

Downe Cottages – Activities & Places to Visit

Brochures giving details of things to do in the area are available in the passageway by Reception. The following is a selection of those activities.

Things to Do

Horse Riding

If you want to go horse riding contact Debbie at *Gooseham Barton Stables near Morwenstow* (01288 331204). She's set up stables with over forty horses from 11 to 16.2 hands. Mounts are allocated according to your size and experience. The countryside is perfect for hacking and they are a well-organized riding stables. Debbie provides American saddles as well as English for transatlantic visitors. Her prices are very reasonable (English saddles – £20 for one hour, £12 for half an hour). A two hour hack through the coastal scenery near Morwenstow is a fabulous morning or afternoon's activity. (If you are a complete novice your first ride is limited to an hour.)

For the experienced rider who wishes to spend a good part of their holiday with horses contact Chantal Hackford at *The Lutsford Riding School* (01237 441629) in Hartland. Chantal provides individual lessons on an all weather sand school and has regular all day workshops.

Fishing

Stafford Moor Fishery at Dolton (which is near Winkleigh) is a good coarse fishery. The fishery comprises four lakes, which total some 25 acres, set in some 60 acres of moorland. It's been very highly recommended by previous guests. The phone number is 01805 804 360.

(The Royal Oak at Dolton provides very good pub food, as does The King's Arms in the old central square of Winkleigh.)

The beautiful *Tamar Lakes*, which are located towards Bude, provide excellent coarse fishing. The lakes have good numbers of carp to 28lb. They are stocked with carp, bream, tench, roach, rudd and eels. The lakes are open all year, 24 hours a day. (Phone 01288 321 262). There is also a Tea-shop on site open 1st April to 31st October from 11 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Melbury fishery, located near Bideford, was opened in 1990. Mirror and common carp were stocked. The best mirror caught to date is 27lb. Good mixed bags of roach, rudd, bream and pole are taken. It is open all year from 6.30am to 10.00pm. (Phone 01837 871 565)

Jennets is nother fishery near Bideford, Jennets has gained a national reputation for its carp fishing. It regularly produces 20lbs commons and mirrors. It also produces quality bags of smaller carp, roach and tench. It is open all year from 6.30am to 10.00pm. (Phone 01837 871 565)

Sea Fishing

One of the joys of the area is a fine day spent in a boat sea fishing. You can get a boat to take you fishing from Clovelly or Appledore.

Clive Pearson, one of the potters in Hartland, runs a small boat at Clovelly (the Jessica Hettie) which you can charter for fishing trips. Phone Clive on 01237 431042 or on his mobile 07374 190359 to make bookings.

Stephen Perham runs boat trips from Clovelly Harbour on the 'Neptune'. Phone 01237 431761 to book. He will also take you out fishing for the day.

Sea bass and mackerel fishing trips are available from *The Sea Chest in Appledore*. Phone 01237 476191 to make bookings. The cost is £10 per head for a two-hour trip including rod and tackle.

Boat Trips

Tarka Cruises are based at Appledore. They run a boat trip of about an hour's duration from Appledore Quay towards the mouth of the Taw and Torridge Estuary, then back up to Bideford, back down to the West Bank of Torridge past Instow and back to Appledore Quay. The cost is £10 per adult and £8.50 for children under 12 and OAP's. Phone 01237 477 505 or 01237 476 191 to book.

A trip to Lundy Island is an option for any holidaymaker spending a week in Hartland. If the weather is good the day will be a marvelous day out.

Lundy Island was the first designated Marine Nature Reserve in the UK. It is remote, wild, spectacular and unspoiled.

Clive Pearson, who runs the Hartland and Clovelly Pottery, also runs a small boat (the Jessica Hettie) which you can take from Clovelly to visit Lundy Island. It has a maximum capacity of ten people. Phone Clive on 01237 – 431 042 or on his mobile 0374 – 190 359 to make bookings. You can charter the boat to Lundy or take one of his scheduled trips on a Wednesday and Thursday. The boat is also available for charter for a day's fishing.

Clive's boat trip to Lundy is not for the faint hearted in choppy weather (it's a small boat travelling quite quickly in open water) and we do advise you to wear waterproofs as the trip is a wet one. If you prefer to use a larger boat to visit Lundy then take the MS Oldenburg that sails from Bideford and Clovelly. This takes 267 passengers and has bar, buffet and shop on board. Phone 01237 – 470 422 for up to date sailing information and to book your tickets.

If you go to Lundy do pack a picnic, as the pub meals on Lundy are disappointing.

