Travel





The 50 best beaches in Britain

Wild Welsh shores, tiny Cornish coves, sandy Scottish bays: our writers pick this summer's top coastal spots — plus where to stay

Wales 1 Llanbedrog Llyn Peninsula

Pretty multicoloured beach huts line this sheltered beach near Pwllheli on the wild and unspoilt Llyn Peninsula. The sand slopes gently into the water, making it ideal for younger families. From the southern end of the beach you can climb a steep path through a wooded glen on to a towering headland known as Mynydd Tir-y-Cwmwd, with sweeping views over Cardigan Bay. A little stream tumbles on to the sands below the Aqua Beach Bar (aquabeachbar.co.uk), a sleek café serving everything from gourmet burgers to pan-seared scallops.

Where to stay Plas Bodegroes, a restaurant with ten chic rooms near Pwllheli. B&B doubles cost from £110 (01758 612363, bodegroes.co.uk)

2 Three Cliffs Bay Gower Peninsula

When it comes to sheer spectacle, Three Cliffs Bay is hard to beat. Walk for a mile along the valley past a ruined castle to reach this vast expanse of sand next to the namesake craggy limestone cliffs. There are no toilets, but lifeguards patrol in summer. Treat yourself to a slice of carrot cake at Three Cliffs Coffee Shop (threecliffs.co.uk).

Where to stay A well-equipped yurt on the Three Cliffs Bay campsite overlooking the bay. Three nights for five costs from £349 (01792 371218, threecliffsbay.com)

3 Rhossili Gower Peninsula

This three-mile stretch of sand on the Gower Peninsula often tops lists of Britain's best beaches — and for good reason. Dotted with the skeletal remains of shipwrecked boats, it is swept by dramatic waves that offer some of the best surfing in the region. The laid-back Bay Bistro (thebaybistro.co.uk) serves daily specials such as panko

Plas Bodegroes

near Pwllheli

6 Sea Garden Cottages, Tresco, Isles of Scilly

calamari or the veggie-packed Buddha bwk. I plus lomentade bread and cakes, alongside fishious bay views. Where to stay Y Coxidi is one of two shepherds' buts with wood-burner and fire pit at a horse-riding stables in Pillon, a couple of miles away. Two nights or two costs from EDO (0722 390554, pillongscraft-blue-pillong).

houses and pleasure beats, is the most picturesque of the four town heaches. South Beach offers plenty of space for everyone on its miles and a-half stretch of sand overlooking Caldey Island—and it has deek chairs. Hie quarted a shad the contemporary South Beach The contemporary South Beach olicits. The contemporary South Beach olicits. The contemporary South Beach and the Soffili so poin and I day offering shad werey thing from Wesh hreakfasts to brugers and "nost examp" (breakded languosathee) and fires (scharpin com). Where it out of the four facts of the season of t This pretty seaside resort can feel a bit overrun with tourists in peak season, but it has beaches galore. While the compact Harbour Beach, with its candy-coloured

5 Barafundle Bay

Be prepared to walk half a mile along the clifftogs to reach this National Trust bauch in south Penthocksine. However, it's worth the effort for a glorious stretch of sand backed by dunes and wooded cliffs (just don't expect tollets; they're near the car park). When the tide is out there are caves to explore and stuming views aroos to Lindy Island. You may have to queue to secure a table for tea and scores at the Bonthouse tearon (unationaltrust organs) near the car park

at Stackpole Quay.

Where to stay The cosy 18th-century
Stadpole in this four seaside-themed
rooms and some of the best pub food in
the country B&B doubles cost from £100
(01646 672324, stackpoleinn.co.uk)

6 Whitesands Bay nr

This beautiful mile-long stretch of golden sand a couple of miles west of

St Davids offers famastic — and safe — surfing and safemings. There are pilets protic tables, a water tap and a coff. In high season the beach oun get crowld in which each cheef to grow the pilet in which each bealt in Borthneigan. a one-and-a-half milet walk some wides have of the has so fadilities, but is neer busy. Owth an St Davids serves locally produced han beet, sendon and chosens in a friently hour of the hour own of the high community of the high co Where to stay Ramsey House B&B has six smart rooms with Designers Guild and Zoffany wallpaper and fabrics, and Hypnos beds. B&B doubles cost from £90 (0)437 720321, ramseyhouse.co.uk)

7 Pendine Sands

Even at the height of summer you wort have to jockey for space on this swert-mile beath between Annoth and Laughame. It is removed for being the site of Sir Malcolin Campbells word all and speed record in 1924 and cars are still allowed on the beath—although these days its more popular with kitesurfers and windstarfes. If leiguards patrol from mid-July to September. There's plenty of parking along with to liets and beach cafes. The Ferryman



Where to stay The former watering hole of Dylan Thomas, Brown's Hotel in Laugharne, has 15 boutique rooms. B&B doubles cost from £95 (01994 427688, Delicatessen in Laugharne serves local cheese platters, pies, tarts and tapas, in a cosy setting (theferrymandeli.co.uk).

