



3 PERFECT DAYS

🍷 DAY 1 // A GOURMET MYSTERY TOUR

From bewitching Dartmouth, where fishing boats are landing your lunch, catch a ferry to Greenway (p152), Agatha Christie's captivating riverside home. Explorations over, cruise back to Dartmouth for a fish lunch at Seahorse (p158), or the Michelin-starred New Angel (p158) alongside. Next, meander to Sharpham Vineyard (p150) for tours, tutored tastings and snacks on a vine-view terrace. Sneak in a Totnes architectural trail (p149), then dine at Riverford Field Kitchen (p151); a pioneering eco-restaurant.

🍷 DAY 2 // DARTMOOR: WILDERNESS ESCAPE & LOCAL LIFE

Hunt out shabby-chic gems in Tavistock's antiques-packed market (p170), then motor through honey-tinged moors to Princetown, for an atmospheric Hound of the Baskervilles hike (p172). Next, trace narrow lanes to appealing Widecombe-in-the-Moor for lunch in a rustic pub (p173). Then journey past wild ponies and wilderness to Jazz Age Castle Drogo (p175). For dinner, top tips are ubergourmet Gidleigh Park (p176) and 22 Mill Street (p176). Or pick up a pasty and join an unforgettable Megaliths by Moonlight guided walk (p172).

🍷 DAY 3 // LANDSCAPES, GARDENS & ART

Drink in the beauty of the Royal Horticultural Society's inspirational gardens at Rosemoor (p181). Next, head to Broomhill (p180) for cutting-edge sculpture and an exquisite slow-food lunch. Take in the breathtaking expansive of 3-mile Saunton Sands, then motor round the headland to Croyde (p179) for surfing, or Morteheo for an exhilarating hike. Finish with supper at Damien Hirst's Ilfracombe restaurant (p183), surrounded by parts of his *Pharmacy* installation and fish in formaldehyde.

EXETER

pop 111,078

Well-heeled and comfortable, Exeter is steeped in evidence of its centuries-old role as the spiritual and administrative heart of Devon. Relics include its exquisite, ancient cathedral and winding chunks of 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 unique movie museum, the chance to go on subterranean tours and some super-stylish places to stay and eat, and you have a relaxed but lively touring base.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

TOURIST INFORMATION // Exeter

Central Tourist Office (☎ 01392-665700; www.exeterandessentialdevon.com; Paris St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Jul & Aug) **Quay House Visitor Centre** (☎ 01392-271611; The Quay; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-Oct, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun only Nov-Easter)

EXPLORING EXETER

🏰 EXETER CATHEDRAL // TAKE TIME OUT AMID EXQUISITE ARCHITECTURE

The site of Exeter's magnificent **cathedral** (☎ 01392-255573; www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk; The Close; adult/child £5/free; ☎ 9.30am-4.45pm Mon-Sat) has been a religious one since at least the 5th century. The Normans started the current building in 1114 and the towers visible today date from that period. In 1270 Bishop Bronescombe remodelled the whole building, a 90-year process that introduced Early English and Decorated Gothic styles.

You enter via the gorgeous **Great West Front**. Above the door, scores of weather-worn figures line an image screen that was originally brightly painted. Now it forms the largest collection of 14th-century sculpture in England. Inside, the ceiling is mesmerising. The longest unbroken **Gothic vaulting** in the world, it sweeps up to meet ornate, vividly-coloured ceiling bosses.

In the north transept, the 15th-century **Exeter Clock**, in keeping with medieval astronomy, shows the earth as a golden ball at the centre of the universe, with the sun, a fleur-de-lys, travelling round. Still ticking and whirring, it chimes on the hour. Further down, the tiny **St James Chapel** was built to replace one destroyed in the Blitz in 1942. Its unusual carvings include a cat, a mouse and, oddly, a rugby player.

In the atmospheric **Refectory** (☎ 01392-285988; ☎ 10am-4.45pm Mon-Sat) vaulted ceilings sit over trestle tables and stained-glass windows – a place to tuck into excellent cakes and quiches surrounded by carved stone busts of the great, the good and the dead.

Informative 45-minute, free **guided cathedral tours** run at 11am and 2.30pm Monday to Friday, 11am on Saturday. Intensely atmospheric evensong services are at 5.30pm Monday to Friday and 3pm on Saturday and Sunday.

🏰 TOUR HISTORIC EXETER // DO SOME DIY HERITAGE DETECTIVE WORK

Exeter's past is evident in its architecture. The Romans marched in around AD 55 and put up a 17-hectare fortress, complete with a 2-mile russet-red **city wall**. A surprising 70% is still standing and springs up beside shops, car parks and parks, often

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