Tennis

Hartland has two tennis courts in the village, which are available for hire. Phone Bridget Stowell on 01237 – 441 492 if you want to arrange to hire a court.

Cycling

The whole of the immediate area around Downe is ideal for the fit cyclist. Most of the roads are single track framed by the lovely Devon hedgerows that give the countryside so much character. It's possible to cycle for miles down the Coast towards Bude without touching an A road and crossing the A39 brings you into a veritable wonderland of little lanes that criss-cross the County.

For those of us who are less than fit (or just less ambitious) the Tarka Trail provides a leisurely series of rides over less demanding terrain. Cycles can be hired from 'Gifford's Cycle Hire' in Kilkampton (01288 321 829, "Bideford Cycle Hire" (01237 424 123) or 'Yelland Cycle Hire' (01271 378 794) amongst others. For a small charge Gifford's Cycle will deliver cycles to Downe and have very reasonable rates (£5 per day for an adult's cycle, £3 for a child's and £7 for an adult's mountain bike).

Golf

Downe Cottages are ideal for golfing breaks, particularly out of season when long weekend or mid-week breaks are readily available. The two and three bedroom cottages are ideal for a golf party of two or three couples. "Tee Times" can be arranged when booking the cottages to ensure the smooth running of the golf break.

Royal North Devon is the closest senior golf course is the Royal North Devon in Westward Ho. This is the oldest seaside links in England. Its reputation is that it is a very friendly club with a demanding course. Handicap certificates are required. (01237 473817)

One of our golfing visitors described it as follows: "A genuine links course well worth the green fee. Several holes have intimidating sheer faced bunkers, some are almost twenty feet deep and shored up with railway sleepers. Long carries over beds of rushes, lots of water hazards, and most fairways have feature stones and rocks."

Do book in advance because the Club has many events on their calendar and they're on most golfing society routes.

Saunton Golf Club is just the other side of Barnstaple and is the most prestigious of the North Devon courses. It is playable in almost any weather. The Championship East course on 6708 yards par 73 sits alongside the newer West Course 6356 yards par 71. Handicap certificates are required. (01271 812 436).

One of our golfing visitors described it as follows: "Guaranteed to find every single weakness in your game..... and then some. The East course hosts several PGA Championships and that should give you a clue as to what you'll be up against. Tucked away between the beach and Braunton Burrows (several square miles of rugged sand dunes) each course is some 7000 yards long and provides a

serious challenge. It is also quite expensive. We played both courses in one day and were completely shattered afterwards. The golf game held together – just!”

Hartland Forest Golf and Leisure Club has the nearest 18-hole golf course. The golf course is very suitable for beginners or those with a high handicap and there are no handicap requirements. It's ideal for the casual golfer who plays occasionally. (01237 431 442). Two of our visitors, who are members at Wentworth, describe a round of golf at Hartland as “highly entertaining”. They had never lost a golf ball on the fairway before and reached the 19th Hole in great spirits! A sense of adventure is a must for the serious golfer trying Hartland Forest.

Our literate golfer commented that “we simply turned up and walked straight onto an empty course. Looks and sounds like it will be easy – beware! It will challenge all but the very best golfers.”

Holsworthy Golf Club is a parkland course that is challenging for both beginners and low handicap players. It has no handicap requirements. (01409 253177).

Comments received include the following: “You can just turn up and play but I recommend booking by phone first. We walked straight on at mid-day on a Sunday and it was almost empty – unheard of where we're from. Holsworthy is a challenging and quite long course, with some quirky tee positions. It's also quite a hilly course with most of the middle twelve holes either up or down the side of the valley which runs through the course.”

Ifracombe Golf Club has an interesting and testing course in excellent condition with lovely views over the sea and moors. A Handicap is preferred. (01271 862176)

Described as follows by our in-house golfing expert as “very friendly, turn up and play (but members only between 10.00 am and midday). It's on the coast road about a mile east of the town towards Combe Martin. It is an extremely hilly and beautiful course with vistas across the sea from most holes. Don't go if you want a gentle walk. There's a 70-yard par three – sounds easy? Into the teeth of the wind that always seems to be blowing with a canyon between tee and pin you can be sure of a few surprises.”

Bude Golf Course is another super links course, it is located close to the centre of Bude. It has a natural all weather, quick draining surface which provides play off regular tees to regular greens 360 plus days a year. The demands made by the strength and direction of the wind ensure that the course is never easy and presents a new and different challenge every time you play. Handicap certificates are required. (01288 353 635).

