



Given the environmental cost of flying, and after recent volcanic events affecting air travel, it's no surprise that a British beach holiday is increasing in popularity. **Tracey Davies** gives us her pick of the best beaches.

If there is one place that is guaranteed to lighten your mood, inspire creativity and ignite a sense of fun it's a day out at the seaside. From the grouchy caw of grey-eyed gulls to the clinkety-clink of a bunting-like string of fishing boats, the freedom and space that comes with being by the sea is amica for the soul.

As a girl growing up by the sea, I regularly used the coast to reflect on the trials and tribulations of teenage life. Even now, nature's counsellor is the first place I turn to when the going gets tough. This issue, the team has scoured the country to find the best of Britain's beaches for whatever mood you find yourself in this summer.



# BEACH



# MELBA

### BEST FOR KISS-ME-QUICK

From wild rocky outcrops to coves of pure white sand, Britain has a beach for every whim. So when you need to inject a dose of good, clean fun into your life, do it with style (or in many cases, lack of) with a trip to a traditional seaside resort.

- **Southwold in Suffolk** is as far as you can get from the brash resort towns of Margate and Blackpool. The beach is not vast but it is sandy and despite the North Sea lacking the briny hue found on the west coast, Southwold beach is as pretty as its postcards. With its quirky pier and pastel-coloured beach huts, plus a distinct lack of gaudy arcades, Southwold offers a gentler way to be beside the seaside.

- Although **Tenby North Beach, Pembrokeshire**, is a prominent resort on the South Wales coastline, it has a distinct English Riviera feel about it (apologies to our Welsh readers). From the trio of fabulous sandy beaches on offer, North Beach is my favourite. It has the best sand for sandcastles and is close enough to the town and to Fecci's, a retro ice-cream emporium, for my annual Knickerbocker Glory.

### BEST FOR REFLECTION

Whether it's ferocious surf and canyonesque dunes you prefer or a quiet cove of flinty shingle, I recommend the following beaches for quiet reflection.

- The utter remoteness of the glorious sandy crescent of **Calgary Bay, Isle of Mull**, is what makes this beach so special. Surrounded by the best in rugged Scottish scenery and graced with a depth of turquoise ocean, Calgary Bay is the place to really get away from it all.

### How clean is your beach?

Do you remember the heartbreaking posters of oil-soaked seabirds in the 1990s? Well, sadly it seems in 2010 if cleanliness is close to godliness our beaches are in hell. According to a recent survey by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the amount of litter found on Britain's beaches is a staggering 77% higher than it was in 1994.

However, thanks to a number of dedicated coastal support groups such as Wales' Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners (NARC) and Coastal Care, alongside regional conservation projects run by the National Trust, volunteers are making a massive difference to the state of our coastline.

To help boost the essential work of volunteers, the government's Environment Agency has launched a new project called CSI Seaside, which analyses and identifies DNA found in contaminated waters. DNA analysis will help identify the country's worst environmental polluters.

In the UK we are lucky enough to have some of the wildest, most beautiful and charismatic beaches in the world, so we must look after and treasure our natural coast because it is essential balm for our mind, body and spirit.



- Under the eerie backdrop of Slieve Donard, the highest of the Mourne Mountains, the seaside resort of **Newcastle beach, County Down, Northern Ireland**, is dominated by a sandy swathe stretching five miles down the coast. Despite its popularity during the summer, Newcastle is what I call a great winter beach. With miles of wide, flat, fudge-like sands coupled with the menacing mood of the Irish Sea, it's the perfect spot for blowing away emotional cobwebs.

- **Sandymouth Bay, Bude, Cornwall** – a National Trust beach – is a real find in North Cornwall. Situated close to Bude, Sandymouth has pockets of crab-infested rock pools and large, Bedrock-style boulders to perch on. There's a definite air of the Famous Five about the beach, enhanced by the little café-shop selling ice-cold ginger beer and crumbly, fresh Cornish pasties (in case the quiet reflection makes you feel a little peckish). In the summer it's more than bustling, but in the cooler months it's just you, me and the crabs.

### BEST FOR CHEAP THRILLS

Sometimes all we need to lift a dull mood is a slight shift in our comfort zone. The beaches in Devon and Cornwall are not only known for their wild beauty but also for their crazy surf and hordes of board fanatics.

- **Watergate Bay in Cornwall** is fast becoming known as the Cornish home of extreme sport. The Bay's Extreme Academy offers lessons in surfing, kite-surfing, wave-skiing and paddle-surfing, which is enough to take anyone out of their comfort zone!

- For a slightly gentler introduction to life on the waves, the glorious butter-soft plains of **North Devon's Saunton Sands**

are devoured by surfers throughout the year. With three glorious miles of sandy beach, backed by swishy green dunes, it's a remarkable beach for both boarders and bathers.

### BEST FOR BEING NAKED

Over the past 30 years social nudity has become much more acceptable in the UK. However, being a naturist in Britain is not for the faint-hearted. With unreasonable temperatures and a bitter north wind, finding a nice private spot away from party-poopers is not always easy.

- It is perhaps not without a hint of irony that popular nudist beach **Studland Bay in Dorset** was Enid Blyton's inspiration for Noddy's Toytown. This four-mile stretch of sand interspersed with sheltering wild green dunes is vast enough for both the clothed and the clothes-free to sunbathe in harmony.

- Other famous (and official) naturist beaches include **Black Rock Beach, Brighton**. This shingle beach near Brighton's marina is probably one of the most notorious nudist beaches in the UK. Despite bottom-numbing pebbles, this is a friendly, well-hidden stretch ideal for achieving an all-over tan.

- **Cleat's Shore on the Isle of Arran** is perhaps for only the bravest of naturists. The Scottish islands are not known for their tropical temperatures however this glorious cove of white sand and deep blue waters is a pure taste of heaven when the Sun shines.

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