

The Attractions of Devon and Cornwall

Answer the questions **1-10** by referring to the article below. Choose from the list of towns **(A-E)** for each question.

Which of the towns A – E:

A. Plymouth

B. Torquay

C. Falmouth

D. St. Ives

E. Ilfracombe

1. possesses boats used in historic voyages?
2. lets you watch a show on the streets?
3. is noted for its evening entertainment?
4. has a celebrity amongst its local businessmen?
5. has a recreational area near the beach?
6. has houses made of wood?
7. allows you to observe animals in the wild under the water?
8. has a tourist attraction which has been praised?
9. has altered its natural coastline?
10. used to play an important role in the postal service?

High on granite cliffs towering above the restless Atlantic, walkers on Britain's longest national trail, the spectacular 630-mile South West Coast Path, are left in no doubt of the sea's role in shaping this area's landscape and heritage. England's far south-western counties of Cornwall and Devon boast a seafaring tradition of adventurers, explorers, pirates and emigrants, reinforced by the salty flavour of novels by Daphne du Maurier and Rosamunde Pilcher.

Add to this the fine cuisine, stylish hotels, National Parks and one of Europe's favourite surfing resorts, picturesque harbours and gardens warmed by Gulf Stream currents - and you have the recipe for a perfect all-year holiday destination.

The 08:35 train from London's Paddington station to **Plymouth**, Devon bears a ship's name - "The Mayflower". This was the vessel which carried a band of determined religious reformers, the Pilgrim Fathers, on their momentous journey to a new life in North America, in 1620. After 66 days at sea they eventually settled in New Plymouth and laid the foundation of the New England states.

The story is brought to life in the naval port and city of Plymouth's Mayflower exhibition, situated on The Barbican, opposite the historic harbour steps from which they set off nearly four centuries ago. It also tells how thousands of emigrants to the USA and other countries (mainly Australia and New Zealand, with Canada becoming popular later) started their journey here.

The city is full of seaside atmosphere, particularly around the old harbour with its fish market and customs house and the waterfront park, the Hoe. Here Elizabethan seafarer Sir Francis Drake is said to have finished a game of bowls before sailing off to confront the approaching Spanish Armada.

Also here is the National Marine Aquarium which, among its many fishy delights, boasts the world's largest collection of sea-horses. Britain's biggest aquarium, its attractions include a coral reef teeming with brightly-coloured fish and the deepest tank in Europe - three storeys high - containing a wide variety of sharks which you can view close-up (if you dare) from inside a walk-through transparent tunnel.

To see marine life of a warm-blooded variety, head east to the popular seaside resort of **Torquay**. Coastal creatures from puffins and penguins to fur seals are all at home in an environment of reconstructed beaches, cliff-faces and an estuary. Living Coasts, Paignton Zoo's marine aviary, opened in July 2004 to rave reviews. The birds fly freely over your head and acrylic tunnels also allow unobstructed underwater views.

Going west from Plymouth you cross the wide River Tamar on one of two high bridges, road and rail, leave Devon and enter Cornwall. There are views of battleships at anchor and the sparkling ocean beyond.

The UK has more coastline than any other country in Europe, with no-one living more than 75 miles from the sea. But it is only in Cornwall that you feel the sea is ever-present: a leg of land jutting precariously into the Atlantic, its two coasts only four miles apart at the narrowest point.

Cornwall was the obvious choice as location for a new National Maritime Museum, which opened in late 2002. The stylish, modern building, clad in English oak, rises beside the water in the harbour-town of **Falmouth**, on the edge of the world's third largest natural harbour (Rio and Sydney take the top slots).

Falmouth was an almost sleepy place, despite once being the British Empire's second busiest port. Its main occupations after tourism are luxury yacht-building, ship repair and oyster fishing (oyster sail-boats can still be seen working the River Fal). But the museum has brought new life and 'buzz' to the town.

The entrance is through Events Square, surrounded by shops and dining places, and the focal point for open-air entertainment, particularly during the town's Oyster Festival, held every October.

The galleries include historic small vessels from the national collection. They range from a 70ft. rowing boat used by Eton schoolboys in the late 1800s, through Olympic medal-winning boats, canoes, yachts, power-boats and working craft to the ketch used by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston to make the first solo, non-stop global circumnavigation. You can compare Queen Elizabeth II's little yacht Bluebottle to the latest state-of-the-art, carbon-fibre racing dinghy.

Find out more about Cornwall's nautical traditions in various exhibits. How seven generations of the same family made a living from the sea; and how the 40 mail ships of Falmouth Packet Service made the town a world communication hub, from 1688 until the electric telegraph took over.

Then descend to the Tidal Zone, where windows thicker than a man's fist, and five metres high, look directly out under the waters of Falmouth Harbour. See fish and other marine creatures - sometimes cormorants diving for their dinner - it's like an aquarium in reverse. Climb the museum's 30-metre tall tower for an aerial view of the harbour. A café offers refreshment and more spectacular views.

No visit to Cornwall should exclude the artists' town of **St. Ives**, its Tate Gallery sitting right on the beach; Newquay, a young surfers' paradise with a nightlife to match; or the Eden Project near St. Austell. This is a garden with a difference, reminiscent of something out of science-fiction, its spherical hot-houses or "biomes" containing waterfalls, beech houses and tropical flora from distant parts of the world - all in a former quarry.

Something with a definite maritime flavour is the region's food. It is now as easy to find freshly-caught sea bass or native oysters as everyone's favourite: fish-and-chips. Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Padstow is one of the best of its kind and the celebrity chef has now complemented it with his own fish-and-chip shop. All fish is locally sourced -- monkfish, Dover sole and gurnard are available as well as cod, haddock and plaice - customers choose their fish and wait earnestly while it is cooked.

In the North Devon harbour-town of **Ilfracombe**, controversial modern artist Damien Hirst has opened the White Hart Bar at 11 The Quay, overlooking the harbour. The locals hope it will give a prominence to the town in the way Rick Stein raised Padstow's profile. Go along and sample the tapas, mezze, freshly baked bread and cakes and judge for yourself.

As for places to stay, these range from friendly farmhouses and family-run bed and breakfasts to luxurious hotels such as Bovey Castle. This Edwardian mansion in the fine scenery of Dartmoor National Park has been transformed into the "ultimate luxury destination" by entrepreneur Peter de Savary and opened earlier in 2004. With a 1920's Palm Court dining room, a piano-bar serving 142 different cocktails, individually designed bedrooms and suites, a spa and championship golf course, this is a place for people who expect the very best.