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Nanny Pat's Adventures in Cornwall

When my grandchildren first arrived they all lived in Brighton. That made visiting them a 10 hour round trip in the car or a 9 hour train journey from Cornwall, which is a tall order when you have a busy full-time job! Family life is very important to me and I made it a priority to visit once a month and not be a remote 'duty visit' Nan but a full 'hands on' Nan who is a big part of their lives.

I have a passion for the outdoors and luckily my sons and their families do too, so my visits to Brighton often entailed leaping on buses and trains and exploring the local area, including woods, parks and beaches, walking on the Downs and enjoying the many outdoor parades and festivals so common there.

As I was free of work and domestic chores on these visits, I was able to devote myself entirely to my grandchildren, pushing buggies down to the beach, playing in the parks, having picnics galore, telling stories and indulging myself in their delightful company. This set a pattern and when my son Mark and his family relocated to Cornwall with two toddlers I set about having at least one adventure a week with them, usually on a Wednesday. These days became known as Nanny Pat's Wednesdays.

I tried to choose places which were suitable for their ages and catered for my needs with buggy friendly paths, good baby changing facilities, cafés with a children's menu and were affordable (often free). We all enjoyed these days out, discovering areas of Cornwall we didn't know, learning about wildflowers and wildlife, talking about the weather and the seasons. The company of my grandchildren brought me great joy. There is a magic about the Cornish coast and countryside that I never tire of and it is heartening to me to hear them talk excitedly about adventures we had years ago with such enthusiasm - I hope they will pass the memories on to their children one day.

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Wilfred and Megan are at school now so our adventures are more difficult to arrange but my elder son Paul has come home to Cornwall with his toddler Sam and baby Jasmine so the adventures will begin again...

As our guests at Bosinver are mostly families with young children I thought it would be great idea to share our adventures and give you some tips for enjoying our beautiful county with your little ones – many of these days out will not appear in guide books. I hope you enjoy them as much as we did!

With love,



Pat Smith (aka Nanny Pat)

We have printed and encapsulated the individual days out and they are available in the office for you to borrow and enjoy. If you try out any of the days out in this ebook (and we hope you will), we'd love to hear what you think of them. Drop us a line reception@bosinver.co.uk, tweet us @bosinver or post on our **Facebook page**

Note: While all the information about the places we've visited is correct at the time of writing, things like opening hours, admission prices and facilities can change. We've included links wherever possible and suggest you check the online before making a special trip.



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The Lost Gardens of Heligan

Visitors come from across the globe to visit **The Lost Gardens of Heligan**. We're lucky that Heligan is just a hop, skip and a jump away from Bosinver, making it a great option for a family day out.

The award-winning gardens now extend to 300 acres. You can explore Victorian productive gardens where they grow fruit (including pineapples, which were introduced to Heligan in the 1800s) and vegetables, spot wildlife in its natural habitat and learn about lots of different plants and species.

Wonderful woodland sculptures, fungi-growing areas and exotic plants make this a very rich sensory world for children to experience. Wilf and Megan loved the Jungle Valley, which has its own micro-climate and all sorts of exotic plants and flowers, including impressive tree ferns from New Zealand. As they crossed the stepping stones, they felt like they were entering another world, and their imagination ran wild. The Jungle even has its own rope bridge too now!

In 1999, Heligan took over the responsibility for another 200 acres of the estate covering grassland, wetlands, rivers, a small lake and farmland. This area has become an integral part of the Heligan Wild Project which aims to show visitors the sensitive links between land, animals, nature and food production. On our most recent visit we were lucky enough to be shown around by Jim Briggs, Heligan Estate Manager. Wilf was fascinated by this area, and asked lots of questions about what they were doing there and the creatures that live there.

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Extra details

Useful information

You can find out more about Heligan's story **on the website**.

Dogs on leads are welcome in the gardens.

Ask at the guides at the ticket office for the best things for young children to see and do.

When to visit

Like most of Cornwall's gardens, Heligan is at its best during the spring, although it's well worth a visit at any time of year.

Getting there

Heligan is about 10 minutes' drive from Bosinver, just off the B3273. Postcode for Sat Navs: PL26 6EN. Turn left out of our driveway, then left into Polgooth. Follow the road down through the village, then turn right at London Apprentice. Follow this road and look out for the signs to the Lost Gardens of Heligan on your right.





Trelissick Gardens



Trelissick is one of our favourite places to visit as there's so much scope for adventure here. We love the woodland walk down towards Roundwood Quay, which has magnificent views across the Carrick Roads and the Fal River.

The beauty of Trelissick is that it can be very different depending on the time of year you go. The ever-shifting light here is wonderful and the number and colour of leaves on the trees can completely change the atmosphere.

Trelissick is a great place to play nature detective, and the small beach is perfect for a little seashore exploration. In the autumn, the path is strewn with colourful leaves, and there are lots of interesting things to discover at ground level, as well as things to climb on for a different perspective. Megan loves hunting for bugs among the leaves and finding interesting fungi (great to look at but not to touch). On one memorable occasion we found a huge fungus growing on a tree that looked just like a giant pasty! There are a couple of lovely sculptures by Reese Ingram which Megan always likes to visit when we come down here. They also make the perfect place for a picnic!

Early spring at Trelissick is glorious, and it's a wonderful place to come to see the land waking up after the winter. We like trying to spot as many signs of spring as possible, including snowdrops, daffodils, catkins and bluebell leaves. The birds are also busy at this time of year gathering food, courting and starting to build nests. If you can be really still and quiet, it's amazing how many you can see. Curious robins hop closer, watching you watching them, while blackbirds hop through the undergrowth, turning over leaves to look for insects. If you're really lucky, you might still spot some of the more unusual winter visitors like redwings, fieldfares or bramblings.

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Adventure time in Trelissick



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Extra details

Useful information

Parking at Trelissick is free for National Trust members (£3.50 for non-members)

You can find out more about Trelissick and download information about the walks on the **National Trust website**.

There's a nice café if you fancy some refreshments after your walk, plus good toilets and changing facilities. Dogs are welcome on the woodland walk.

If you'd like to extend your visit, why not explore Trelissick Garden? Managed by the National Trust, it's got plenty to interest the whole family. There are lots of winding paths and different areas to explore, quirky summerhouses and a huge tree just made for climbing.



When to visit

Clear, sunny days at any time of the year make perfect exploring weather - ideal for getting outdoors with an active pre-schooler.

Getting there

From Bosinver, Trelissick is approximately 30 minutes' drive. It's just off the A39 between Truro and Falmouth and is well signposted. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR3 6QL. From the car park, follow the signs for the woodland walk then head towards the water.

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Kennall Vale

Tucked away just outside Ponsonooth, near Penryn is the **Kennall Vale Wildlife Reserve** a 20 acre area managed by Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Today it's a tranquil spot, making it a great place for a leisurely walk and afternoon of wildlife spotting. But Kennall Vale has a rather more explosive past. As we discovered, this area was home to the Kennall Vale Gunpowder Works and once played an important part in the mining industry.

Established in the early 19th century, the Kennall Vale Gunpowder Works produced high quality gunpowder which was widely used in Cornish mines. In the 1880s, when more sophisticated explosives became available, demand for gunpowder declined, and the factory eventually closed in the early 1900s.

The ruins are well preserved - Kennall Vale is part of the World Heritage site of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape, and the gunpowder works became a designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1999. As you explore the reserve, you'll come across several mills, the remains of a number of buildings and complex system of leats, which once carried water to the mills. You can also still see some of the massive iron cogs that were once turned by water wheels.

While adults may be intrigued by the history of the area, for children it's a wonderful place full of things to discover. The moss-covered trees and boulders are full of character, and it's not hard to imagine them taking on a life of their own!

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Kennall Vale WaterFall



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Extra details

Useful information

For more information, take a look at the **Cornwall Wildlife Trust website** where you can also download a guide to the nature reserve and the gunpowder works.

What to look out for!

The woods here are full of birds. One in particular to watch out for is the dipper, which looks like a huge wren with a white throat and partial white breast. You're likely to see it in or around the river, as most of its food items, such as insect larvae, freshwater snails and small fish, are found in the water. It even walks underwater to find them!

If you're here at dusk, you might also see Pipistrelle bats flitting through the trees.



When to visit

Kennall Vale comes into its own during the winter months, particularly after a heavy rainfall. The river is an impressive sight as it rushes down the valley, tumbling over the granite boulders.

Getting there

From Bosinver, take the A390 to Truro, then the A39 towards Falmouth. Turn on to the A393 to Ponsanooth at the roundabout before you reach Falmouth.

As you pass through Ponsanooth village, look out for the Post Office, and turn off the main road here.

Follow this road for a few hundred yards. Access to the reserve is via a footpath on the right as you ascend the hill. Look for the reserve sign on the wall to the left of the access. There is limited parking in lanes near the site, so please be careful not to block the access routes.

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St Michaels Mount



St Michael's Mount is one of Cornwall's best-loved landmarks. With its wonderful medieval castle, this small island off the coast of Marazion is like something out of a storybook.