Penally Abbey, Tenby, Pembrokeshire

486

8 Llangrannog Beach

Edged by craggy diffs, this family-friendly stretch of sand II miles north of Caroligan is kied for surfing and of Caroligan is kied for surfing and sailing with a slipway for boats and lifequards in summer. At low the year can reach the smaller and quieter Clihorth Beach, also accessible by a difftop path. The nustic-disk Beach Hut Caff (thebeachhurdsex out) of fers brunch. mezze and homemade cakes, as well as daily febr socials well as daily fish specials.

ownere to stay Breakfasts are a gastronomic affair at Penbontbren.

a farmhouse B&B two miles from the coast at Glynarthen. B&B doubles cost from £100 (01239810248, penbontbren.com) Where to stay Granary Lofts are sleek self-catering apartments overlooking the Telf estuary in Cardigan. Two nights for two costs from £177, self-catering (coldatnight.could)

Where to stay Granary L

toilets, a National Trust car park and a small kiosk selling ice creams. Vegan-friendly Food for Thought, a few miles south in Cardigan, has specials such as

9 Mwnt Ceredigion

This sheltered cove four and a halfmiles north of Cardigan is a haven for widdlie lovers, with bottlenose dolphins often potted froiking in the sea. Descond 193 steps to a children's paradise where a stream runs to the tool, when for damming (although little ones might complain when it comes to dimbing back up those steps). At the top latere are IO Benilech

Isle of Anglescy
This gently shelving Bue Flag heach on Anglescy's east coast is great for families, with dean water, rock pools and a vast expanse of sand Facilities include toilets, a car park and shops to buy ice cream

> Where to stay Seaview Guesthouse in Benlech lives up to its name, with a panorama of sea and sky visible from many of its bedrooms. B&B doubles cost from £65 (0)248 853406, seadanthors. and beach paraphernalia. Tuck into good pub grub at the Ship Inn, which has picnic tables overlooking Red Wharf Bay (shipinnredwharfbay.co.uk).

11 Walberswick Suffolk East Anglia and Essex

Across the River Blythe from Southwold (a "foot ferry" rowing-boat service operates for £lpp) is the twee village of Walberswick. Tufty dunes back the

hroad areach of sand and simple which was a favourie of the wild swimming author Roger Deakin Farlher on is the author reserve, where the markly receks and sood and are busy with bilters in is nammer. Wildenswing the has Arts and Crafts-stje homes and a pretty village green where you'll find the parish Landern cale serving decadent cream less in whose to stay. The Archor is a where to stay The Archor is a whore to stay the area which are and a popular restaurant serving well-exacted defires such as coal inguine, vention burger and wood riled bizzas. Sed Gouthes coal defination of the archord in the coal stay in the Archord of the such as a sed of the s

12 Southwold Suffolk

A Special

Londoners rummage for clothes or kitchenware in pricey bordiques, and the retro pier, refurbished in 2005 and home to a wardy amusement arcade. Mediating the two is the beach, a long stretch of shingle and sand backed by pastel-heed huts (southwoldhuts.co.uk). The town is also home to the specialist scaled restaurant shifterland flouses could) where crab back so home to the specialist scale of the section of There are two Southwolds: the villagey, inland lanes where well-groomed

13 Holkham Beach near

A seemingly infinite expanse of sand and sky awalisal Holdman whether you amake weed from Wells-next the Sea or cross pine woods as filt that and dunes from the car paid, on Lady Anne's Drive in Holdman white Holdman being mo severed. Not fair infand, the ity-covered vectorial inst land; menut anges from their hands thand menut anges from their handsets and chips to brie, peer and hazehnet strudels with aprical chairney.

