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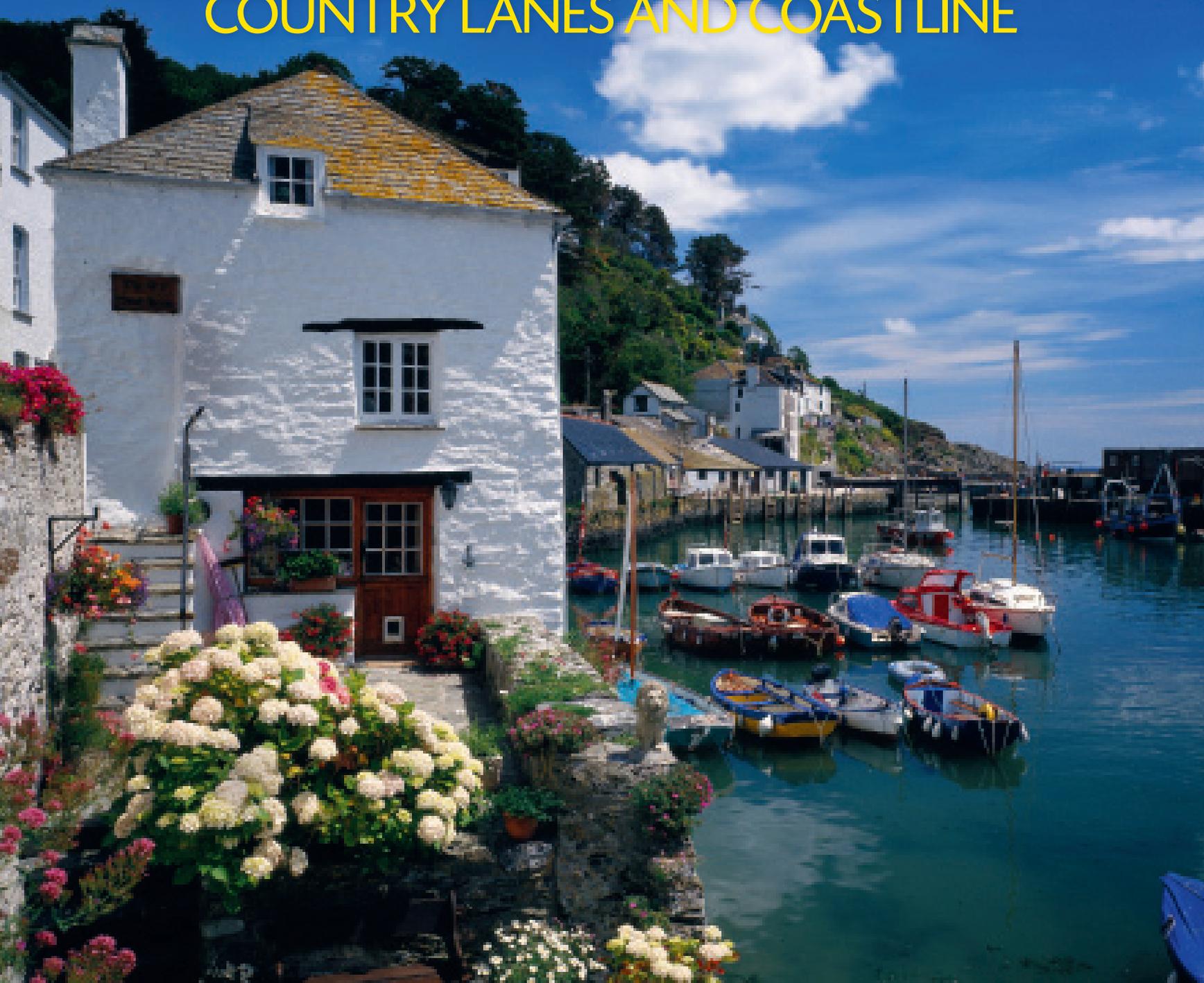
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# BRITAIN

TRAVEL CULTURE **HERITAGE** STYLE

DIGITAL GUIDE

*Explore*  
**CORNWALL'S**  
COUNTRY LANES AND COASTLINE



The tiny, picturesque fishing port of Mousehole, near Penzance on Cornwall's south coast

# Coastlines & country lanes

Even in a region as well explored as Cornwall, with its lovely coves, harbours and hills, there are still plenty of places that attract just a trickle of people. We're heading off the beaten track in one of the prettiest pockets of Britain



Far left: The village of Zennor. Centre: Fishing boats drawn up on the beach at Penberth. Above: Sea campion, a common sight on the cliffs. Left: Prehistoric stone circle known as the Hurlers

Cornwall in high summer – it’s hard to imagine a lovelier place: a gleaming aquamarine sea rolling onto dazzlingly white sandy beaches, backed by rugged cliffs that give way to deep green farmland, all interspersed with impossibly quaint fishing villages, their rabbit warrens of crooked narrow lanes lined with equally crooked and tiny cottages.