The buildings date back to the 12th century when there was first a priory, then a fortress, a place of pilgrimage and finally a private home as it passed into the ownership of the St Aubyn family in 1659. In 1954, they went into partnership with the National Trust and the castle and its grounds were opened to the public. The island is home to a small community, including the St Aubyns, who still live in the castle.

There are two ways to get to the island – by boat or on foot. At high tide, small boats ply back and forth to the mainland. We visited at low tide, and walked along the cobbled pathway or 'giant's causeway' across the seabed. There's something quite magical about approaching the castle on foot across this hidden causeway that is only visible at certain times of day. As we climbed up to the castle, we passed the large granite heart of Cormoran the giant. One of the National Trust volunteers stopped to tell us the story. According to legend, the Mount was built by a giant called Cormoran who would wade ashore to steal livestock from local farmers. A reward was offered in return for killing the giant and a young boy called Jack came forward. One night, when Cormoran was asleep, Jack crept over to the Mount and dug a deep pit halfway up one side. In the morning, Jack blew on his horn to wake the giant, who came running down the Mount. Blinded by the sun, he fell into the pit. Jack quickly buried the giant, and from then onwards was known as Jack the Giant Killer.

The castle itself is full of treasures from the past, including some impressive-looking armour!

We managed to time it so we could also walk back across the causeway. Wilf and Megan wrote numbers in the sand and were thrilled to watch the seabed disappear as the tide came in and the island was once more cut-off from the mainland.

Extra details

Useful information

Ask the guides at the ticket office for the best things to see and do with young children – they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

The National Trust's '50 things to do before you're 11 ¾' is a great way to make the most of the outdoors – and you can tick off at least a couple of things on the list during your visit to St Michael's Mount and get a sticker for taking part.

Getting there

St Michael's Mount is close to Marazion, near Penzance. It's approximately 45 minutes' drive from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR17 0HT.





St Mawes Castle

Our trip started in Falmouth, where we boarded the **ferry to St.Mawes**. Richard the ferryman kept the kids amused throughout the 20 minute journey with his oversized sunglasses and a range of 'faces' that kept appearing in the window, including a smiley face, Winnie the Pooh and more. Their delight kept the rest of the passengers entertained too... It was a little thing, but really made the trip memorable!

Once back on dry land, it was time to invade the castle! Now managed by English Heritage, **St Mawes Castle** was built by Henry VIII. It's one of a chain of forts built between 1539 and 1545 to protect the coast from an invasion by France and Spain. Along with Pendennis Castle on the other side of the Fal estuary, it guarded the important anchorage of Carrick Roads.

While it's not a large castle, St Mawes is very well preserved, and is just right to explore with a couple of under 5s. Wilf was particularly delighted with the garderobe (loo) and the oubliette – a hole-like cell that people were sent to as punishment for misdemeanours. During our visit, the castle came under attack! This time the threat was from the air rather than the sea, as marauding seagulls swooped down and made off with Wilf's lunch!

There's plenty of outdoor space to play, burn off some energy or have a picnic lunch, and also a good café and gift shop on site. We bought a couple of toy swords, which were perfect for a little imaginative play (and perhaps fending off the seagulls!) I'd also recommend the audio tour, which is fantastic and really helps bring the castle to life. Walking back towards the harbour from the castle is the Tresanton Hotel – a must stop for their wonderful cream teas. Immaculately turned out restaurant staff, views over the harbour to die for and freshly baked homemade scones. It feels like a film set. Don't miss it!

Extra details

Useful information

Admission is £4.80 for adults (£4.40 concessions), £2.80 for children. Under 5s are free.

St Mawes Castle is dog-friendly, so it makes a great excursion for the whole family.

Getting there

The Falmouth-St Mawes Ferry runs regularly from Prince of Wales Pier and Custom House Quay in Falmouth. **Check the Fal River website** for current sailing times and prices. Under 5s go free on the ferry.

Alternatively, you can drive to St Mawes from Bosinver, which takes approximately 35 minutes. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR2 5DE.





The Cornish Seal Sanctuary

This one definitely has the aww factor! Based in the pretty village of Gweek on the Helford Estuary, **the Cornish Seal Sanctuary** rescues and rehabilitates numerous common seals, grey seals and sea lions each year. Many of these are pups, which are sick or have been injured or orphaned. Most of them are released back into the wild once they've recuperated.

The sanctuary isn't just home to seals and sea lions – many other creatures also live here as well, including Humboldt penguins, Asian short clawed otters, ponies, goats and sheep.

Feeding takes place at several times throughout the day and these sessions are brilliant! My two also enjoyed the wonderful underwater viewing areas where you can see seals and penguins at their best.

There are lots of **videos on the Cornish Seal Sanctuary's website**, so you can get a taste of what it's like before you visit.

While you can't take the seals or penguins home (although your little ones might want to), you can help support the Seal Sanctuary's work by sponsoring one. Ours is called Gilbert!

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Extra details

Useful information

On Christmas day you can save 30% on the door price if you book tickets in advance online.

Dogs on leads are welcome, so you could combine a trip to see the seals with a walk. Gweek is a special place full of wading birds and changing creek views.

When to Visit

Anytime of year

Getting there

The Cornish Seal Sanctuary is approximately 50 minutes' drive from Bosinver. You can find detailed directions on their website. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR12 6UG.



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The Gribbin and Polridmouth

Located to the west of Fowey, its sweeping views and secluded beaches make Polridmouth Cove popular with visitors and locals alike. Pack a picnic and some beach equipment and prepare for some fun! The cove is sheltered and it's a great spot for families who are prepared to make the effort and walk a little way from the car park!

The path from the car park is laid with stones and easy to walk. Megan and I spent ages identifying lots of wild flowers – there are loads here in the spring. We also had great fun doing roly polys down the grassy bank on the way back!

Polridmouth Cove is the setting for Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca – literature lovers will enjoy soaking up the ambiance. The ornamental lake alongside the beach has ducks and swans which also take to the sea. Megan was delighted when some very friendly mallards came to help her make her sandcastle!

Looking out across St Austell Bay, you might also see the **Fowey-Mevagissey ferry**, and if you're lucky, maybe even a dolphin or a basking shark. We highly recommend the ferry trip – it's a great way to appreciate the coastline from a different perspective and kids will love the novelty and sense of adventure.

Every year, the RNLI save hundreds of lives in Cornwall alone. One of the highlights of the day was seeing them in action. We watched as the lifeboat RIB came out of Fowey, nosed into Polridmouth and searched for a lady in Sandy Cove who had fallen and hurt her leg. They helped her into the lifeboat and off they went, racing away across the water.

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The Day Mark



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Extra details

The Daymark

The red and white striped Daymark tower is one of Cornwall's more unusual landmarks. Erected in 1832, it stands 25m high. It was built to distinguish the Gribbin Head from St Anthony's Head, as when you approach them from the sea, the two headlands look similar. Ships regularly ran aground in the shallows of St Austell Bay, believing they were sailing into the much deeper waters of Falmouth Bay.

Useful information

There's lots to explore in this area, with beaches, woodland and a network of footpaths that link up with the South West Coast Path. The area is also full of history. If you look carefully, you might come across the remains of a Bronze Age barrow.

Getting there

Polridmouth Cove is a 10 minute walk from the car park at Menabilly Farm (just keep going along the top road at Polkerris near Fowey). Postcode for Sat Navs: PL24 2TN. This has to be one of the cheapest car parks in Cornwall – 50p in an honesty box for a whole day's parking.



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Portscatho and the Hidden Hut Cove

Once you've discovered the Roseland, you'll wonder why you've never visited before. Relaxed and idyllic, this stretch of Cornwall's coastline has a variety of delights to discover.

If you're looking for a family friendly day out with a culinary twist, we'd recommend heading over to Portscatho, a picturesque fishing village in the heart of the Roseland. This was one of my favourite days out with Megs. We parked in the Portscatho car park and explored the harbour and village. There are some lovely galleries and an unusual vintage gift shop plus a pub, café and good deli and butcher.

For lunch we went to the **Hidden Hut**, which shot to fame when it featured in Caroline Quentin's Cornwall on TV. Run by enthusiastic couple Simon and Gemma (he's the chef, while she hosts), it's a small, rustic beachside café which sits on National Trust land overlooking Porthcurnick beach - which also happens to be one of the most beautiful beaches in the area, with a large stretch of golden sand and great rock pools.

The Hidden Hut is just a short walk along the cliff from Portscatho. It's a cracking place to go for lunch, and their Feast Nights are really something special (more on those later). The South West Coast Path runs right past the Hidden Hut, so it's an ideal pit stop for walkers. And it's more than just another popular beach café - since they opened, they've been building a reputation for exciting, inspired food. Don't miss out on the cakes made by Gemma's mum Maggie - they're simply delicious.

