-the-art new kids' playground is



St Agnes Beacon Club site



Merrose Farm Club site

FANTASTIC FALMOUTH

Another absolute 'must-do' from Merrose Farm is a day trip to the waterside town of Falmouth. The easiest and classiest way to do it is to park up at St Mawes and take the ferry direct to the town centre. Discounted ferry tickets and parking advice are available from the wardens.

Falmouth is an absolute delight. While the shipyard provides the lifeblood to the town, the overall impression is that it is a cool, calm, charming and chic place.

Falmouth carries off its cosmopolitan air with a refreshing lack of pretentiousness.

Five minutes' walk along the thriving main shopping street from the ferry pier leads you to the smart, trendy Discovery Quay and the National Maritime Museum (see panel on p23). During the summer months, the St Mawes ferry takes you directly there. Rick Stein's famous fish and chips emporium joins the classy yet reasonably-priced food establishments in the area. You won't go hungry here.

Suitably replete, it might be a good idea to walk off a few calories. Jostling with Merrose Farm for pole position as Cornwall's most popular site for walkers is laid-back St Agnes Beacon on the north

planned for 2013. Canine caravanners like the separate doggie field provided and the fact that Fido is allowed on most of the local beaches all year round.

Five miles south of the site, St Mawes is worth a wander but, for a quieter and slightly more magical experience, visit the church at St Just-in-Roseland. Set in dramatic sub-tropical gardens, this gorgeous little waterside church has an intimate, friendly feel epitomised by the provision of free mineral water, tea and coffee.

DID YOU KNOW?
The remains of Wheal Coates tin mine, visible from the St Agnes Beacon site, date from the 1870s



Daisy's Café in Looe

OUTDOOR FUN

KEEP ACTIVE



Growing passion

A huge amount of work has gone into restoring The Lost Gardens of Heligan in Pentewan near St Austell. There are more than 200 acres to explore including a Victorian kitchen garden and luxuriant 'jungle'.

T 01726 845100
W heligan.com



Photo: Julian Stephen

Trailblazer

Accessible from any of the sites featured, the South West Coast Path is a 630 mile-long trail. You could use sections of it to create your own circular walks around peninsulas such as Roseland.

W southwestcoastpath.com



Tre-mendous

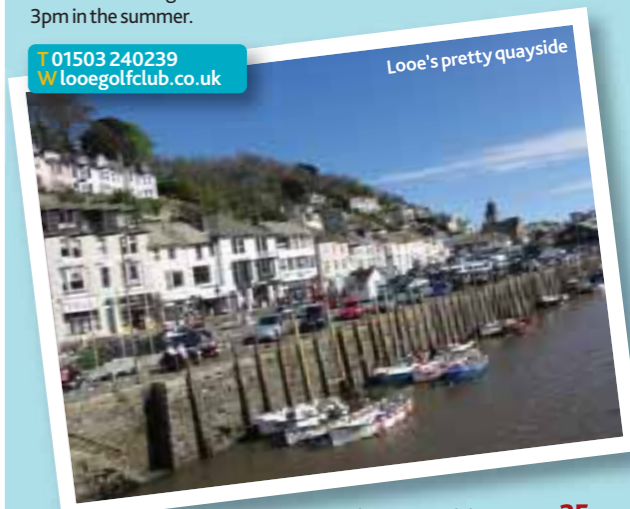
More than four miles of footpaths lead through an impressive collection of over 5,000 different plants at Trebah Garden near Falmouth. It even has a private beach on the River Helford.

T 01326 252200
W trebah-garden.co.uk

Looe views

Designed by the great Harry Vardon, Looe Golf Club's course offers fantastic views in all directions. Green fees are very reasonable – there's even an £18 twilight rate after 3pm in the summer.

T 01503 240239
W looegolfclub.co.uk



Looe's pretty quayside

CULTURE

Eye spires

Truro Cathedral is a superb example of neo-gothic architecture. Entry and guided tours are free, so why not indulge yourself in the coffee shop and contribute to the upkeep of this magnificent building?

T 01872 276782
W trurocathedral.org.uk



Back in time

You get a wonderful insight into Victorian life at **Lanhydrock** near Bodmin. There are more than 50 rooms to see at this grand National Trust country house.

T 01208 265950
W nationaltrust.org.uk



Georgian treat

Pencarrow is a grand yet friendly Georgian house. A fine collection of antiques is on show – and take time to enjoy the Italian, lakeside and woodland gardens.

T 01208 841369
W pencarrow.co.uk

Manor from heaven

Take in the Elizabethan ambience and architecture at **Trerice Manor**. You could also try out the Tudor garden games of 'slapcock' and 'kayling'.

T 01637 875404
W nationaltrust.org.uk



coast. You won't find a loo block or showers here, but there is a laundry room to make life a little easier.

A stunning outlook is St Agnes Beacon's principal draw. Many of the tiered grass pitches enjoy an awesome view of the sea and remains of the Wheal Coates tin mine. This site is the closest of our quartet to the South West Coast Path, so it's hugely popular with walkers. It takes about 30 minutes to walk to the pretty village of St Agnes, or a little over an hour if you go via the Coast Path. Arrive hungry, as there is a variety of lunch options, from beachside cafés and pub to the highly-recommended KT's Coffee Shop in the village. Do try the bread pudding – yum!

To reach the beach from the site takes about 10 minutes on foot (the uphill return journey takes 20!). Check the tides first – at low water, a vast expanse of golden sand emerges together with gentle, rippling surf. A beachside café takes care of hungry tums, serving up drinks and snacks including its famous Hedgehog Ice Cream.

QUIET PLEASE

Rounding off my stress-busting tour of Chilled Out Cornwall was the quiet site at Valley Truckle. Sitting in the shadow of its larger sibling, Trewethett Farm, this is the one to choose if you prefer a more relaxed and accessible site.

Valley Truckle is perfectly placed for exploring a plethora of attractions. Golfers delight in the fact that the Bowood Park



course is less than a mile from the site and offers Club members substantial discounts on both green fees and food and drink prices in the clubhouse.

A trip to the delightful, friendly fishing village of Boscastle is a necessity. Idle away a lazy afternoon exploring this charming place, its quaint quayside, its cottage-lined cobbles and its multitude of dog-friendly pubs and cafés. Work up an appetite walking alongside the river at the foot of the valley, then sate it at the friendly Sails Café (where even your dog gets a little snack to enjoy), or indulge in something a little more substantial at the cosy Cobweb Inn (see panel on p24).

Cornwall's low-season ambience is very different from its summer-holiday vibe. But don't take my word for it; go see for yourself. Just don't plan on losing any weight while you're there. ■

MEMBERS' VIEW

Ian and Linda Soden (right) from Ashby-de-la-Zouch are regular visitors to Merrose Farm along with their West Highland Terrier, Penny. "We love this site, it's so lovely and quiet," they say. "The pubs and the beaches around here are particularly dog-friendly, and the peninsula seems to enjoy a favourable microclimate. And there's some lovely scenery; the flowers, the hedgerows, the beaches... it's just the perfect place to relax and unwind."



To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at caravanclub.co.uk/together



Enjoying one of many happy visits to St Agnes Beacon were Hazel and Mike Savage (left) from Fareham in Hampshire. "We have a motor caravan so we like to park up on site then walk everywhere. The site's obvious attraction is the stunning view, but we also enjoy its handy location for so many walks. You can walk the South West Coast Path in either direction, or head into St Agnes and visit the bakery. We recommend the sausage rolls!"