Where to safe he will be the structure of the sprawing holdman testate which also includes a Phaledam Hold on the sprawing holdman testate which also includes a Phaledam Hold on the sprawing holdman testate which also includes a Phaledam Hold on the sprawing holdman testate which also includes a Phaledam Hold on the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold of the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold of the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold of the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold on the sprawing hold of the rooms mixing ornate furniture and designer bathrooms. B&B doubles

cost from £155 a night (01328 711008, holkham.co.uk)

14 Cromer Norfolk

Set below sheer chalk cliffs, Cromer's beach is part of a four raille souly sveep from New Rumon all the way to Overstrand. Some gibbings, one gibbings, one gibbings, one gibbings, one can bring other set will be proposed to the lively swells. Sake due to those cliffs the narrow-kained from themses in lots of the brively swells. Sake due to those cliffs the narrow-kained from those and distributed (and consense and), as list and distributed (in old consense) as list and distributed (in old consense) as list and distributed (in old consense) as selected in start of the highlights include Cromer crab bringers, where its start free miss in land the list and Taoay Britis in its bar Beef doubless cost from £558 a night (OZ63 832010, the guarrow for the list has the Beef doubless cost from £558 a night (OZ63 832010, the guarrow from £108 and £108 and

15 Frinton-on-Sea Essex

Frinton's explanate remains pleasingly old fashioned, with colorful leach his and a grassor [The dean sands head the Greenswart Fine dean sands head has lifeguards on patrol. Parking is free prohibited between May and September. d. Carlé 9, a short stroll from the Seath. Carlé 9, a short stroll from the Seath. Where to stay. Terminutes of twe hand for the fine of the stroll from the seath of t

The bleeched white sand and jade and urquise coom are almost tropical in their brilliance at this dame-backed bands of TSMs. The second biggest of the late of SSMs, the second begat of the late of t

16 Pentle Bay Tresco **South West**

lowes alike The shoreline mar Barristable, is idea for padding (with lifeguards on patrol during summer morths), while its carding blue waves are good for surfing. Tucked behind the beach, Barunton Barrows is one of Britains largest sand dune systems, bome to are plants and burterfiles. Beachside on a carrier plants and burterfiles beachside and sides on a sun-kissed terrace (beachsidegriff could, where to say? The chic Chalet Saunton offers direct beach access, with self-catering accommodation ranging from three bedroom apartments to a perthouse. One platfor for six costs £450 in June and September, £500 in July and August (OIZT) 180514,

18 Blackpool Sands

Fringed by pines and evergreens, this sheltered by its a good spot for families and swimmers keen to enloy its clean water (it is a blue Flag boach). Children will love ploying with buckets and spades in the purpose-built sandpits, and the hathing artis ideal for sandathing and its planting and its control of the sandard spades in the purpose-built sandpits, and the hathing artis ideal for sandathing and iffigurand cover between July and iffigurand cover to save franch cover to save franch to save franch with a green to also franch cover to save franch with a green to also franch cover to save franch cover to sa

Where to stay Sleeping between two and ten guests, Sea Garden Cottages offer sea views, with a tennis court, indoor pool and gym. Seven nights for four costs from £1,900 (01720 422849). 17 Saunton Sands Devon This three-mile stretch of honeycoloured sand attracts walkers and wate

The shallow waters and clean, to flee-coloured sand make Bigoury-on-Sea in south Devon ideal for families. Children can spend hours exploring the rock pools, and sair and stand-up paddeboarding tessons are available (discoverysurf-con). The bach has if it guard cover between May and September, and there are to liets in the main car park and a crife selling organic produce (forrighte-beet-co.uch.) Downwalkers are welcome year-round to the west of the crusseway. When the birds out, walk across to Burgh Island (for ride the irractor for £2 anch way) and stop off for a pint at the Pilchard Inn.

(hurghisland.com).

Where to stay Cut off from the maintaind twice a day, Burgh Island Hotel has 25 fabulous art-deco-style rooms, a spa, croquet lawn and seawater bathing pool. B&B doubles cost £295 a night.

including dinner (01548 810514, burghisland.com)

20 Studland Bay Isle of

Curring round the coact for four miles.
Studland flaw (first subline) views of Old
Harry tracks and the ble of Vight. Its
pale cirects of could be bleded by being
the circuit of could be bleded by being
the circuit of could be bleded by the bleded
to the circuit of the circui

Where to stay A three-minute walk away, the Pig on the Beach has rooms from £160 (0345 2259494,

21 Lulworth Cove

gently sloping clffs, with an interise blue sea. Its unique lamadom is best admined with a pincie from a grassy spot a top the clffs, although those with a birth of artenatine could experience it up-close on a three-hour costering adventure (from 18.8 lulworthoutdoors.com). Low tide reveals rock pools, and it has good snorfelding and swimming. The Boat Shed Cafe has uniterrupted it was of the cover as well as homerande cales and mozze platters (bluevorth.com).

