



Exeter & East Devon

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

Heritage city, rural idyll, spectacular shores – Devon's eastern corner delivers them all. On the Jurassic Coast, wave-carved cliffs range from russet-red to creamy-white. In between sit long pebble beaches, genteel resorts and quaint fishing villages; perfect for hiking, kitesurfing, fishing or strolling along the prom. In history-rich Exeter discover Roman walls, a fine cathedral and lively arts scene. The snaking River Exe estuary is ripe for exploration by boat, bike or on foot. Behind, rolling red-soil hills shelter tucked-away villages and stately homes. Fine food and drink abounds, from vineyards and celebrity-chef-run eateries to the beach barbecue of mackerel you've just caught yourself. Sleep in Mongolian yurts, luxury safari tents or chic city retreats. It's also a place to really experience other ways of life as they're lived, whether at a livestock market, village beach party or rural pub.

When to Go

- **Jul–Aug** In theory, warmer, dryer weather. School holidays swell visitor numbers, accommodation costs rise, roads and resorts become congested. Beer holds its fiesta-like village regatta.
- **Jun & Sep** Prime visiting time: fewer crowds and less traffic, but all attractions are open. September brings the warmest seas, and the weather is often quite good, too.
- **Apr–May** The holiday season gets underway from Easter; sights, campsites and boat trips swing into action. In late April foodies flock to Exeter's South West Food and Drink Festival.
- **Oct–Nov** Many attractions close, but accommodation prices plummet. A great time for coastal storm-watching, too.

EXETER

POP 119,600

Exeter is steeped in evidence of its centuries-old role as the spiritual and administrative heart of Devon. Relics include its ancient cathedral and chunks of winding Roman wall. But the city also has a youthful vibe, visible in bursts of ultramodern construction and a thriving arts scene. Down by the River Exe, the atmospheric quayside is a launch pad for explorations by bike or kayak. Add a movie museum, the chance to go on subterranean tours and stylish places to stay and eat, and you have a relaxed but lively touring base.

History

Exeter's past can be read clearly in its buildings. In around AD 55, invading Romans built a fortress ringed by a 2-mile defensive

wall. Saxon and Norman times saw growth: a castle went up in 1068, the cathedral 40 years later. The Tudor woollen boom brought Exeter riches and half timbered houses; all those sheep in surrounding fields meant wool was brought to the city, dyed, and the cloth exported via Exeter Quay to Europe.

By the late Georgian era, Exeter was a genteel urban centre, its merchants busy building elegant town houses, many of which now house hotels and B&Bs. The Blitz of WWII brought devastation. In just one night in 1942, 156 people died and 12 hectares of the city were flattened. The postwar years saw an ambitious rebuild in red brick and cream stone; see its clean lines above the main street shopfronts. Fast forward to the 21st century and the attention-grabbing £220-million Princesshay Shopping Centre.



Exeter & East Devon Highlights

- 1 Walking along the rooftop of the glorious Gothic **Exeter Cathedral** (p48)
- 2 Hiking the extraordinary, millennia-old **Jurassic Coast** (p62) around Branscombe
- 3 Catching your own supper, then cooking it on the beach at **Beer** (p61)
- 4 Exploring the marsh-fringed Exe estuary, then enjoying a superb meal in pretty **Topsham** (p55)
- 5 Sipping fine vintages, then tucking into fine food at picturesque **Yearlstone Vineyard** (p52), near Bickleigh
- 6 Getting a real natural high **kitesurfing** (p58) off Exmouth
- 7 Glimpsing life below stairs at stately **Powderham Castle** (p52)
- 8 Experiencing the bustle – and the bidding – at the twice-weekly **Exeter Livestock Market** (p49)
- 9 Joining an impromptu jam session during **Folk Week** (p60) at Sidmouth