The wild Atlantic coast draws visitors for its stunning beaches and great surfing. Newquay and Padstow are the main towns here that pull in the crowds, and Newquay’s status as Britain’s principal surfing mecca ensures that the beaches for some distance on either side of the town remain quite busy throughout the summer. Things are a little different in the Padstow area, however. While the beaches and surf are good here too, you really do not have to venture that far to find some very beautiful and quite peaceful areas to explore.

West of Padstow lie two of the most rugged stretches of cliff on the entire Cornish coast: Trevoze Head and Bedruthan Steps. The latter consists of a string of crumbling surf-lashed offshore rocks and islets, backed by

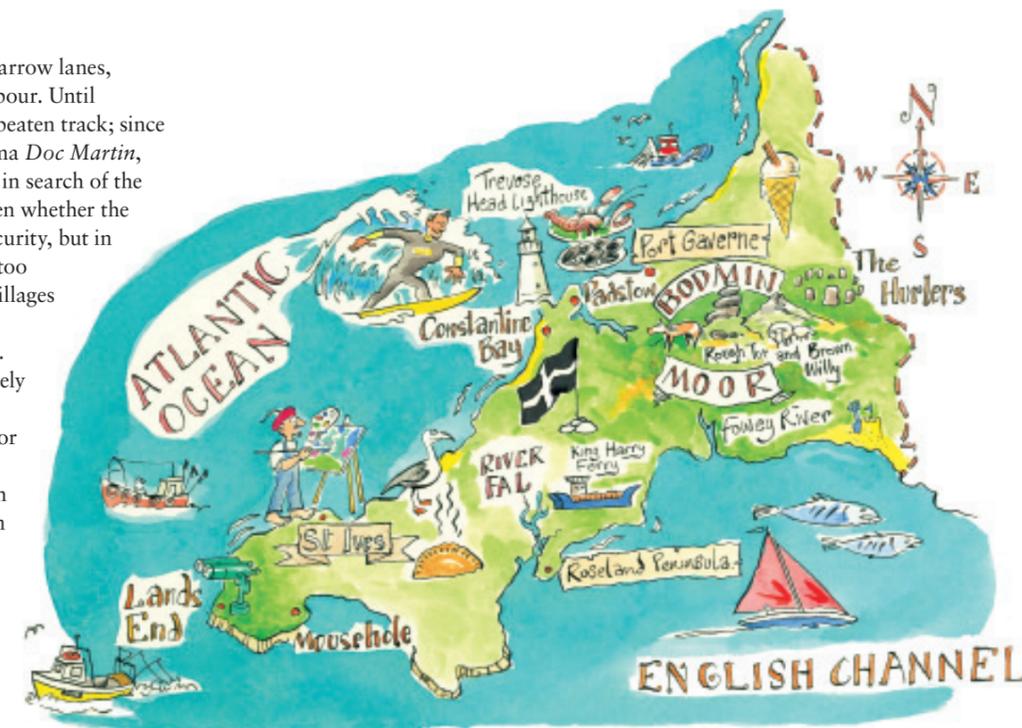
sheer cliffs that together make up one of Cornwall’s most photographed and iconic views. A steep path leads down from the cliff to the beach that stretches out around some of the islets, making for a lovely walk at low tide.

Trevoze Head is one of the north coast’s main promontories, a rugged, windswept headland, tipped by a lighthouse and with superb views out to sea and along the coast westwards: a great place to watch a sunset. Nearby is Constantine Bay, a truly magnificent curving sweep of golden sand. Though it does get busy, crowds are greatly reduced by the deliberately very limited car parking in the area. It’s best to park in Constantine village, and then accept the mile or so walk from there to the beach.

East of Padstow, the crowds head for Polzeath and yet another surfing beach. However, continuing just a few miles further brings you to the twin headlands of Pentire and Rumps Point – like Trevoze Head, a major promontory surrounded by steep cliffs. Though rugged, Pentire and Rumps are much less desolate, home to extensive grasslands and wild flowers, and with plenty of hiking options. The nearby fishing harbour of Port Isaac is always

a lovely place to explore, with its steep narrow lanes, white-washed cottages and working harbour. Until recently, it definitely qualified as off the beaten track; since becoming the setting for British TV drama *Doc Martin*, however, it has attracted crowds aplenty in search of the Doc’s cliffside house. It remains to be seen whether the village will eventually slip back into obscurity, but in the meantime if Port Isaac seems a little too popular, there are always the tiny cove villages of Port Quinn and Port Gaverne a short distance on either side that are still quiet.