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Extra details

Feast Nights

In the spring, summer and autumn they run regular pop-up feast nights. I went with friends in August for my birthday, which was a real treat! Each feast night has a different theme. The food's cooked on vast pans in the open air by chef Simon and helpers. There were 100 people there and we were lucky to have beautiful weather. It was a magical evening listening to crashing waves, enjoying great food and soaking up the view: a lone anchored yacht, red harvest moon and a galaxy of stars. We were last to leave, furnished with a hurricane lamp by Simon to navigate the coast path back to the car with the instruction to 'Leave it by the gate for us to collect in the morning!' That's Cornwall for you. Trust and respect.

To get the most out of your feast night experience, you'll need to take everything you would normally take on a picnic with you (minus the food!). A torch might also be helpful for the walk back to your car.

Useful information

The Hidden Hut is open 7 days a week, 10am – 5pm (plus special Feast nights) from March to October. There are free public toilets near the Hidden Hut.

Dogs are welcome on Porthcurnick Beach all year round, and at the Hidden Hut.

Feast nights are ticket-only events. They sell out super fast, so we'd recommend signing up to the mailing list so you get an email when the next lot goes on sale.

Getting there

From Bosinver, it's a 25-30 minute drive to Portscatho where you can park (look out for the Porthcurnick Beach car park) and a short walk along the coastal path to the Hidden Hut. Postcode for Sat Navs: Take a look at the **Hidden Hut website** for further directions.



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Fantastic Food and Fun



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Mevagissey is our nearest port. Like Fowey it's an ancient harbour with a long history of smuggling, pirates, fishing and festivals. Today it's a lively fishing port (you can buy fresh fish on the quay) but as with many Cornish seaside towns it earns most of its living from the tourist trade. Walk into the main street and turn left for the harbour and quay. The high wall at harbour entrance is a great place for fishing and crabbing. You can always find a man with a boat who will take you out for a fishing trip. Many of our guests who visit Mevagissey come home with a mackerel or pollock to cook for tea.

We think the best bit is getting out on the water and taking in views of our spectacular coastline. You can take a boat trip to Fowey on the Mevagissey-Fowey ferry. **The timetable is available online.** Dogs travel free, and you can even take your bike across if you arrange it in advance. It's a fabulous trip well worth doing.

On the way to the harbour wall you'll find the Mevagissey Aquarium. It's only small but it's free to go in and all the fish in the tanks (some of them are whoppers) are found in our Cornish waters. It's quite eye-opening to see how many species there are – do go in and take a look.

Wilf and Megan also love to visit the pirate shop just off the harbour. During Feast Week there were real pirates at the shop and Wilfred had a pirate's parrot on his arm! I also recommend Marie Morrison's silver jewellery shop, just off the harbour.

Mevagissey Feast week

Mevagissey is transformed during Feast Week which takes place at the end of June/beginning of July. The whole town gets involved with the celebrations, including a Fish Festival, boat and raft races, and a Flora Day ending with a carnival and firework display.

Extra details

Useful information

One of the best ways to explore this historic fishing village is by taking on the challenge of the **Mevagissey Treasure Trail**. It takes about an hour and a half to do and will have the whole family engaged searching for clues – great for families with school age children.

The South West Coast Path runs through the village, and it's a good area for walking.

Getting there

Mevagissey is just a short drive from Bosinver. Drive down through Polgooth village, and when you reach the crossroads at London Apprentice (opposite the Kingswood restaurant), turn right onto the B3273 and follow the road past Pentewan until you reach Mevagissey. It's best to park in the first large car park as you drive into town as the streets are very narrow and congested.



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Paradise Park is one of Cornwall's most popular attractions for families with young children and one of our favourite days out. It's a great place to visit all year round and has a fantastic indoor play area which is ideal for under 5s. We usually spend the morning doing a circuit of all the bird and animal areas outside.

There are some incredible, colourful birds, including parrots, flamingos, toucans, peacocks and Cornish choughs. The Fun Farm has donkeys, goats and pigs to pet, and there's a lovely little area with gerbils, guinea pigs and mice that all have their own little houses.

One of the best things is feeding the penguins – Wilf and Megan love feeding them fish by hand. They also really enjoy visiting the aviary with the lorikeets. At certain times of the day you can go in with the keeper and the birds will fly down and eat food out of your hands – a real treat! The café's very good and a nice place to stop for lunch before giving the children a chance to let off steam in the **Jungle Barn indoor play area**, which has soft play, giant slides and a special toddlers' area.



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Extra details

Breeding and conservation at Paradise Park

Paradise Park is highly respected for **breeding and rescuing birds and animals**. They've been running The World Parrot Trust for 25 years (a charity that works around the world to save rare parrots) and they're also involved in schemes to help support native birds and animals such as red squirrels, otters, barn owls and Cornish choughs.

Useful information

Paradise Park was awarded a coveted **Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence in 2014**.

It's open every day from 10am (except Christmas Day). There's plenty of free parking, easy access and good toilets and changing facilities.

There are often special activities during school holidays - check the website for more details.

Top tip: If your children love birds and animals and you think you might visit more than once during your holiday you can buy a return ticket for your next visit at a discounted price of £3.99 per person.

Getting there

Paradise Park is in Hayle, just off the A30 and is approximately 45 minutes' drive from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR27 4HB.



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Pentewan Beach

Pentewan is probably the closest beach to Bosinver and we often head here if we only have a couple of hours to spare. It's a safe, sheltered beach with golden sand (great for building sandcastles) and perfect for a family day out. Part of the beach is privately owned so if you want to spend the day here, turn left into the village past the Ship Inn (which does good food) and park in the car park on the right and follow a path through the sand dunes to the beach.

If you're only here for part of the day, carry on and enter the **Pentewan Sands Holiday Park** following signs for The Seahorse. This is a great leisure facility including a big indoor pool with slides and toddler pool, plus a soft play and restaurant. As long as you use the leisure centre or restaurant you can park here and go down to the other side of the beach where there is a funky beach bar called the Driftwood Bistro.

For some reason there is always a lot of debris on this beach so being mindful and hoping to teach Wilf and Megs a thing or two about social responsibility, we find the largest container (often a fish packing crate) and make it our mission to fill it with plastic whilst talking about the problems rubbish creates for fish, birds and other wildlife around the world.

We drag the full crate to the bin area and then off to play on the beach – even in the depths of winter. Skimming stones, playing tag, drawing faces in the sand and collecting pebbles with faces on can keep little ones occupied for several hours out in the fresh air. There is a small playground on this beach but it is showing signs of age!

We usually finish up with a swim followed by hot chocolate and a romp in the soft play – another lovely day out costing very little!

Extra details

Useful information

Dogs are welcome on the beach from 1 November – mid March but outside these times there's a seasonal dog ban.



Getting there

Pentewan is less than 10 minutes' drive from Bosinver. Turn left out of our driveway then left again into Polgooth village. Continue through Polgooth till you reach the T junction opposite the Kingswood restaurant. Turn right towards Mevagissey on the B3272. Pentewan is approximately 2 miles along this road on the right. The entrance to Pentewan Sands is clearly marked.



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St Ives by train

A trip to St Ives by train is possibly one of the best child friendly days out in Cornwall. **The St Ives Bay Line** offers some of the most spectacular views of any branch line in the country. Kids of all ages will feel the anticipation building as the stunning stretch of coastline comes in to view. All aboard!

St Ives has plenty to offer families all year round, but the advantage of going off season is that you can avoid the crowds. The train journey from Truro to St Ives takes a little less than an hour, depending on connections. You change at St Erth from the main line to pick up the branch line which hugs the coastline via Carbis Bay.

We did this on a miserable Saturday in January but still had a wonderful time. First stop is usually down the steps to Porthminster beach with the superb Porthminster Café (note to parents – they do excellent food for a fine dining experience in the evenings). When you look out of the window, it feels as though you're sitting in the middle of an artist's painting.

Wilf and Megs went scrambling over the rocks on the beach and met a lovely little Jack Russell dog to play with. Then it was onwards towards the centre of St Ives for a warming hot chocolate at another of my favourite watering holes, the Pedn Olva Hotel, which is right on the beach. They're open all year for food and are very welcoming to families with children. Go into the lounge bar to enjoy the outstanding views over the beach and harbour – you might have to pinch yourself to check you're not dreaming!

The tide was out leaving the characterful little fishing boats bedecked with nets and floats stranded on the sand which led to discussions about how the lifeboat got out when the tide was out!

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We were able to walk around the pier edge to the outer harbour wall and discovered the beach strewn with dogfish, presumably thrown out from fishing catches but dead things always fascinate kids and led to further chats about discards and fishing quotas.

St Ives has beaches galore, and we worked our way around them all – Porthmeor, Porthgidden, Harbour beach and Porthminster – and ended up at the Tate Gallery. You can go up to the rooftop café for free and savour the magnificent view yet again (be careful of marauding food-stealing seagulls in the summer!).

The rock-strewn coast path meanders along the coast down to Zennor and is stunning for the more energetic of you with older children – just soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the experience of the wilder side of Cornwall, even if you just walk a little way. The rock-strewn coast path meanders along the coast down to Zennor and is stunning for the more energetic of you with older children – just soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the experience of the wilder side of Cornwall, even if you just walk a little way.