Where it is 1sty The Castle in this 12 boulfage bedroors from ET29 868. On the fossil-filled Jurassic Coast, Lulworth is an impressive arc of rock-and-shingle beach flanked by

Edged by the jush hills of the Exmoor Coast, this was swathe of pebble electh is a fascinating place to explore, with is a fascinating place to explore, with Second World War pilhoxes and old lime kins scattered among the singled among the single Access is via a path from the National Trust car park in Bossington Village Access is via a path from the National Trust car park in all a way). There are to liets and princir balles at the car park and Kitmors tearnooms is just the 90t for coffee and cake (thores com). Swimming is not advised owing to strong currents, but this is a good place for a walk with far reading years to Wales. Dogs are **22 Bossington Beach** Selworthy, Somerset

Dunkery View is a lovely cottage where two nights for four costs from £531 (0344 8002070, nationaltrust.org.uk)

26 Kynance Cove, the Lizard, Cornwall

23 Durley Chine Dorset

Eschew Bournemouth's central beach (no obvisus) and seaterly Rescomele (no havins) and bread westwards along Poole Bay's larg ource Backed by woodland and Blue Flag certified. Darley Chine manages to be tranquil despite having colourful hust to hire (hournemouth on sul; and ice-cream blooks. There's a car park or you can arrive by train from Bournemouth Pier or on foot along Middle Chine's narrow sorozo.

marrow gorge.

Where to stay The Green House is a White walled Victorian cifftop villa with B&B doubles from £129 (01202 498900, thegreenhousehotel.co.uk)

24 Watergate Bay

Along the coast from central Newquay, Watergate Bay offers two miles of solders and at low tide, backed by define and at low tide, backed by define and at low tide, backed by define and caves. I'll your days with activities ranging from rock-pooling to surfing (lessons available from E5) with extremeracientycoals befree refuelling on crab spaghetti while overlooking the Alamica at the Beach Hut (watergatebaycoals). Full lifeguard cover runs between May and September, dogs are allowed on the beach year-round and there is pelony of parking—the council car park is free after-4pm, although for best value park in the field above the beach the Gog friendly Watergate Bay Hotel has Beld doubles from E280 (01637) 860543, watergatebayco.ub)

The second secon

The Castle Inn. West Lulworth, Dorset

The Gallivant Hotel, Camber, East Sussex

25 Sennen Cove Sennen,

The nearest locach to Land's End, the westermost point of mainland flagland this sweep of pricine sand, storing clifts and while Comish sea is an dylic spot. Explore its gases dunes or coal off with a dip in the turquoise sea (with lifeguards between March and Corcher). The west-facing beach is popular with surfers, with a shorebrack for beginners (lessons are available from £3 with semeasurfingenites coals). Worth the samest from the terrace of Surf Beach Bar, which serves good burgers, with charge good burgers were to stay Keymor View sleeps up to nine guests in five bedrooms, some with coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views, a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views a week coast from the fact of the New Coastal views and prize fact of the New Coastal views a week coast form the fact of the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views and prize the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views and the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views and the New Coastal views and the New Coastal views a new Coastal views and the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views and the New Coastal views and the New Coastal views a week coast form the New Coastal views and the New New Coastal views and the New New New New

26 Kynance Cove

stay A ten-minute drive away, you'll have to arrive early if you want kynance with its crues of ship serpentine mathle, to yourself. Access is via a seep foughar from the kildson it Trust car park (shout a 15-minute walk), but its worth the effort, with sugar-self, sand, emerald water and dark-red and green rock stacks below. When the crowds descend, turn right through the gap past Asparagus Island, then set up on the second beach, opposite Sugardoat Rock, with its natural pool, died for swimming. There are foldes at the family-run Kynance Cove Cafe, which serves everything from tee creams to pastics (synanceococate.ou.k). Where to stay The recently refurbished Poluritan with stellar views over Mounts Bay has three night's fall for two from 6547, including a defining cred of 1550pp

a night and a spa treatment (01326 240421, polurrianhotel.com)