Travelling inland brings you to the lonely hills of Bodmin Moor. With the great majority of Cornwall’s visitors heading for the coasts, and those wanting rugged inland moors opting mainly for the much larger Dartmoor just across the border in Devon, Bodmin Moor remains only lightly explored. The northern hills, particularly Rough Tor and Brown Willy, arguably make up the moor’s most rugged area, topped by some amazing granite outcrops, and offering the region’s best inland hiking. It is here that you’ll find herds of very beautiful



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Trevoze Head is a rugged, windswept headland, tipped by a lighthouse and with superb views out to sea and along the coast



semi-wild ponies, rather shy and much more nervous of the few people they see than their cousins on Dartmoor.

For something a little less energetic, head to the moor's southern slopes, initially to the village of Minions and a series of prehistoric stone circles, the Hurlers – a group of men who, so the story goes, were turned to stone for daring to play the Cornish ball game of hurling on a Sunday. Continuing further down off the moor brings you to Golitha Falls, a lovely stretch of the Fowey River passing through a steep, narrow and densely wooded valley. Not so much a waterfall as a very steep slope, the river tumbles downwards over moss-covered granite boulders, all overhung by the dense foliage of an ancient oak woodland. Take care, as the path is steep and slippery, particularly around the falls themselves, but this area is truly worth exploring as it is one of the most beautiful woodland rivers in Cornwall.

Golitha brings us some way from the rugged landscapes of Cornwall's moors and coastal cliffs, but the real antidote to all that wildness lies in the gentle valleys and creeks that make up the River Fal and Roseland peninsula, just north of Falmouth on Cornwall's south coast. A busy and popular port town, Falmouth lies on the western shore of Carrick Roads, the magnificent mouth of the River Fal and one of the world's largest natural harbours. Cutting northwards through the hilly landscape, the Roads not only slowly narrow down into the River Fal itself, but also penetrate up into side valleys, creating a series of coves and creeks that make this region a wonder to explore by both road and water. Travelling by car, a series of very narrow lanes meander around the hills and valleys, taking you to such lovely riverside villages as Flushing, Mylor (complete with yacht marina and upmarket restaurants), Restronguet and Feock, all lining the Fal's western shore.

Once beyond Feock, take the King Harry Ferry across the river and onto the Roseland peninsula. A narrow strip of land separating Carrick Roads from the open sea,

Roseland is perhaps Cornish countryside at its most beautiful; the limited amount of space seeming to squash everything into miniature, from the rolling hills to the fields and even the villages. Specific highlights include the coastal harbours of Port Loe and Portscatho at Roseland's northern end, plus the riverside locations of St Just in Roseland and St Mawes further south. St Mawes is a one-time fishing village now turned into a highly fashionable and up-market resort, while St Just is rightly loved for its beautiful 13th-century church, sitting on the shore of a quiet creek, enveloped in a stunning jungle



The river tumbles downwards over moss-covered granite boulders, all overhung by the dense foliage of an ancient oak woodland



garden of palms, laurels and rhododendrons.

Gardens are an important feature of the Falmouth area, the sheltered landscape and balmy climate having encouraged a number of 19th-century garden designers to set up here. Along the Fal itself and close to Feock, the National Trust-owned Trelissick is one of the most prominent. Southwest of Falmouth, in the Helford River valley, a smaller cousin of the Fal, you will also find the sub-tropical Trebah and Glendurgan gardens, while a little further afield is the Trevarno Estate.

In the summer months much of the Fal area can be explored by boat, thanks to a network of passenger ferries running between Falmouth and many of the principal villages, along with river taxis available for hire. The boats make for a great, relaxing way to move around, and with much of the landscape criss-crossed by footpaths

– particularly Roseland – they make for a very practical way to start and finish a hike, with the car safely abandoned in Falmouth.