Wander back through the narrow streets, stumble across the hidden artists' studios and galleries and indulge yourself in the souvenir and craft shop on the way back to the station. A brilliant day out all round!



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Extra details

Nanny Pat's top tip

There's a beautiful 20 minute walk along the coast path from Carbis Bay to St Ives. I was planning to do it but the train did not stop at Carbis Bay station. Talking to a fellow regular passenger it appears that it only stops there on the return journey so if you want to do that walk stay on the train for the return trip and get off at Carbis Bay – it's only a five minute journey.



Getting there

We started our journey in Truro, where we parked at the station (£3.90 all day). With a railcard, the return fare for me plus a four and a six year old was an amazing £7.50. A great day out for £10 if you take your own packed lunch – bargain! If you're staying at Bosinver you could start your trip at St Austell station. For timetables, prices and inspiration, take a look at the **Great Scenic Railways of Devon and Cornwall website**, which is packed full of great ideas for alternative days out.

Alternatively, you could drive to Lelant Saltings, which is around 50 mins drive from Bosinver and pick up the branch line there.

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Blue Reef Aquarium

Newquay is famous for its surf beaches, but it's also a very family friendly destination. One of the best attractions, particularly for days when the weather's a bit iffy, is the **Blue Reef Aquarium**. The day we went, the forecast was storm force 10 with hail storms!

Wilf and Megan are both totally into CBeebies Octonauts, a cartoon series of underwater adventures where Captain Barnacle and his crew encounter various marine creatures and help solve their problems. Each episode looks at a real life scenario and helps point out the problems affecting our oceans such as melting ice, plastic, changing sea currents, etc. So what better way to build on the children's interest and fascination with sea life than to give them the chance to get up close to it at Blue Reef?

Blue Reef is set right on Towan Beach, one of Newquay's seven glorious beaches. Admission for all three of us was around £21, and the tickets let you go in and out as often as you like throughout the day. We took full advantage of this and broke the day up into three to fit in with the times of feedings and talks. We had hot chocolate in the café at Blue Reef but at lunchtime we walked back up the hill to the Morris pasty shop in Gover Road. Their pasties are amazing and we didn't want to miss them! In the summer I would bring a packed lunch and eat it on the beach.

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The Aquarium is brilliant; the exhibits are well presented in natural settings and all the creatures looked very healthy. You can even borrow hop-ups for little ones to stand on to get the best view into the tanks. At the entrance there's a board with feeding times and information talks so you can plan your visit. We watched the octopus get its daily ration of live crab. Apparently it octopus takes the crab into its beak, paralyses it with venom and then eats the flesh, leaving the starfish to hoover up the unwanted shell!

Wilf loved the caiman. They were about his size and very prehistoric looking, like the nautilus which was my favourite. In the car on the way home we each listed our 12 favourite things - from turtles to sea horses - and agreed it had been a great day!

Even though it was freezing, wet and windy, we all had a great time on the beach clambering over the rocks and dodging the waves (well wrapped up and toasty warm in waterproof jackets and trousers, woolly hats, scarves and gloves!) Afterwards we drove past the famous Fistral surfing beach to Pentire Point to do some winter wave watching.



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Extra details

Useful information

Trenance Gardens and Leisure

Park are just a mile from the town centre and offer a variety of delights including rowing and pedal boats for hire, a skate park, mini railway, a crazy golf course and wonderful gardens to explore. You'll find the award-winning Newquay Zoo here as well.

Getting there

By car, it takes approx 35 mins to get to Newquay from Bosinver. There's plenty of parking in the town, and some car parks have a reduced tariff during the winter. There's more information about **parking in Newquay on the Blue Reef website**. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR7 1JQ (Manor Road car park).

You can also do this day out by train from Bosinver. Take the train from St Austell to Par and then the pretty branch line to Newquay. The station is very close to the town centre and beaches so it's not too far for little legs to walk.



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Cardinham Woods



If you go down to **Cardinham Woods** today, you might not find a teddy bears' picnic, but there are plenty of opportunities for family adventures.

Cardinham is an attractive mixed woodland that's popular year-round with locals and visitors alike. It's great for families with children of all ages, as the little ones will be happy exploring, paddling in the stream, or spending time in the imaginative animal-inspired wooden play area next to the Woods Café. Those with older children can venture deeper into the woods and walk or cycle the trails. We spent hours at Cardinham. Megan loved paddling in the stream with her wellies on, trying everything out in the playground and scooting around the tracks. We also enjoyed taking a closer look at some of the plants and flowers.

Walking

Cardinham has some excellent walking trails which reveal fantastic views and a taste of the area's history. There are four waymarked trails to choose from, and plenty of other tracks to explore. You can find out about all the trails and download maps from the

Forestry Commission website.

Cycling

Cardinham has a wide variety of paths that are suitable for walking or cycling. There are also some new trails for off-road cyclists and mountain bikers which are great for families with older children.

The Woods Café

Pop in to **the Woods Café** to refuel. It was once a woodsman's cottage and still has lots of character - in the winter, you can warm up beside a real fire. The food there is delicious, and there are plenty of seasonal dishes to choose from. We love their squidgy brownies, divine carrot cake and white chocolate and raspberry muffins. Mmm...

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Extra details

Useful information

Cardinham Woods is managed by the **Forestry Commission**, and their website is full of useful information. They've even got an interactive autumn leaf colour rating tool, so visitors wanting to see the woods in all their autumnal glory can check when's the best time to go.

Car parking costs £2 for up to 2 hours and £3 for over 2 hours. There are toilets available including disabled facilities and baby changing areas. There are plenty of picnic benches and outdoor BBQs you can use.

Getting there

Cardinham Woods is less than two miles from Bodmin, and approximately 30 minutes' drive from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Navs: PL30 4AL.



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The Camel Trail

The Camel Trail is the most popular cycle trail in Cornwall. You won't find any camels here though – it takes its name from the River Camel (Dowr Kammel in Cornish, which means crooked river). The Camel Trail follows the route of an old railway line. It's ideal for family cycling as it's traffic-free and largely level. It's also an excellent way to soak up some of North Cornwall's most beautiful scenery.

The full trail is 18 miles long, running from Padstow to Wenford Bridge, via Wadebridge and Bodmin. However, you can opt to do one of the shorter sections instead – we cycled the trail from Wadebridge to Padstow which is an easy route winding five and a half miles along the old railway line by the Camel Estuary. The views are spectacular!

The trail runs through a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). You're likely to see several species of wading birds in along the way, and if you're lucky, you might also spot an otter or a kingfisher.

We usually reward ourselves with a delicious ice cream when we get to Padstow, where you can explore the pretty harbour and indulge in a little retail therapy. You can also get the ferry over to nearby Rock or visit the National Lobster Hatchery on your way back to Wadebridge.

Extra details

When to visit

Spring and autumn are ideal times to cycle the Camel Trail as it's cooler and less busy – it can get very busy here at the height of summer!

Getting there

Wadebridge is approximately 40 minutes' drive from Bosinver. There's a large long stay public car park in Piggy Lane. Postcode for Sat Navs: PL27 7AP.

Useful information

Useful information

If you don't have your own bikes with you, you can hire them at **Bridge Bike Hire**, **Camel Trail Cycle Hire** in Wadebridge or **Padstow Cycle Hire** in Padstow

It's worth booking in advance or calling to check whether they've got availability before you travel.

There are public toilets in Wadebridge and Padstow.

You can find more information and **download a leaflet** about the Camel Trail from the Cornwall Council website.



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Fowey and Polruan

This is a wonderful day out for little legs with hardly any cost, just the car park and the ferry. We parked in the **Bodinnick Ferry car park** – a top tip for a level walk into Fowey.

Follow the river into the town and on the way you'll pass **Pinky Murphy's café** – a delight not to be missed. This wonderful quirky place serves excellent food and a great cup of coffee. The décor is funky and relaxed, the upstairs is geared up for little ones to entertain themselves and there is even a basket of knitting for you to add a row or two whilst you wait for your order!

Continue into the ancient town with its narrow streets and bustling pavements. There are all manner of interesting shops and eateries. My favourite is **Sam's Bistro** which you will pass on your way to the **Polruan ferry**.

Pop in and have a look at Town Quay. You could try crabbing here off the quay wall or the brave ones could be tempted to hire a little motor boat for an hour or two and take to the water – the best place to see the magnificence of this old port. You can go up as far as Golant and pass the docks with the train line which still carries trucks of china clay from St Austell for export by ship all over the world.

Retrace your steps to the main street and carry on bearing a little to the right and start to go uphill. Turn left at the first turning onto the Esplanade, a row of beautiful old merchants' houses. Follow this road for about five minutes and you will come to a very narrow lane on the left with steps leading down to a granite quay. This is the Polruan ferry stop and you can see it plying its way to and fro about every 20 minutes, so you won't have long to wait.

