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THE TIMES

Britain's 20 best places to stay on the beach



Nare Hotel in Cornwall

Rob Ryan
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From a spa with panoramic views of a surfing paradise to an old country pile a few steps from the Atlantic Ocean, our coastline is studded with outstanding seaside retreats. Travel writer Rob Ryan selects the top locations to stay in during a heatwave

1. The Nare, Veryan-in-Roseland, Cornwall

On the Roseland Peninsula, the country house-styled Nare is arguably the most traditional hotel in Great Britain, so wonderfully anachronistic you can probably find someone called “the Major” at the bar or in the billiards room most nights. The setting is wonderful, the food excellent, the restless seascapes of the Atlantic oddly soothing and there are always buttered scones for tea.

Details: Availability is “good” throughout the summer. A two-night stay in a sea-view room costs £518pp B&B with Cornish cream tea (01872 501111, narehotel.co.uk)

2. Watergate Bay, Cornwall

Given its location on one of the best bays in Cornwall for both watersports and studied indolence, Watergate could easily have rested on its laurels. Over the past couple of years, though, it has created a modern, clubby guest area with panoramic views from picture windows over the sands, as well as installing a new pool/spa area. Unusually for this part of the world, you can take dogs in both the hotel and on the beach.

Details: There are some three-night breaks in August, with sea-view doubles from £295 B&B per night or £340 with dinner (01637 860543, watergatebay.co.uk)

3. Merchants Manor, Falmouth, Cornwall

The term minimalist is a dirty word at the 39-room Merchants Manor, where baths are rolltop, curtains swagged, fabrics lavish and chairs wing-backed. Rather than being a fusty relic, though, this is a recent refurbishment in classic country-house style. The best rooms come with views over Falmouth Bay, some with private balconies.

Details: There is plenty of availability throughout August, with double sea-view rooms from £139 B&B per night (01326 312734, merchantsmanor.com)

4. The Scarlet/Bedruthan Steps, North Cornwall

These two sister hotels have reasonable summer availability. The Scarlet is adults-only, with outdoor hot tubs, decked terraces, eco-friendly swimming pool and an Ayurvedic-inspired spa. Bedruthan is a full-on family affair, with Ofsted-registered children's clubs, heated pools, daily entertainment and kids' menus. They both have a hillside position looking over sandy shores to the sea, so that rooms with a view are plentiful.

Details: Both have multi-night dates on offer in August. The Scarlet costs from £245, room only (01637 861800, scarlethotel.co.uk). Bedruthan has seaview doubles from £270 B&B (01637 860860, bedruthan.com)

5. Thurlestone, Devon

Another bastion of tradition, the Thurlestone Hotel has been in the same family since 1896 and, as it was back then, the big attraction is the beautiful (now Blue Flagged) beach on its doorstep. The hotel caters well for families, with a kids' club running until August 31. There are 65 rooms and 52 of them face the sea, with wonderful coastal views. This is one for the old school bucket-and-spade brigade.

Details: There is good availability for summer, with double seaview rooms from £300 B&B or £350 with dinner, and reductions for longer stays (01548 560382, thurlestone.co.uk)

6. Cary Arms, Babbacombe, Devon

The bright and breezy Cary Arms is a New England-inspired take on the seaside experience, right down to fishing for crabs from the pier outside (which the chef will cook in the very good restaurant). All eight rooms have excellent views over the sea and coast. You get the same vistas with the four converted fishermen's cottages — with kitchens and fireplaces (in case the weather turns treacherous) — that are on site.

Details: There are lots of rooms free over the summer, with doubles from £175 B&B per night, and a one-bedroom cottage (also sleeping two) from £1,550 per week (01803 327110, caryarms.co.uk)

7. The Alexandra, Lyme Regis, Dorset

Wonderfully romantic whatever the weather, the 24-room Alexandra has a lofty position, with many rooms and the terrace overlooking the iconic curve of the Cobb. Decor is a colourful and successful blend of the contemporary and the traditional and the restaurant serves a satisfying menu of locally sourced seafood and produce.

Details: There is "plenty" of space in August for two-or three-night stays, with doubles from £199 per night B&B (01297 442010, hotelalexandra.co.uk)

8. Hotel du Vin, Brighton, East Sussex

Brighton is full of grand piles and quirky boutique hotels, but what these lack is real consistency. The HdV has never let me down; it is steps from the beach and the promenade, rooms are modern without being kooky and the staff are equally adept with adults and kids. It's just a shame that only the spacious suites have sea views.