Other Courses

In addition to the above there are numerous golf courses in North Devon and Cornwall which are accessible to the enthusiast whilst holidaying in Downe Cottages. (For example the St Mellion Golf

Course with its international reputation and stunning golf courses is only an hour and a half's drive away.) Information on all North Devon and Cornish Golf Clubs is available from Jeremy and Lynda.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

If you want a really great day out doing something very different try clay pigeon shooting at *Lypscott Farm with Nigel Bond*.

Nigel has created a wonderful group of stands amongst the woods at Lypscott Farm and the days shooting is tremendous fun. Take a picnic and enjoy lunch on the picnic tables that Nigel has dotted through the woods.

Nigel, a former England International shooter, provides shooting for everyone from 8 to 108 years of age and tuition for those with no experience whatsoever and for those who are already very skillful shooters but want to improve.

Phone Nigel on 01409 241 839 OR on 07778 526 096 to discuss the day.

A typical days shooting will cost £40 for 40 clays on eight different stands and with a group of from four to six you can expect to take about three hours.

One thing that's marvelous about Clay Pigeon Shooting is that it's almost weatherproof i.e. you can still have a great day even if it's raining provided you go dressed for the weather.

Gardens to Visit

Brochures giving details of the gardens in the area are available at Downe. The following is a brief description of those gardens.

Hartland Gardens

Docton Mill is one of our favourite gardens in the immediate area is Docton Mill. This is a lovely eight-acre garden set around a former Mill that dates back to Saxon times. It's an ideal way to spend a few hours. The walk to the coast from the Mill, it's well worth the effort. The owners of Docton Mill are John and Lana. It's open every day from March to the end of October. Light snacks are available all day as well as cream teas and cakes.

The gardens are closed from 1st November to 28th February but on most fine Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in November and February the Mill is open for light lunches and cream teas. (Just phone 01237 441 369 to check whether the Mill is open on a particular day in the closed season.)

If you follow the directions to come to Downe, *Hartland Abbey* is the last house you will have passed before Downe Cottages. The garden and the house are open to the public from May to September.

Located a few hundred yards from Downe, *Cheristow Lavender Farm* is well worth a visit. (see above for details).

The garden at *Clovelly Court* is a classic example of a Victorian kitchen garden and the greenhouses have been fully restored. The walls surrounding the garden are substantial and create a sheltered mini-climate for a wide variety of plants and fruits.

Other Local Gardens

The grounds of *Arlington Court* (seven miles North East of Barnstaple) include thirty acres of informal gardens. The house is owned by the National Trust and includes a carriage collection.

Marwood Hill (four miles outside Barnstaple on the A361 to Braunton) is the result of one man's passion for trees and shrubs. The three lakes provide a lovely setting for the various flowering trees and shrubs from May through to October

In Instow, just the other side of Bideford, is *Tapeley Park*. Recently renovated by Mary Keen and Carol Klein.

The pearl of the local gardens is unquestionably the *RHS Garden at Rosemoor* (one mile South of Torrington on the B3220). The most beautiful and most interesting of the gardens of North Devon

We recommend that you take time to enjoy The Formal Garden in the summer. Savour something quite special

The Eden Project is much more than a garden and we do recommend a visit if possible.

The Eden Project is located just outside St Austell overlooking St Austell Bay and is signposted from the A390, the A30 and the A391. It is a comfortable ninety-minute drive from Downe Cottages and makes a marvelous day out. (Drive down the A39 to Camelford then take the B3266. Join the A389 and head towards Bodmin. Before Bodmin follow the A389 towards St Austell. You then cross the A30 and take the A391 to St Austell. At this stage the Project is well signposted.)

During British Summer Time it is open daily 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. In winter it is open daily 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The phone number is 01726 811911 if you have any questions before leaving.

Two hours is about all it takes to visit the Eden Project (ignoring queuing for a ticket and any meals) and it is probably best to plan your visit for the afternoon when queues are at their shortest.

Places to Visit

Brochures giving details of places to visit in the area are available at Downe. Listed below are some of the places that we have found to be of particular interest and which we think will provide interesting days out:

Nearby Towns, Villages and Places

Clovelly is an extraordinary village that has remained unchanged for more than a hundred years. It is very beautiful and clings to the steep hillside as the cobbled street rushes to the harbor below. The old slate roofs with their blues and greys and the stone walled cottages are stunning as you walk down towards them from the top of the village or gaze up to them from the harbor wall. In summer the cobbled streets are brightly edged by the rich colours of the flowers that grow in every cottage garden.