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Expert Traveller

With two miles of sand in shades from fudge to chocolate, Compton, in West Might, has views of Freshwater's chalk, ciffis, Access is via steps from National. Trust car parks at Hanover Point, Brook Chine or Compton Chine Fram. The list of facilities is succinct toides and a tap at Hanover Point, plus an ice-ream van at Compton Chine Fram. The list of facilities is succinct toides and a make at Compton Chine Fram, while Freshwater Bay's Hano Caffe offices the purges and smoked macketel pitité (thepianocalice, oals. Keep an eye out for dinosaur fossils exposed on sandstone ledges at low table. Dogs are welcome at the southern end year-round. Where to say forms Eto Lodge includes five pine-floored family sized said with the southern end year-round. Where to say forms Eto Lodge includes five pine-floored family sized said tents on a working imm. There is a strated pizza oven, a trentouse you are allowed to add for eggs and meet-floared.

28 Kingsgate Bay near

There's no car park at Kingsgate Bay; you'll need to park at the surf-friendly Joss Bay and walk along the beach from there, keeping a close eye on the tides. Those who make it will find a sheltered

sandy one framed by sugar-white chalk cliffs and arched sea stacks. There are caves to explore, and dogs are welcome. Looming over the southern end is the 18th-century Kingspate Cadle and its many grey turnets. It's a five-minute drive to the buzzing calks and bars of Mangate try Roost, perched on Mangaries Cliff Terme for gilled chicken and tasty twists on street food froost resources. The Sands Hotel in

30 West Wittering

Margate has Turner prints alongside turquoise-print walls, but most impressive are the grand sea views. B&B doubles cost from £130 (01843 228228, sandshotelmargate.co.uk)

29 Viking Bay

Where to stay Six miles away, Crouchers has an art-filled seafood restaurant and B&B from £180 (01243 784995,

31 Camber Sands crouchersorchards.co.uk)

Overlooked by the classic seaside resort of Broadstains. Viking Bay's horseshoeso almost away of sand has decknians, bear has life guards, a summer surf school and a short pier. Another reason to come is Morellik, a retro tee-cream to more is Morellik, a retro tee-cream or pation (morellingsleato.com) on the order. The town cedenates its connections with Charles Dickens (who lived and wrote here) at the annual Dickens Federical (lime 24-23) and in the Dickens Federical (lime 24-23) and as Beaches (49) Albion Street), which as Beaches (49) Albion Street), which and work to say The Bay Tree, or cliffs beaches and the same of the process of the same of

wekshakiff nuweshays (weshakiff nose who stump up enjoy inthis sand, dean waters, hats for hire, waves to gladden windsurfers and suwns for picnics and parking. A plassy, £15 million café is being prepared for an October opening. Until then walk cound the coast to Itchemoc Shippard for Itaons and wides at the Quartertice (Café. Love it or hate it, there is an access charge to this private village shore facing Chichester Harbour of £8.50 at Bay, has B&B doubles from £95 (01843 862502, baytreebroadstairs.co.uk) The funicular at Saltburn, North Yorkshire

Return to Camber village for wasabi prawns or lobster burgers in the Rye Bay

Where to stay The Galiwant, just over the road from the beach has a restaurant and B&B doubles from £95 a night (0797 225057, thegaliwant.co.uk) North East
32 Embleton Bay
Northumberland

Roughly halfway between Bamburgh and Almouth, the beach at Embleton has Dunstanburgh Cattle's remains at the southern end of one and ah half miles of powdery sand. You may spot the occasional seal towards the northern end of the bay, there's deem bruillie and, in the adjacent viginge of Low Newtonby-the-Sea, the superlative Ship Inn has

A three-mile stretch of dunes between Bye Bay and the Kent border. Camber Sands is so was that your own patient of golden powder is easily found, seen on the summer Standary in August. Find it is by using the object of the property on the bound hilding stomwest for about half a mile towards the River Roberts mouth. The seat soften tiple for Kelterarifing courses of a strong breeze.

Lilburn Tower at Dunstanburgh Castle
Northumberland

local kippers and homemade apple crumbles (shipmmewtons oak). Try to arrive at Embleton for sumies to see the gradual llumination of Dunstanburghs walls and fractured turrets.