Details: "Great availability" until August 23 in a sea-view suite, from £295 per night room (01273 718588, hotelduvin.com)

9. The Zanzibar International Hotel, Hastings, East Sussex

Hastings/St Leonard's-on-Sea is being talked up as the new Brighton and the Zanzibar certainly channels the latter's spirit, with a collection of themed rooms (based on continents and countries) carried off with some panache. I particularly like South America, with its open bathroom and large floor-to-ceiling windows looking out to sea.

Details: There is good availability. Three nights with cocktails on arrival and dinner at the beachside restaurant on the first night in a sea-view double room costs from £265 per night B&B (01424 460109, zanzibarhotel.co.uk)

10. Royal Harbour Hotel, Ramsgate, Kent

Another hotel that is a bright spot in a town that has seen its share of hard times, the Royal Harbour is a deft update on the seaside hotel, combining modern colours, big comfortable beds and free wi-fi with nods to the past (you can play vinyl, scan the sea with binoculars and there are enough books to keep any bibliophile busy).

Details: Summer availability is "very limited" at weekends, but much better during the week. A double sea-view room costs from £100 B&B per night (01843 591514, royalharbourhotel.co.uk)

11. Brudenell, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

Bang on the beach in Benjamin Britten country, the Brudenell has rooms that have been modernised and refreshed in livelier seaside colours over the past few years. New this year is the Seafood & Grill restaurant, which takes advantage of the seascapes that inspired Britten so much.

Details: There is good availability for stays of two or three nights, with sea-view doubles from £170 B&B (01728 452071, brudenellhotel.co.uk)

12. Titchwell Manor, Brancaster, Norfolk

Don't be dismayed by the exterior, as things look up immediately once you have stepped over the threshold into the bold, colourful public areas. The rooms are good too; some pared down and neutral, others nodding to its Victorian manor house heritage. Better still is the menu — the food is local, modern and satisfying (as are the views over the north Norfolk coast).

Details: Sea-view rooms are available on "most days" between now and September, with doubles from £215 B&B (01485 210221, titchwellmanor.com)

13. Seaham Hall Hotel, Co Durham

Things have certainly changed since the days of Get Carter, when Michael Caine stomped this area's coal-blackened beaches. These days the beaches are all gussied-up and people come for a stay at the smart, 20-room Seaham Hall Hotel, with its splendidly revamped Oriental-style spa, pool and hammam and its terrace BBQs overlooking the sea, rather than to pick stray nutty slack off the sands.

Details: There is still "very good" availability throughout the summer. Two nights in a junior suite with sea views cost from £285pp B&B (0808 2509674, prideofbritainhotels.com)

14. The Midland, Morecambe, Lancashire

This wonderful former white elephant of an art deco masterpiece, with Eric Gill interiors, really does feel like a light-filled grand ocean liner. Of the 44 rooms, 28 come with a sea view, which takes in Morecambe Bay and the fells of the Lake District.

Details: There is good availability. A two-night "Summer Saver" B&B with dinner on the first night is from £175pp (0845 8501240, englishlakes.co.uk)

15. No 43, Arnside, Cumbria

No 43 is a cute and stylish cross between a boutique hotel and a guesthouse in a terrace of large houses. There are sparkling views across the sands of the River Kent estuary from its two suites, rooms number 2 (in which the double-ended bath also has a view) and number 7. Both come with binoculars for scanning the horizon.

Details: There is decent availability for multi-night stays in August. Sea-view suites cost from £175 B&B (01524 762761, no43.org.uk)

16. The Pennington Hotel, Ravenglass, Cumbria

There is a mix of river and estuary views here, as this village is where the rivers Esk, Mite and Irt wind down to the Irish Sea. The Pennington Hotel was once a coaching inn — it still serves a decent pint — and comes with 21 rooms, many with estuary views. The rooms, while comfortable enough, often take second billing to the food (vegetables, fruits and herbs are handpicked from Muncaster Castle's historic kitchen gardens). It's dog and child-friendly, too.

Details: There are plenty of dates in August for two days or more, both midweek and at weekends. Doubles cost from £120 B&B (0845 4506445, penningtonhotels.com)

17. St Brides Spa Hotel, Saundersfoot, Wales

St Brides, which has 24 cream-and-pastel rooms, sits on a headland overlooking Saundersfoot harbour, with lovely elevated views of Carmarthen Bay. However, given all the spa/gym/health facilities on offer (including an infinity pool that overlooks the sea and coast), it's one for those who expect a little more than scenery gazing from their summer break.

Details: Availability is "pretty decent" over the summer — doubles with sea view and balcony cost from £200 per night B&B with a 90-minute session in the thermal pool and hydro suite (01834 812304, stbridesspahotel.com).