When you get off the ferry at Polruan you'll see a **South West Coast Path** sign with an acorn on it telling you to go to the right. Follow this path and you will soon leave the town and start climbing the hill to reveal stunning sea views out into the English Channel. At the top of the hill there are some old lookout buildings – we climbed up and sat on one to have our picnic with breathtaking views and only the seagulls for company.

We spent a really happy hour here playing hide and seek and blowing dandelion clocks. The more adventurous could carry on to beautiful Pencarrow head and Lantic Bay but those with toddlers will probably head back across the cliffs to the top of Polruan and make their way back down the road towards the river. There's a lovely tea room at the bottom of the hill on the left called the Harbour Café. Alternatively, for those who fancy a pint, try the Lugger Inn!

Back then onto the ferry for the return trip, (the best bit according to my two!) maybe a bit of retail therapy and a wander back to the car – enjoy!



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Extra details

Useful information

You can extend this day for older children by turning left as you leave the ferry on the Fowey side and carry on down the Esplanade to Readymoney Cove (the magnificent castle like building above the beach is Dawn French's home) which is a lovely little sandy beach with safe swimming.

The second extension is to cross the river from the Bodinnick Ferry car park and climb a short steep hill on the other side till you see a National Trust sign saying '**Hall Walk**'. Follow this for an hour's walk into Polruan with the most spectacular views of the creek and harbour.

Getting there

From Bosinver it takes approximately 25 mins to reach Fowey, and around 40 minutes to reach the Bodinnick Ferry car park (postcode for Sat Navs: PL23 1DF).





Trebah Garden

Trebah is a subtropical paradise that's been rated amongst the top 80 gardens in the world. It's a magical place for children, full of little moments of surprise around every corner. There's the ever-popular paraglide, adventure play areas (Fort Stuart for the little ones and Tarzan's Camp for the bigger ones), plus loads of 'secret' passages to explore. The tree ferns (which hide a miniature waterfall) and the leafy Gunnera Passage are great fun. Then there's the private beach, where you can paddle on a hot day and enjoy an ice cream. And don't forget to look out for the creature in the pond... Could it be a relative of the Loch Ness Monster?

There's a well-stocked café serving a range of meals and snacks made from local produce. If you sit outside, you may well find yourselves surrounded by a flock of friendly chaffinches and sparrows who'll be only too happy to swoop down and pick up your crumbs!

Dog friendly

Trebah is one of the most dog-friendly visitor attractions in Cornwall. They actively encourage visitors of the four-legged variety (you'll need to keep them on a lead in the gardens and on the beach). They've got water bowls for dogs outside the Visitor Centre for thirsty pooches and offer complimentary poop scoops to dog owners on arrival.

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Extra details

When to visit

Trebah is spectacular in spring, but it offers plenty for families to see and do throughout the year. You can see what's looking good in the garden at any time on their website – and staff will point you in the right direction when you get there, too.

By early March, there's already a riot of colour in the garden, with a variety of rhododendrons and camellias in bloom, and the golden glory of daffodils and narcissi. Their champion magnolia (the tallest of its kind in the UK) is absolutely stunning. and less busy – it can get very busy here at the height of summer!



Useful information

Trebah Garden is open every day. Admission is free for children under 5.

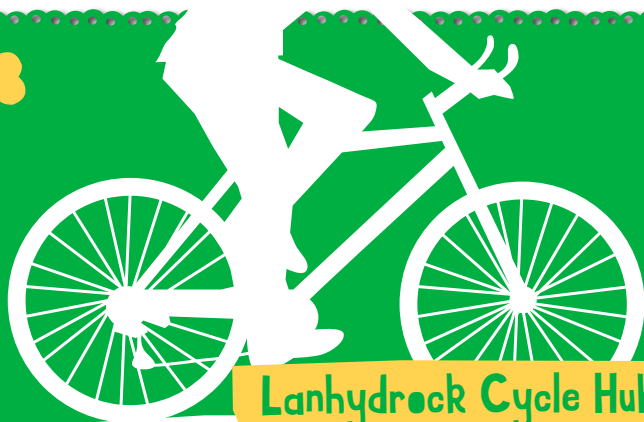
There are clearly marked disabled-friendly routes around the garden which are also good for pushchairs and buggies.

Getting there

Head towards Truro on the A390 and then take the A39 to Falmouth. The gardens are well signposted (look for the brown garden signs). It will take about 50 minutes by car from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Naps: TR11 5JZ.



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Lanhydrock Cycle Hub

In spring 2014, the National Trust opened its **new cycling facilities at Lanhydrock** to the public. I spent the day there with Wilf and Megan and had a whale of a time cycling the trails, walking in the woods and clambering over the wonderful new play equipment.

The trails have all been designed and planned with great detail for the level of ability that each one caters for. They are well signed and all operate a one way system so there's no fear of crashing into out of control speed merchants bearing down on you! All the trails wind their way through the woods with various inclines; we did the Lodge Trail which is the easiest and this was just right for four year old Megan on a small girl's bike fitted with stabilisers. There are other trails with steeper inclines and challenging drops designed for thrill seekers.

Just past the car park is the cycle skills track where you can try out some steep curves, bumpy hollows, narrow stream crossings and windy tracks. Wilfred loved the challenge and happily whizzed around on his own whilst I was helping Megs.

We hired the bikes for 3 hours (£10 each) which is plenty of time for younger children and then had a bite to eat in the café. The menu was good, as was the coffee, so I was happy after my marathon run trying to keep up with Megan!

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After our break we headed off through the woods down to Respryn Bridge, a favourite haunt of ours. It's an ancient narrow stone bridge over the upper reaches of the River Fowey and ideal for playing pooh sticks. We had our usual challenge and it was Megs' turn to win 8-6 with the fastest sticks. We followed the river track on the other side of the bridge and walked up through the woods to the house (this is my favourite spot for bluebells in May) with the promise of a lovely Callestick farm ice cream to keep Megs' legs going up the hill!

We bought our ice creams and sat and licked them on the lawn in front of the house in the sunshine, trying to make shapes of the beautiful cumulus clouds floating in the clear blue sky above us. Another incline back to the car park - this time the incentive was the new playground. The wooden structures from Earth Wrights looked as if they had been hewn out of the forest and really blended in with the environment. Wilf and Megs loved them and didn't want to leave. It was a perfect end to a busy day and we all agreed that it was a brilliant new facility for Cornwall. Well done National Trust!



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Extra details

Useful information

There's a huge car park next to the cycle hire shop and café and you can park for free, bring your own bikes and cycle the trails for free too.

If you want to hire bikes there is an excellent bike shop with "Specialised" mountain bikes of all sizes (even balance bikes for little people), fully trained and helpful assistants who will adjust the bikes for you and provide you with a helmet and map

The Cycle Hub Facebook page has up-to-date information about the trails. You can **download a map of the trails** from the National Trust website to help plan your visit in advance.

For keen cyclists, the hub links to Sustrans Route 3 and onto the Camel Trail to Padstow or Wenford Bridge.

Cardinham Woods with its **trails** is only a mile down the road.

Getting there

Lanhydrock is just off the A30 near Bodmin and is well signposted (look out for the brown signs). Postcode for Sat Navs: PL30 5AD. From Bosinver, it takes approximately 25 minutes by car.

If you prefer to travel by public transport, Bodmin Parkway railway station is 1 ¾ miles away.



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Lappa Valley



Lappa Valley is a great day out for the under 5s. It has all the ingredients for toddler paradise, including miniature steam train rides, great outdoor play, mini golf, canoeing on the lake and a mini tractor and bike circuit.

The attraction is based around the old railway lines which originally served Treffry's horse- drawn line which ferried ore in 1849 from the East Wheal Rose mine to Newquay for shipping. This was replaced in 1874 by the Cornwall Minerals Railway, when the horses gave way to steam locomotives. After mining declined, the line was upgraded to carry passengers in the early 1900s. It thrived with the growth of tourism in Newquay from the 1930s to the 1950s, but unfortunately the line fell victim to Beeching's axe and closed in 1963. However, this wasn't the end for Lappa Valley, as it was bought in 1973 and reborn as a tourist attraction. East Wheal Rose Mine's engine house stands at the centre of the site and is a remarkable reminder of its history.

There's plenty of parking at Benny Holt where you pay your admission and board the steam train heading for East Wheal Rose. Wilf and Meg loved having a compartment all to ourselves and whilst it was perfect for them it was a bit of a squeeze for me! Wilf gazed longingly at the steam engine and I think he would have loved to drive it - but not shovelled the coal methinks! What's so nice about this journey that it only lasts a mile but it seems as if you're being transported to another world - one that isn't accessible any other way - which adds to the sense of adventure. The smell and the odd smut in my eye reminded me of my train journey to school and made me nostalgic for the good old days of steam!

When you reach East Wheal Rose there's so much to do - we canoed on the lake, played on all the great wooden play structures, took another two or three train rides to secret destinations and more...

After a picnic it was time for pedalling around the cart track, which the children loved. All too soon it was time to head for home - but we'll definitely be back again before long!

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Extra details

When to visit

Lappa Valley is great year-round attraction, however, there isn't much under cover so it's not recommended for a wet day.