Where to say Half a mile hland the one-bedroom Calefor Cottage pair's designer flair with sea views across the fields. A week for two costs ESS (1657). Crabbree and Crabbree.com)

33 Saltburn-by-the-Sea

The small resect toom of Sulbturn-bythe-Sea relains much Victorian charm,
with formal taliant Greders, a miniature
with formal taliant Greders, a miniature
railway and, leading down 35m cliffs,
Britains delet water-bainced function.
Take this to reach the beach a shinglesand affair that stretches eight miles,
and frock-pooling, and for the surfers who
come to nake the forth Sea breaks
who visit to enjoy sandcastle-building
and rock-pooling, and for the surfers who
come to nake the forth Sea breaks
to prometa Mylthy Jemon sole
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coaks a tap-notch Whithy Jemon sole
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Wings 10 stays Salla doubles from ES (O227)
borded-phallabotes com)
bathuse 864 doubles from ES (O227)

34 South Bay

Scarborough, the spiritual home of all British seaside holidays, is still going strong. Luring bucket-and-spaders since

In EAS it has two main shores: the wilder, less handsonely handed North Bay, handsonely handed North Bay, hanne to a water park and the revered chippy North Bay Fisheries and it has handled to a water part to the south regular to the south argae, sandy South Bay is especially good for families, with bookeys, lifequard and suffish Billed north pools at low title without to say A seven room Regular to without the say As exert room Regular to without the say As exert room Regular to without the say As exert room Regular South Say Bas doubte from E80 00723 373696.

35 Druridge Bay

Seven miles. That's the colosal length of this marvel most of its and and dame to unning from Arable to Cresswell. That means room for everyone surfers, index, hikes, picnishers and paddiers. So does hikes, picnishers and paddiers. So does hikes, picnishers and paddiers so does hiradachers, with no lewer than three nature reserves coccupying the pools, meadows and woods behind. This year might be the last when it is all so thylic; plans are a foot for an opencest coal mine on the adjacent lanks. Park in Anhab, at the northern end of the beach, and return for crab salidas at the Sand Bar. Where to stay In the castle town of Alrawick, eight miles north; he Cooled har has It characterfut, colourful rooms with B&B colubles from £175 (101665).





36 Central Beach Skegness, Lincolnshire

One of Britain's ultimate beach resorts, Skegness, which has Blue Flag status, has an aquarium at one end, a seal sanctuary and butterfly conservatory at the other, and donkey rides, crazy golf, a paddling pool and half a mile of golden sand in between. Lifeguards are on patrol until September.

Where to stay Five miles west of Skegness, the Chestnuts is a collection of stylish, rural cottages. A three-bedroom barn costs from £1,260 for a week (01754 810904, chestnutsfarmbreaks.com)

North West 37 Formby Beach Mersevside

Backed by dunes and pine woodlands, Formby's shore, north of Liverpool, is broad and bonny. It's also blowy, making kite-flying an option, while there are views of north Wales and occasionally visible 5,000-year-old footprints to look for. Five miles south, and just offshore from Crosby's beach, stand Antony Gormley's Another Place statues, and a little way inland is the pleasant town of Formby, home to the Kitchen (4 Chapel Alley) and its homemade quiches.

Where to stay A 15-minute drive away is the cool Vincent Hotel in Southport with B&B doubles from £118 (01704 883800, thevincenthotel.com)

38 St Anne's Beach nr Blackpool, Lancashire

Like Blackpool, four miles north, St Anne's promenade has classic entertainment: miniature trains, crazy golf, paddling pools and donkey rides. Yet here it is much lower-key. A Victorian pier endures and there's a huge swathe of sand. Chic, pastel-painted beach huts with fridges and microwaves can be hired (stannesbeachhuts.co.uk). Inland, the Vinyl Groove Café serves great bacon butties (vinylgroovecafe.co.uk).

Where to stay Try to book the Queens Hotel's large Victoria room, which has a freestanding bathtub and Ribble Estuary views. B&B costs from £120 a night, (01253 737316, queenslytham.co.uk)

39 St Bees Cumbria

Sandy and vast when the tide is out — and pebbly otherwise — the long, pristine beach at St Bees (sometimes called Seacote Beach), four miles south of Whitehaven, has a faintly wild feel

courtesy of its crashing Irish Sea breakers. Rock pools and a playground make it tempting for families, as do the afternoon teas and homemade ice cream at Hartley's Beach Café (stbees.org.uk). Dogs are welcome too.

