

At sixteen, I **hitch-hiked** down to Cornwall in the **south-west** of England with a friend. We spent the **holiday** walking along the **coastal path** with a **tent** and a **backpack**, staying at **campsites** on the way. The weather was **fantastic** and the sea was **beautiful**. We had almost no money and lived on **sandwiches** and tea. One of the first things I learned was this: a fire and **a mug of tea** can make the world seem **perfect**. The second thing: spending more money does not mean having more fun. What really **mattered** was talking to people. I had to do lots of **chatting**, **negotiating**, **discussing** and questioning. Strangers could be very helpful and interesting, I **discovered**. They could also be **dangerous**, **boring** and **stupid**. It was up to me to **judge** them and **decide** - and that skill has been **useful** to me many times since then. I wrote it all down, but I've lost the notebook now, **unfortunately**.