Useful information

Useful information

Lappa Valley is open every day from 10am - Admission is £12 for adults, £9.50 for children aged 3-15 (under 3s go free) and £10 for over 60s.

You can also buy a family saver ticket – see the website for details.

The ticket price includes all activities except coin-operated cars. There's a café and ice cream shop, plenty of grassy areas for picnics and a good set of toilets with baby changing facilities.

Getting there

Lappa Valley is located between Newquay and St Newlyn East and is approximately 30 minutes' drive from Bosinver. It's a little tricky to find so I suggest downloading the map from their **website**. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR8 5LX.



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Godrevy

This spot on the north coast is one of our favourite haunts for a day out. It offers easy access with lovely grass to park and play on and with surf, golden sands and views to die for across to St Ives - who needs to go abroad?

Godrevy Lighthouse is one of Cornwall's iconic landmarks. It was built on a rocky island just off the coast in 1859 to warn ships of the dangerous "Stones" reef which extends across the bay towards St Ives and is quite visible at low tide. We love walking away from the sea and to the rear of the car park, following a mown track to a tiny little beach just before Hell's Mouth where a seal colony lives - there are always some seals here and in the winter we have counted over 100! We then follow the coast path back towards the lighthouse, across the cliff top, which is humming with bees and full of butterflies in the summer months. It's a lovely spot to sit awhile to watch the sea birds wheeling and speculate about the life of the lighthouse keeper and the little house on the island and its garden, long since abandoned to modern technology.

The rocky headland close to the lighthouse is our preferred spot as it's an easy walk down to the beach and has lots of rock pools, as well as sand suitable for sandcastle building and relatively tame surf for small bodyboarders. The sands are almost completely covered at high tide so the beach gets very crowded and you need to take care to make sure you're not cut off if you're exploring the bottom of the cliffs.

We love taking Muriel (my camper van) for the day out as we can pile all our beach gear inside and have a sand-free picnic. I can even make myself a cup of tea and get changed in private without wrestling with a changing towel on the beach! Our absolute favourite thing which we have to do every time we visit is to buy an ice cream from the van parked near the car park. Delicious...

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Extra details

Useful information

Godrevy is managed by the National Trust – you can download a walk map and find out more about the area on their **website**

Godrevy Café has excellent homemade food and views to die for!

There are two car parks at Godrevy: the first is next to the National Trust information point and the café. You can carry on past this to the second car park where we parked - the road meanders alongside the cliffs and dunes before emerging into several swathes of slightly sloping open grassland. Expect to see several camper vans on a sunny day!

Parking at Godrevy is free for National Trust members; there's a charge for non-members

There are good toilets near the car park – always helpful with little ones in tow

Getting there

It takes just under an hour to reach Godrevy by car from Bosinver.

Postcode for Sat Navs: TR27 5ED. To get there, take the A30 down to Hayle and then head for the town centre signed from the big roundabout with Marks and Spencer and Next adjoining it. At the next roundabout take the B3301 signposted Gwithian and Portreath.

Follow this road past several campsites and through Gwithian village, over a narrow bridge, then take the first right into a narrow lane signed National Trust Godrevy.



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A Family Bike Ride on the Bissoe Trail

If you enjoy cycling, there are several trails in Cornwall that are gentle enough for the whole family, but still offer plenty in the way of adventure. I've been exploring the cycle routes around Bissoe with my family. Grandson Wilf has just learned to ride a bike by himself, so he was also keen to take to the trail and show off his new skills.

We did part of the **Coast to Coast Trail**, which runs from Devoran (near Bissoe) on the South coast to the Portreath on the North coast. This is Cornwall's narrowest point – you can literally travel across Cornwall and back in less than a day.

The full Coast to Coast Trail is 11 miles long, but you don't have to do all of it – especially if you're five and you've only just learned to ride a bike by yourself! The trail follows tramway and railway routes once used to transport ore and supplies from the mines to the ports on the coasts. This also means it's generally level, and mainly off-road.

As you cycle along the route, you'll pass through the heart of Cornish tin mining country - there are old mine workings dotted across the landscape. There's also plenty of opportunity for wildlife spotting. In early spring, the landscape is transformed by the vivid yellow flowers of the gorse bushes. There are also several other routes you can access from Bissoe, spanning 60km in all. And the trails aren't just great for cycling – horse riders and walkers can also enjoy them too.

Extra details

Useful Information

There's a café at Bissoe which has a good range of family-friendly food, plus traditional Cornish cream teas and delicious Callestick ice cream. Parking is £3 for the day (or free with bike hire).

If you haven't brought your own bikes with you, **Bike Chain Bissoe Bike Hire** has a range of bikes available for children and adults, complete with all the necessary accessories. Hire costs start from £8 for a kid's bike for the day, and this includes a helmet, pump, lock, tool kit and back pack (advance booking recommended)

When the Visit

Spring and autumn are ideal times to go cycling, as it's less busy (and hot) than during the summer.

Getting there

It takes just over 30 minutes to get to the start of the Bissoe Trail from Bosinver by car. It's easy to find – just off the A39 towards Falmouth from Truro (turn right at the Devoran roundabout, then look out for the brown signs).
Postcode for Sat Navs: TR4 8QZ.





Heartlands

Described as Cornwall's 'first free cultural playground', **Heartlands** is fantastic day out for all the family. With over 19 acres to explore, there's lots to entertain amuse and inspire kids of all ages.

The Diaspora Gardens are a wonderful place to wander as you uncover the story of how Cornish people travelled the globe, taking plants native to Cornwall across the world, and bringing back exotic plants which flourished in our mild climate.

Wilf and Megan gave the adventure playground a big thumbs up. Aimed at children from 1-13 (sorry parents!), it's got subterranean tunnels, a 'shipwreck' to climb on and big funnel slides. The highlight has to be The Giant's Trap - a huge wooden climbing structure based on a local legend. We loved all the little imaginative touches like the designs on the rocks and the interactive exhibitions. Heartlands has been really well thought out - we'll definitely be going back in the future.

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Extra details

Useful Information

There's a range of events throughout the year, including free daily Engine House tours which offer a fascinating insight into Cornwall's mining heritage, plus a huge range of special events including music and theatre performances. Wilf and Megan were delighted to see a live performance from CBeebies favourite Mr Bloom when they visited! There are drop-in art and craft workshops in Heartland's Creative Studios every day.

When the Visit

There's lots to see and do both indoors and out, so it's ideal for a family day out at any time of year.

Getting there

Heartlands is just off the A30 at Pool. Admission is free, and there's plenty of car parking (parking charges apply). Postcode for Sat Naps: TR15 3QY.

You can also reach Heartlands by public transport – see their website for more information.



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Glendurgan

Set above the hamlet of Durgan on the Helford River, **Glendurgan Garden** is a true delight for adults and children alike. Wilf and Megan love it here – it's definitely captured their imagination. While there's lots to keep active kids amused, it's also a lovely place to relax and soak up the atmosphere.

The beauty of Glendurgan is the way it reveals itself slowly. Made up of three valleys which slope down to the river, there are lots of secret spots, unexpected views and hidden treasures to discover...

Until 1962, when they gave it to the National Trust, the garden was owned by the Fox family, a renowned Falmouth family. Six generations of the Fox family developed the garden, which, owing to its sheltered position, has a range of sub-tropical plants, plus ferns, palms and bamboo that provide colour all year round.

Glendurgan was created as a family garden, and it shows! It's one of the most child friendly gardens in Cornwall, with so much for the kids to see and do. Wilf and Megan were captivated by the giant Gunnera plants, which look a bit like huge rhubarb leaves - 'the biggest leaf ever!' If you're fond of hide and seek, this has to be one of the best places to play. Kids (of all ages) will probably also like to try out the Giant's Stride, a huge pole with ropes you can swing from!

At the heart of Glendurgan is the famous maze. It's made from cherry laurel, and is an astonishing 176 years old. It's surprisingly challenging, not to mention enticing... Once you reach the summer house in the centre, you can relax and watch everyone else trying to find their way towards you.

Keep wandering downwards and you will eventually reach Durgan, a pretty, tiny fishing village on the banks of the Helford River. It's a lovely place for paddling or skimming stones, or perhaps a stroll along the coast path which runs through it.

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Extra details

Useful Information

Don't miss the café, which has a range of delicious homemade food on offer – not to mention ice creams!



When the Visit

Glendurgan's great for a family day out at any time of year, but it's magnificent in the spring when it's in full bloom with camellias, snowdrops, primroses and daffodils followed by magnolias, rhododendrons, bluebells and azaleas and more...

Getting there

Glendurgan is located just outside Mawnan Smith, nr Falmouth, approximately 45 minutes' drive from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR11 5JZ. There's plenty of easy access parking available.



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Roskillys

A visit to **Roskillly's farm** on the Lizard makes a wonderful, relaxing day out for the whole family. Roskillly's ice cream has won countless awards and is simply divine. After sampling some of the flavours on offer, you can burn off some calories by exploring the farm.