Where to stay Fifteen miles southeast the dog-friendly Bower House Inn has rooms from £80, B&B (01946 723244, bowerhouseinn.com)

40 Silecroft Cumbria

At the southeastern edge of the Lake District National Park, Silecroft's shoreline is simply vast at low tide. Meadows stretch inland to the green and brown fell of Black Combe; the beach is on a section of the Cumbria Coastal Way. There's lots of free parking and toilets, plus a simple beach cabin serving strawberry milkshakes and vegan sorbets. In Silecroft village, the Miners Arms pub on Main Street wins regular praise for its burgers.

Where to stay Herdwicks near Haverigg Beach, five miles away, has B&B doubles from £135 (01229 778758, herdwickshoutiquehotel com)

Scotland

41 West Sands St Andrews, Fife

The sand pounded by runners in the film Chariots of Fire is a glorious two-mile Blue Flag stretch, backed by dunes and bordered by one of the most famous golf courses in the world. There's plenty of parking, the toilets won gold in the 2018 National Loo of the Year awards and there are lifeguards during the summer. The Seafood Ristorante (theseafoodrestaurant.com) teeters on the cliff overlooking the beach or it's a 15-minute walk to the town, with its fish and chip shops and ice-cream parlours, such as the legendary Jannettas (jannettas.co.uk) for a tub of Irn-Bru sorbet.

Where to stay Overlooking

Where to stay Overlooking
West Sands, Hotel du Vin has
36 rooms, many with sea views,
from £235 B&B
(hotelduvin.com)

42 Luskentyre Sands Isle of Harris

On a sunny day the turquoise waters lapping the shimmering white sands of Luskentyre beach on the west coast of Harris in the Outer Hebrides could almost pass as Caribbean. Fringed by sand dunes and cradled by rolling hills,





the beach looks on to the isle of Taransay. At the end of a single-track road there's a car park with toilets. For lunch head to the Machair Kitchen, run by the Hotel Hebrides, overlooking Niseaboist Beach (hotel-hebrides.com). Where to stay The Seaside House is a cute crofter's cottage overlooking the beach. A week for six costs £1,250 (seasidehouse.luskentyre.com)

43 Portobello Edinburgh

This two-mile sandy city beach, divided by wooden groynes, is just a couple of miles southeast of the centre, looking out on to the Firth of Forth. It has a retro vibe: stroll along the promenade eating an ice cream, the whey and extense such as

or try the pubs and eateries, such as the buzzing Beach House Café (beachhousecafe.co.uk), which serves a mean "Porty Smash" (smashed avocado, Portobello mushroom, toasted seeds and balsamic drizzle). Many of the buildings form part of a conservation area, including the Victorian Portobello Swim

Formby Beach

Merseyside

Centre, a pool and Turkish baths.

Where to stay Abercorn Guesthouse is just a couple of minutes' walk from the beach. It has free parking and lavishly decorated rooms from £90 B&B (0131 669 6139, abercornquesthouse.com)

44 YellowcraigEast Lothian

A popular family beach southwest of North Berwick, Yellowcraig is a broad sandy bay backed by sweeping dunes, grasslands and woods, and threaded with a network of nature trails. The nearest café is the homey Amalfi ice-cream and coffee parlour in the nearby village of Dirleton (also the location of a romantic 13th-century castle). There are toilets and showers, a play area and a wheelchair-accessible path and ramp to the top of the dunes. Dogs can run freely on the beach, which has views to the 19th-century lighthouse on Fidra Island. Where to stay The elegant Edwardian Greywalls Hotel, designed by Edward Lutyens, is three miles away and has 23 double rooms, from £200 B&B (01620 842144, greywalls.co.uk)

45 Dunnet Bay Caithness

This two-mile arc of white sand near Dunnet Head is backed by giant grass-tangled dunes. The A836 on the other side hugs the coast, and about halfway down, a mile from the village of Dunnet, the Seadrift Visitor Centre has a free car park and toilets. The beach is popular with dog walkers, surfers and families hunkering behind windbreaks. Dunnet, at its northern end, is the home of Rock Rose Gin; the smart new craft distillery has tours and tastings (dunnetbaydistillers.co.uk), and you can grab lunch at the Northern Sands Hotel (northernsands.co.uk).