While the Fal makes for a very peaceful interlude, Cornwall really is mainly about its wild and rugged coastline. Nowhere is this more true than at its far western tip, the Penwith peninsula, beyond the towns of St Ives and Penzance. Penwith has its share of crowded visitor locations, but it is honeycombed with much quieter alternatives, any exploration of which would do well to

Facing page: The lighthouse at Trevoze Head, built in 1847. This page, top: Semi-wild ponies on Bodmin Moor. Bottom: The parish church in the village of Feock

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Above: The long sandy beach at Constantine Bay

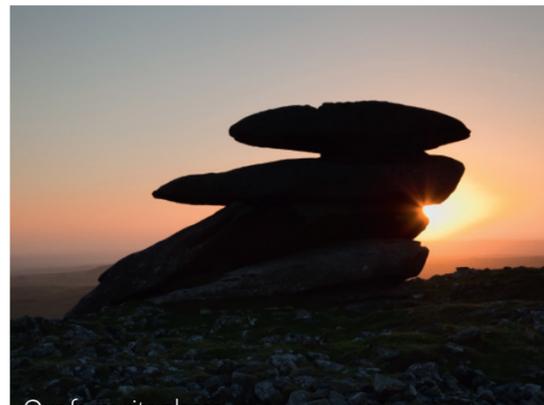
start with Trencom Hill, one of Penwith's highest points, lying southwest of St Ives. Its short, steep climb is rewarded with 360-degree views that take in both Mounts Bay to the south and St Ives bay to the north. To the south lies Chysauster, the remains of a Roman-era village that has been partially excavated, giving a good indication of rural life at that time. The landscape between here and Land's End, Britain's most south-westerly point, is littered with the remains of far older societies. The most famous of these include Mên-an-Tol and Lanyon Quoit, the latter the remnants of a burial chamber; the former a curious collection of standing stones, including one circular stone with a hole punched through.

Even Penwith's present-day buildings illustrate what an ancient landscape this is – many of their granite walls seem to have merged with the rocks, so much a part of the landscape have they become. This is best illustrated in the hamlets and farms that lie scattered along the Atlantic coast west of St Ives, centred in particular around the oddly named Zennor. Seemingly hewn out of the granite landscape, this village has clung to the clifftops for many hundreds of years. These days Zennor's popular pub, The Tinnars Arms, built in 1271, provides rest for weary coastpath walkers, and its Wayside Museum gives an insight into the village's past rural and tin-mining life.

The main and very pretty fishing centres of Newlyn and the wonderfully named Mousehole are worth a visit. But along the south coast you'll find a string of less visited fishing coves, principally Lamorna, Penberth and Porthgarra, all beautiful places and each utterly unique. Penberth is lovingly preserved by the National Trust, while Porthgarra is the starting point for walks up onto the adjacent Gwennap Head. The massive granite cliffs of this headland are an important geographical site, where Britain's south coast finally comes to an end, the last southeast-facing cliffs taking a sharp right turn to look westwards and out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Where to stop? There are so many places to find. Once you've started exploring Cornwall's less visited corners, you'll realise just how many more there are to discover. 

For our full report, go to [www.britain-magazine.com](http://www.britain-magazine.com). For details of what to see and where to stay in Cornwall, and for Penzance and St Ives visit [www.visitcornwall.com](http://www.visitcornwall.com); for Falmouth visit [www.falmouth.co.uk](http://www.falmouth.co.uk); for Padstow: visit [www.padstowlive.com](http://www.padstowlive.com).



Our favourite places...

## Off the beaten track

- **Bedruthan Steps:** Rugged cliffs and a string of offshore islets and rocks on the north coast between the towns of Padstow and Newquay.
- **Pentire and Rumps Point:** Twin headlands on a promontory east of Padstow, characterised by cliffs, seabirds and wild flowers.
- **Rough Tor:** One of Bodmin Moor's highest and wildest hills. Superb views and hiking, with the nearest road access being from Camelford.
- **Golitha Falls:** A beautiful waterfall on the Fowey River, enveloped in ancient oak woodland, on the southern slopes of Bodmin Moor.
- **Mylor:** A fashionable and upmarket village on the western shore of Carrick Roads, complete with a yacht marina.
- **St Just in Roseland:** While the village itself is fairly nondescript, its 13th-century church is stunning for its unusual setting surrounded by a lush garden of palms and rhododendrons, sitting on the shore of a River Fal creek.
- **St Mawes:** A very attractive harbourside town close to the mouth of Carrick Roads.



- **Zennor:** An ancient village high on the cliffs above the Atlantic, located in rugged and remote countryside between St Ives and Land's End.
- **Chysauster:** A partially excavated prehistoric village between St Ives and Penzance, it is an important archaeological site for the knowledge it has yielded of everyday life in pre-Roman times.
- **Porthgarra and Gwennap Head:** Porthgarra is a tiny cove that was once a fishing base, with paths that lead up onto Gwennap Head, a granite outcrop that marks the end of Britain's south coast.



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