



Southwest England

Southwest England offers up, on one verdant, sea-fringed platter, the pick of Britain's cities, coast and countryside. Stretching west from Hampshire to the soaring cliffs and golden sands of Cornwall, the region takes in Dorset's chocolate box–pretty villages, Wiltshire's prehistoric sites, Bath's exquisite Georgian cityscape, Bristol's buzzing nightlife, hippie-chic Somerset and Devon's beguiling blend of moors and shores. Here you can surf surging waves off Cornwall and Devon or find your very own fossil on Dorset's Jurassic Coast; party hard at the resorts of Bournemouth, Torquay and Newquay, or revel in family-holiday nostalgia on the Isle of Wight. Skim around Weymouth's Olympic sailing venues or slip off your shoes, jump on a ferry and island-hop around the chilled-out Isles of Scilly.

Inland lie three tempting national parks: the rugged wildernesses of Dartmoor and Exmoor and the gentler woods of the New Forest. Stonehenge, Avebury, Tintagel and Glastonbury wade in with blockbuster ancient sites, Stourhead and Longleat bring stately-home grandeur, Bath bags the Roman relics, while Portsmouth, Plymouth and Falmouth drip with a nautical past. For years snooty urbanities have ridiculed England's southwest as a sleepy backwater, full of straw-chewing yokels, out of step with modern life. The thatched cottages, cream teas and fudge shops can (thankfully) still be found. But the region also has some of the country's best restaurants at Newquay, Padstow, Bristol and Dartmouth; cutting-edge art and culture scenes at St Ives and Bristol; inspiring eco-initiatives at the Eden Project and Totnes; and enough ultramodern boutique hotels to keep you pretty and pampered for years. Rejuvenated, reinvented and really rather fabulous, England's southwest is gently, politely, having the last laugh.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Being swept away by kitesurfing (p377) and gourmet grub (p377), near **Newquay**
- Finding your very own fossil on Dorset's **Jurassic Coast** (p303)
- Hiking exhilarating wilderness trails on **Dartmoor National Park** (p365)
- Steaming through the giant tropical greenhouses of the **Eden Project** (p381)
- Soaking in a thermally heated, roof-top pool in gorgeously Georgian **Bath** (p334)
- Tracking down Banksy's guerrilla graffiti on the hip streets of **Bristol** (p326)
- Becoming a barefoot beachcomber on Cornwall's bewitching **Isles of Scilly** (p393)
- Clambering aboard Nelson's warship in salty seadog **Portsmouth** (p286)
- Connecting with your inner love-child in crystal-crammed **Glastonbury** (p342)
- Circling stone circles at **Avebury** (p318) and **Stonehenge** (p315)



■ POPULATION:
4.06 MILLION

■ AREA: 8973 SQ
MILES

■ NUMBER OF ICE-CREAMS SOLD ON A SUNNY DAY IN
BOURNEMOUTH: 90,000