Where to stay It's a short drive to Granary Lodge, Prince Charles's new guesthouse in the grounds of the Castle of Mey, which has B&B doubles from £145 (01847 851473, castleofmey.org.uk)

46 Sandwood Bay Sutherland

Some say this is the most beautiful beach in Britain. It's definitely one of the least accessible. Sandwood Bay is part of the Sandwood Estate on the northwest coast of Sutherland. It's backed by dunes and a trout-rich freshwater loch, flanked by towering cliffs and can only be reached on foot. The four-mile hike in is a fairly

More beaches overlea

flat tramp along a rough track from the car park at Blairmore (also the nearest toilets). But it's worth it. Wild Atlantic breakers crash on to the mile and a half of pink sand.

Where to stay Take your tent (wild camping is legal in Scotland), and just make sure you pack enough provisions. You can stock up on smoked cheeses and charcuteries from the Highland Charcuterie based in nearby Oldshoremore (highlandcharcute.com)

47 Dornoch Sutherland

This Blue Flag-flying, golden-sand beach on the tranquil Dornoch Firth stretches for miles from Dornoch Point to the Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve. It's popular with dog walkers, as well as wildlife watchers scanning the waves for seals and dolphins playing in the firth. It's also bucket-and-spade territory; the sand shelves gently, so is perfect for paddling, and is sheltered by towering dunes. There's a car park, toilets and a children's play area, and it's just a short flip-flop away from picture-postcard-perfect Dornoch, with its famous golf course, cathedral and eateries Where to stay Once a 19th-century manse, Links House is a sumptuous five-star hotel with 15 individually designed rooms decked out in tasteful tartans and

(01862 810279, linkshousedornoch.com) 48 Camusdarach Arisaig

tweeds. B&B doubles cost from £330.

The cult Scottish film *Local Hero* was shot on and around Camusdarach Beach



on the west coast, a mile from the village of Morar. With its sugary white sands, crystal-clear waters (perfect for snorkelling) and backdrop of grassy dunes, it's one of the most beautiful beaches in Scotland. You might be lucky enough to see otters playing in the shallow water, seals basking on the sand or dolphins in the bay. From the westward-facing beach, the sunsets are spectacular, as are the views out towards the craggy Cuillins on Skye and the islands of Rum and Eigg. There is a car park, but no facilities, so pack a picnic. Where to stay Camusdarach Campsite has five wooden camping pods sleeping up to five (four adults), with a minimum three-night stay, from £50 a night (01687 450221. camusdarach.couk)

49 Traigh Mhor Barra, Outer Hebrides

The wide sweep of Traigh Mhor bay on the northern tip of Barra is popular with beachcombers and foragers collecting cockles on the shore. But if the orange windsock is flying, signs warn you to stay off the sand because the beach doubles as a runway. Barra is the only island in the world where scheduled flights land on the sand and the runways disappear at high tide. Taking off in one of Loganair's Twin Otters, spray spattering the windows, is one of those bucket-list adrenaline rushes. As for facilities: there's a café and toilets in the airport. Where to stay The Heathbank Hotel, a former 19th-century church house in

Northbay (a couple of miles from Traigh Mhor) has a restaurant serving locally caught seafood, six rooms (from £130 B&B) and a glamping log pod, which costs £90 a night room only (01871 890266. barrahotel.co.uk)

50 Achmelvich Bay Lochinver, Sutherland

Waterskiers windsurfers and kayakers

jostle for space on the sea, while from the rocks, anglers cast their lines. Just four miles northwest of the village of Lochinver, much of it snaking along a single-track lane, it's worth the tortuous journey. The sea is aquamarine, the sand bleached white, and over your shoulder looms the iconic mountain of Suilven. The small beach car park has toilets, but not much in the way of facilities. Stock up in Lochinver from the famous pie shop and restaurant Lochinver Larder (piesbypost.co.uk). Dogs are not allowed on the beach during the summer. Where to stay Achmelvich Beach Youth Hostel sleeps 20 in three rooms (one twin, two five-bed and one eight-bed). You can opt for the "wee breakfast" of cereal, yoghurt, fruit and tea and coffee (£4.50), there are "heat it and eat it" pre-prepared three-course evening meals (£8) and a self-catering kitchen. Beds cost from £22 a night (hostellingscotland.org.uk)

Compiled by Ellie Ross, Richard Mellor, Liz Bird and Lucy Gillmore All prices quoted are for stays this summer



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