We enjoyed the walks around the ponds and through the orchards and woodland. Nature loving kids will be in heaven here, as there's plenty of wildlife to spot. Megan and Wilf were delighted when the friendly ducks came to say hello.

One of the highlights of our visit was milking time. Head to the viewing gallery between 4.30-5.30pm and you can see the Jersey cows being milked, their milk and cream is used to produce the fabulous fudge and ice cream. When you've worked up an appetite, wander over to the Croust House for delicious homemade food. There's plenty of seating indoors (sitting beside the roaring fire's great in the winter) and outside in the old farmyard.

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Extra details

Useful Information

Free parking and admission.

The farm is suitable for buggies and wheelchairs.

Dogs on a lead are more than welcome on the farm.

During the summer holidays they also put on special live music evenings.

When the Visit

Ice cream and sunshine, need we say more?

Getting there

Roskilly's farm is in Tregellast Barton, St Keverne, nr Helson. It takes just over an hour by car from Bosinver. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR12 6NX.



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Winter Adventures in Falmouth

We love spending as much time outdoors as possible all year round. Falmouth has a lot to offer families within a small area. **Gyllingvase Beach** is a short walk from the centre of Falmouth. It's an easily accessible sandy beach with rock pools and is one of the area's most popular beaches throughout the year. It can get very busy during the height of the summer, but during the winter you'll have heaps of space to yourselves.

The family-friendly **Gylly Beach Café** attracts locals and tourists alike and has a good range of food on offer, plus homemade cakes and snacks. Their kids' colouring sheets and pots of crayons are a nice touch and will keep children amused for ages while you relax and take in the view. Gylly Beach Café is also one of the most eco-friendly cafés around – they're committed to reducing their impact on the environment as well as making a real effort to source their produce locally.

It's a super place to warm up (or stay warm) in the winter. Bag a window seat and enjoy the view. Although the waves are nowhere near as wild as on the north coast, they can still be pretty impressive when it's stormy. Alternatively, when it's calm, you can watch the paddleboard school taking people out to learn this unusual watersport (imagine surfing crossed with kayaking) – or have a go yourself!

We never know what we might see at the beach – and that's the beauty of it! Wilf was excited to see the Coastguard practising sea rescues on one of our trips to Gylly. We watched as a man was winched down from the helicopter into the sea – who needs TV?

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Extra details

Useful Information

There are public toilets at Gyllyngvase Beach, and Gylly Beach Café also has good facilities.

You can walk along the coastal path (10 mins) to Swanpool Beach and Nature Reserve, where you can hire kayaks or play crazy golf.

There are several attractions nearby, including **Pendennis Castle** and the **National Maritime Museum Cornwall**.

When the Visit

Falmouth is a fantastic family-friendly destination all year round.

Getting there

Gyllyngvase Beach in Falmouth is approximately 45 minutes' drive from Bosinver. There's plenty of on-street parking nearby (although it does get busy in the summer) and a public car park just a stroll away. Postcode for Sat Navs: TR11 4PA.

Alternatively you can travel by train to Falmouth (via Truro). The nearest station is Falmouth Town, approximately 8 minutes' walk from Gyllyngvase Beach.



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Wonders of the Rock Pools

Even in the winter, there's plenty to see and do on Cornwall's beaches. Intrepid adventurers Wilf and Megan set off on a journey of exploration with their Dad to seek out some of the treasures the rock pools at Mawnan beach (near Helford) have to offer.

They were amazed at how many different types of creatures they found in just a short amount of time: a daalia anemone, a sea urchin eating a tiny brittle star, a colony of sea squirts, star ascidians, pipe fish, giant and rock goby, freshwater eel, velvet swimmer crab, hermit crab, porcelain crab, Montagu's crab, cushion star, star annelids and scale worms. What better introduction to seashore life than to see (and sometimes touch) it in its natural habitat?

Top tips for winter rock pooling

1. Wellies and warm clothing are a must.
2. Don't forget something warm to drink – a flask of tea or coffee for the grownups and hot chocolate or hot squash for the little ones will go down a treat.
3. You can buy reusable hand warmers (gel pouches that you can put in your pocket to warm cold fingers) cheaply from most outdoor shops.
4. Check the tides before you go – on some beaches the rock pools disappear at high tide.
5. Take a seashore identification book with you so you can look up the creatures and plants you find. The classic I Spy books are great for keeping older children busy ticking off what they've spotted.
6. Take only pictures – don't forget to carefully return any creatures you've caught back to where you found them.

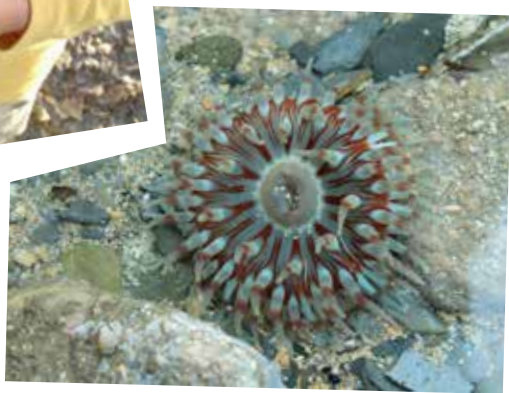
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Extra details

Useful Information

Many of Cornwall's beaches have rock pools and so there's lots of scope for exploring wherever you fancy going. You can borrow nets, buckets and spades and other beach equipment from Bosinver, so you don't have to bring it all down with you.



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Rogue Theatre's Wild Woodland Summer Ball

The Wild Woodland Summer Ball is a magical family adventure in Tehidy woods. Created by Cornwall's renowned **Rogue Theatre** it aims to delight and amaze kids of all ages.

I took Megan and Wilf to Rogue Theatre's Winter Wood production last Christmas. We were all utterly spellbound, so I couldn't resist the opportunity to return with the whole family. When you arrive at Tehidy, the experience begins with an immersive journey through the woods. It's rather like walking into the pages of a storybook. Tehidy is ideal for this kind of storytelling as there are countless winding tracks with dense trees which you can't see through, making it immediately scary and mysterious. The way was guided by a string of lights and en-route we encountered each of the main characters with clues surrounding them from the stories they would recount later (clocks, a hidden wolf, a pirate on sailing ship...). The narrator was last, guarding the door to the World of Fae where we were about to be taken on a spectacular journey of storytelling, acting and imagination.

It was superb at every level: creative, imaginative, musical, athletic and full of wonder. The whole family, from grandparents to two year olds, had eyes like saucers and were totally absorbed in the spectacle. There was even hot chocolate and a cauldron of home-made vegetable soup. At the interval there was face painting and willow weaving to entertain the little ones and we all ended up dancing together on the stage at the end. I recommended the Wild Woodland Summer Ball to several families staying at Bosinver, and they too came back utterly enchanted and determined to seek out similar outdoor performances near their homes.

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Extra details

Useful Information

Afternoon and evening performances usually in August/early September. Rogue Theatre also produce other shows at different times throughout the year – check their website for more details.

Tickets cost £7.50 per person (3 years and under free) and include parking, face painting and woodland crafts.

There are toilets near the performance area.

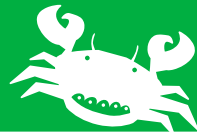
Getting there

The Wild Woodland Summer Ball takes place in Tehidy Woods, near Portreath and just off the A30. You can find full directions on the **Rogue Theatre** website.



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The Helford River

The Helford River area is one of the jewels in Cornwall's crown. I discovered this part of Cornwall while walking the coast path, and enjoyed it so much I decided to return to explore further – this time with the whole family.

The Helford River is a renowned sailing area; it's a narrow estuary in a drowned river valley like many of south Cornwall's fishing ports. Wooded valleys reach down to the water's edge, many with ancient oak forests which have been untouched for thousands of years. Wading birds abound, searching at low tide for mud-living creatures, making their special music so evocative of holidays in Cornwall. There are eel beds and oyster beds here, as well as an area of Cornish marl.

The area is also home to Frenchman's Creek, the setting for Daphne du Maurier's book of the same name. Today, this is a tranquil spot, but Helford Village was once an important port, with trading ships bringing in goods from the continent such as rum, lace and tobacco. In the early 19th century, it was pirates and smugglers rather than tourists who were frequent visitors here.

The National Trust gardens at Glendurgan reach all the way down to the river's edge, as do the gardens at **Trebah**. Both are outstanding and have plenty to offer all year round.

North Helford

The Ferryboat Inn in the village of Helford Passage is a wonderful place for to stop for lunch. Dating back 300 years, its waterfront position and south facing terrace make it ideal for watching the world go by. Run by famous London seafood merchants the Wright Brothers, the seafood here is simply divine. Most of the oysters and shellfish they serve are grown and harvested at the Duchy of Cornwall Oyster Farm (a short boat ride up-river from the pub), and their fish, crab and lobsters come from local fishermen.

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South Helford

If you just want to potter, take a leisurely walk around Helford Village and soak up the atmosphere before heading to the Shipwrights Arms for lunch.