18. Scarista House, Outer Hebrides

This very family-friendly Georgian manse is on the edge of Harris. You'll eat well and the views over the three-mile beach and the swirling Atlantic are dramatic and mesmerising. It also specialises, it claims, in "drinking, lounging around and walking".

Details: The hotel is busy until the later part of August, when two- and three-night vacancies open up. Sea-view rooms are from £235 B&B per night, with discounts for longer stays (01859 550238, www.scaristahouse.com)

19. Inn at John O'Groats, Wick

Billed as an "aparthotel", this comes from the Natural Retreats people, so you know rooms will be modernly minimalist and well equipped (they come with Apple TV here). The feature most likely to be appreciated — given the location — is the floor-to-ceiling windows in the "Nordic" extension to the older inn (think larger versions of Lofoten fishing huts). This has views over seas that may well contain orcas and skies dotted with gulls and puffins, across to the hump of the Orkneys.

Details: Availability is "reasonable" throughout August. Five nights self-catering is from £760 for four sharing at the end of August. Nightly rates at the inn are from £70, room-only (0844 3843166, naturalretreats.co.uk).

20. L'Horizon Beach Hotel, Jersey

A huge grand dame of 106 rooms, three restaurants and large terrace, this beachside hotel overlooking picturesque St Bedale's, which has some of Jersey's finest shoreline, dates from 1850. It has had a lick or two of paint since then and has just launched a new spa complex that offers good-value treatments.

Details: There is good availability, with two nights' half board in a deluxe oceanfront room from £349pp and longer stays also available (0845 4580901, handpickedhotels.co.uk/lhorizon).

All prices are for double rooms in August unless otherwise stated

14 comments

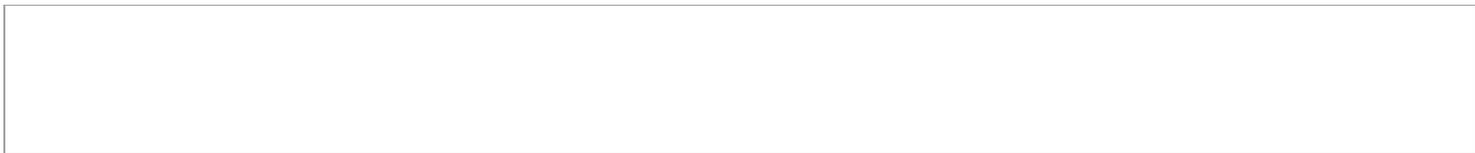
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Dr CHK

5 days ago

L'Horizon hotel in Jersey is at St Brelade's Bay, not "St Bedales" (which does not exist).

Recommend Reply

Cobo201

4 days ago

@Dr CHK And also it's not in Britain.

Recommend Reply

Robert Francis

5 days ago

Driftwood on the Roseland Peninsula, Cornwall is pretty impressive too.

Recommend Reply

topkat

5 days ago

Clearly missing The Atlantic in Jersey <http://www.theatlantichotel.com/about-jersey/location>

Recommend Reply

Martyn Davies

5 days ago

One place in Wales, and not one in either Northern Ireland or Scotland..... not really an exhaustive list from 'Britain' is it. I don't know why people bother looking at these Times lists. They're awful.

1 Recommend Reply

Robert Lawson

5 days ago

@Martyn Davies Last time I looked at a map Wick and the Isle of Harris were in Scotland!

1 Recommend Reply

Gillian Moore

5 days ago

@Robert Lawson @Martyn Davies

Find a stellar beach hotel in N. Ireland and we'll give you a prize.

Recommend Reply

Trevor Garten

5 days ago

@Martyn Davies 18 & 19 sound a bit Scottish to me.

Recommend Reply

Martyn Davies

5 days ago

nadgers. Missed those two.

Recommend Reply

Gordon Tomkins

5 days ago

@Martyn Davies

"nadders" - now there's a word I've not seen or heard for many a long year! :o)

1  [Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

Gill Bullen

5 days ago

@Gordon Tomkins @Martyn Davies as in "Green grow my..."?

They don't make them quite like Kenneth Williams these days - or rather, perhaps they do, but not as funny!

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

Robert Francis

5 days ago

@Martyn Davies It's true that most of the best places are in Cornwall or Devon though - and I am from Wales.

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

Martyn Davies

5 days ago

@Robert Francis @Martyn Davies Same here Robert, but I can't believe that they couldn't find anything around Broadhaven / WhiteSands (by St Davids) / Fishguard and that area....

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

Cobo201

4 days ago

@Martyn Davies Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have wonderful beaches, and they are in Britain. Jersey is not.

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

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