



Bath & Southwest England

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Restaurant Nathan Outlaw (p333)
- ➔ Riverford Field Kitchen (p285)
- ➔ Circus (p318)
- ➔ The Pig (p233)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Vintage Vacations (p237)
- ➔ Scarlet (p334)
- ➔ Lulworth Cove (p246)
- ➔ Tide House (p339)

Why Go?

England's southwest is simply spectacular. Here the past is ever present – prepare for close encounters with iconic stone circles, Iron Age hill forts and Roman baths. Block-buster stately homes border romantic castles; serene cathedrals frame sumptuous Georgian cityscapes. The landscape immerses you in the myths of Kings Arthur and Alfred the Great, and the writings of Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen and Daphne du Maurier.

But the southwest also has an eye to the future. Here you can tour alternative eco-towns, pioneering restaurants and cool surfer hang-outs, and sleep in campsites peppered with chic yurts and retro campervans. Then there are three wildlife-rich national parks, fossil-studded shores, England's best surf spots and a coastline flecked with exquisite bays, towering rock formations and tranquil sweeps of sandy beach. It all gives you a bit of a dilemma – with the West-country you won't know what to do first.

When to Go

- ➔ Cliffs, hillsides and formal gardens burst into fragrance and blooms in April and May, when seasonal attractions also reopen and boat trips start.
- ➔ Music festival fever takes hold in June at ultra-cool Glastonbury (p323), on the funky Isle of Wight (p237).
- ➔ The peak holiday season and the best weather (in theory) is in July and August.
- ➔ The end of school summer holidays in September brings cheaper sleep spots, quieter beaches and warmer seas. The Isle of Wight goes all groovy at bohemian Bestival (p237).
- ➔ Bigger waves draw surfers to Cornwall and north Devon in October; meanwhile Exmoor's deer rut sees huge stags battle for supremacy and the winter storm watching season begins.



Bath & Southwest England Highlights

1 Securing a space on a magical dawn walk inside the massive sarsen ring at **Stonehenge** (p261)

2 Soaking up beach life on the white sands of Porthcurno

or at a quaint surf spot, such as **Croyde** (p298)

3 Strolling England's most glorious Georgian street, Bath's **Royal Crescent** (p313)

4 Striding the high hills of **Exmoor** (p268), Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor

5 Staring at Henry VIII's warship the Mary Rose, in **Portsmouth** (p228)