You can follow the coast path back from the car park for a 20 minute walk taking in lovely river view and a couple of small secluded beaches. Nanny Pat's top tip: You can park above Helford village next to the sailing club. If you're feeling fit there's a delightful walk of about five miles which takes you back to Manaccan, along Gillan Creek to St Anthony. We hired a boat here at **Sailaway** (you'll need to book in advance) sailed around the headland and up the Helford River for a lovely day out with fishing included!

The Helford Ferry

You can easily get across from one side of the river to the other on the **Helford Ferry**, which has been running continuously since the Middle Ages. In the past, it was an important link between communities and was used to transport produce across the river to be taken to market in Falmouth. Today, it operates as a passenger ferry, but you can take bikes, pushchairs and dogs across with you. The ferry operates from Good Friday (or 1st April) to the end of October, and runs on demand during the day.

Walking in the Helford area

With pretty creeks, secluded coves and picture perfect views around every corner, this is an excellent area to explore on foot. There are **several gentle short walks** that are perfect for families and can easily be combined with a boat trip or a visit to one of the lush sub-tropical gardens nearby.

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Extra details

Getting there

You can reach both sides of the Helford River by car. To reach the northern side (Helford Passage), head for Falmouth and take the Mawnan Smith road, heading for Durgan (approx. 50 mins' drive from Bosinver).

To reach the southern side (Helford Village), you need to head for Helston and then Gweek, following the road towards Coverack out on the Lizard Peninsula. Helford Village is signposted after Manaccan (just over an hour's drive from Bosinver).



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Exploring Falmouth with Kids

I often visit Falmouth with my grandchildren. It's well-known for its interesting shops, cafés and restaurants, and the glorious sandy beaches just outside the town are always popular. But this maritime town also has a variety of hidden delights. With a range of indoor and outdoor activities on offer, there's always something to do, making it a great choice for those 'in between' days.

Kimberley Park

Kimberley Park is one of Wilf and Megan's favourite places to play. It's free to visit all year round, and dogs on a lead are welcome. While it's loved by locals, it's rarely discovered by visitors, even though it's only a hop, skip and a jump away from the town centre.

The gardens at Kimberley Park date back to the 19th century and are named after the Earl of Kimberley, who leased the parks to the Borough of Falmouth. If you're visiting Falmouth with preschoolers, it's a great place to stop for a run around or a picnic when the weather's nice. With seven acres, there's plenty of space for everyone to play.

A new £200,000 play-space was opened in December 2012. It's made mostly from wood and is certainly a playground with a difference – it's been imaginatively designed with plenty of structures for climbing, balancing, swinging, sliding and jumping.

Getting there: The gardens are around 5-10 minutes' walk from the town centre, although you can usually find free on-street parking nearby outside the main holiday season.

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Falmouth Art Gallery

Falmouth is renowned for its automata makers, and there's an interesting collection housed in the **Falmouth Art Gallery**. Automata are non-electronic moving machines, often designed to look like humans or animals. By winding the lever, you can make them move. Megan is fascinated by them, and often asks if she can go back and see at them.

The gallery also runs **free workshops**, including some aimed at family groups and toddlers. There are drop-in family workshops on Saturdays from 2-3 pm. Each week there's a different activity on offer, and you can download their programme of events in advance.

The gallery is open Mon - Sat, 10am-5pm, and admission is free. Getting there: Falmouth Art Gallery is located in the centre of Falmouth in the Municipal Buildings above the Library. There are two public car parks nearby.

The National Maritime Museum Cornwall

While the **National Maritime Museum Cornwall** is no secret, what you might not be aware of is how much they offer for families - it's full of things for kids to see, touch, and try out. Their current main exhibition, 'Search and Rescue', is an interactive exploration of the role of the maritime rescue services. Wilf loved the chance to climb inside the 70ft Sea King helicopter and dress up as a pilot!

Apart from the exhibitions, they have a range of children's activities (see the website for more details) including Museum Minnows, an hour of creative play, stories and craft activities for under-fives, and Minnows' Tales, a half-hour session of stories, songs and rhymes every Monday morning during term-time. There's no need to book, and the sessions are included in the admission price.

The view from the top of the Maritime Museum across Falmouth Harbour is fantastic, and if you go right down to the bottom of the museum you can see the fish swimming past!

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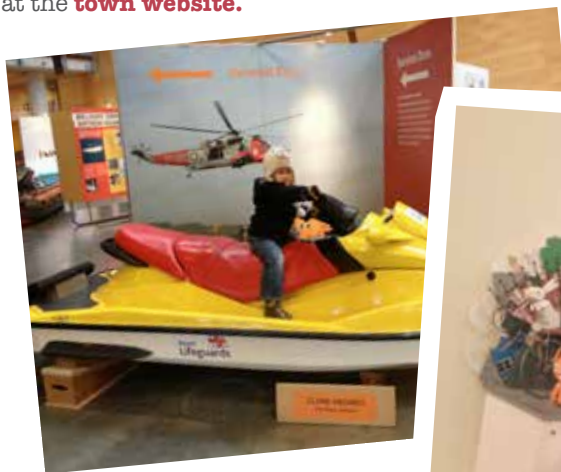
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Useful Information

Admission: Adults £11.00, Children (0-5) Free, Children (6-15) £8.00, Seniors £9.50, Family £32.00. Your ticket is valid for a year, so you can visit as many times as you like while you're down in Cornwall on holiday.

Getting there

There's a car park right outside the Maritime Museum (postcode for Sat Navs: TR11 3QY), and it's few minutes' walk from the Falmouth Town train station. For more information on things to do in and around Falmouth, maps and travel information, take a look at the **town website**.



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Padstow Lobster Hatchery

Following our overnight stay at **Crealy** we drove down to Wadebridge to **Bridge Bike Hire** where we had pre-booked bikes to cycle along the Camel Trail to Padstow. Wilf is fine on a two-wheeler but Megan is not so keen to let go of her stabilisers so I hired a tagalong bike and she promised to help me pedal!

The trail follows an old railway line so is flat and easy for 5 ½ miles alongside the tidal River Camel. The area is an AONB protected site for wetland and wading birds – there are always hundreds of them here. It was lovely to cycle along with so few people. In the summer it can be chaotic with dog walkers, pushchairs and toddlers on bikes who can be unpredictable with their lefts and rights!

The Camel Trail is one of Cornwall's most popular tourist attractions and is much quieter during the winter. There are cycle stands to lock your bikes onto at the end of the trail, so we left our bikes here and walked through the car park towards the town centre. We decided to visit the **National Lobster Hatchery** - a marine conservation, research and education charity which helps conserve the vulnerable lobster population and preserve coastal marine biodiversity.

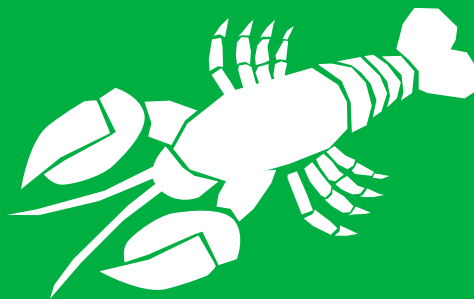
The hatchery is relatively new and has some really interesting displays with fully grown lobsters as well as the mums laden with eggs and the tiny baby lobsters still in their nursery tanks. We spent a good hour in here and felt heartened that the work they are doing will ensure the survival of the lobster in Cornish coastal waters. There are some great interactive displays at the National Lobster Hatchery.

We then headed over the road as the scent of Rick Stein's fish and chips was beckoning us in. A short wait for ours and then we sat on some mooring stones to gobble them up. Delicious...

Padstow is always lively and there was a brass band playing on the quay. There are some lovely shops and galleries here and if you have more time there's a great trip across the estuary to Rock on the passenger ferry. It's also fun to follow the coast path out to Stepper Point where you get a fine view of the infamous Doom Bar, where many a ship has come to grief.

We had a quick look round and found ourselves a good spot for a bit of crabbing - I had brought crab lines and smelly bacon in my rucksack. We managed to catch just one in the time we had, but it was better than nothing!

The bike shop closed at 5pm so it was back to Wadebridge with slightly less enthusiasm from Megs than on the way there and me doing most of the pedalling. I can't wait for her to learn to ride her own bike!



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Extra details

Useful Information

The National Lobster Hatchery is open from 10am every day (except Christmas Day), and well-behaved dogs on leads are welcome. Admission is £3.75 for adults, £2.50 for seniors, £1.50 for children (free for under 5s), or you can buy a family ticket for £8.

If you're interested in supporting the work the National Lobster Hatchery does, you can adopt a baby lobster for just £2.50. Not only do you get to name your lobster, they'll also send you personalized certificate. All the lobsters reared in the hatchery are released around the coast of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly when they're about three months old, and you can check where and when your lobster was released online.



Getting there

From Bosinver, it's approximately 40 minutes' drive to Wadebridge. One of the best places to park is the long stay public car park in Piggy Lane. Postcode for Sat Navs: PL27 7AP. Alternatively you could drive straight to Padstow and park in the Harbour Car Park, PL28 8AQ.



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