It has one problem – us. Too many of us. We therefore strongly recommend that you visit Clovelly on a nice day early in the morning or late in the evening (when it is still light enough to see!).

Bucks Mills is a beautiful village set on the hillside as it meets the shore. It's one car wide and the sort of place that makes men think of retirement away from the hustle and bustle of the Twentieth Century and women think of bottled fruits and home made jam. A lovely place to drive to before beginning an amble on the beach.

Appledore is a lovely, old fishing village located just this side of Bideford. It's lovely just to walk through the streets of the village and enjoy the atmosphere. It's easy to imagine life in the village before the arrival of the motor car.

"Benson's Restaurant" on the Quay is a small restaurant that is very pleasant. (Do book if you want to eat at Bensons in the evening. See the section entitled "Restaurants" above for details.) The George down Irsha Street is a lovely pub for a drink overlooking the estuary and The Beaver next to it is a nice pub to eat in.

The Gallerie Marin at 31 Market Street is excellent if you are interested in contemporary paintings, particularly marine paintings. Do phone for opening times (01237 473 679).

The old town of *Bideford* is located on the side of a hill rising from the west bank of the River Torridge. It sits three miles south of the confluence of the Rivers Taw and Torridge and the Bristol Channel.

Bideford has a very rich maritime history and in the 16th Century trade with the New World brought prosperity to Bideford. From the time a new quay was built in 1663 Bideford developed into a major port and flourished during the 17th and 18th Centuries as an important trade and ship building centre. The buildings and narrow streets of the old town reflect that history.

The town's character is derived from its location on the river, which divides the main residential area and town centre from its smaller counterpart, East the Water. The Torridge is spanned by Bideford Long Bridge, a medieval structure 200 metres long with 24 arches of various sizes, which was built in 1535 and the modern high-flying Torridge road bridge a mile to the north of Bideford.

Start your visit to Bideford by parking the car on the Quay and walking along the Quay and over the Long Bridge away from Bideford. Halfway over the bridge stop and look up at the old town. That's the Bideford Charles Kingsley knew and loved. Looking North you see the new road-bridge which has created a lovely frame for the estuary view.

On the other side of the Old Bridge away from the town is the Brunswick Wharf and here is the Kathleen and May. The Kathleen and May was the last merchant schooner registered at a home port in the UK to earn her living at sea carrying cargoes. She has been restored by a local businessman (Steve Clarke) who deserves great credit for his personal crusade to preserve some of Bideford's maritime history. The Kathleen and May is open to the public at limited times.

The Kathleen May was built at Conah's Quay on the estuary of the Dee in North Wales. She was launched as the Lizzie May and could carry up to 250 tons of cargo. She was employed in the general coasting trade carrying cargoes such as coal, china clay, cement, bricks, fertilizers and grain. In 1908 she was sold to an Irish shipper in Cork and her name was changed to the Kathleen and May. In 1931 she was sold to Captain Thomas Jewell in Appledore. She sailed in the Irish trade and carried coal from the Mersey to the south coast. She was in continuous employment until 1960 when Captain Jewell retired.

After you have visited the Kathleen and May walk back to the Quay and up the High Street. Turn left half way up the High Street into Grenville Street which leads you into Market Place in the middle of which is the Pannier Market. After the Pannier Market walk down Bridge Street towards the Long Bridge and then turn left into Allhalland Street and follow Mill Street back along to Bridgeland Street. That is probably the best introduction to Bideford and the walk takes you through the centre of the old town.

The Pannier Market (open on Tuesday and Saturdays) in Market Place is well worth visiting with a lot of local produce for sale.

Bideford still has a working quay (from which you can take the ferry to Lundy).

Bideford has a long tradition of great New Year's Eve celebrations with every one dressing up in fancy dress. There were over 10,000 people in Bideford for last year's New Year celebrations. Fancy dress can be hired from temporary stalls set up in the town in the week before New Year. There is a fireworks display and recent additions have been a radio event from the Quay with some bands. It is still a remarkably un-commercialised event and has very few of the problems normally

associated with large gatherings in a major conurbation. It still feels very safe and on a human scale. The pubs are incredibly crowded and loud.

Just this side of Bideford is *Atlantic Village, a Factory Outlet*. The principal selling feature is price. Atlantic Village is an attractive modern shopping mall with a range of chain stores. It has an excellent play zone for young children and is a very convenient place to shop. It's clean, bright and not too large.

The sea front at *Instow* is lovely with walks along the sandy beach being the key attraction. It has two good restaurants (see the section entitled "Restaurants" above) and we like to go for a walk and then have a meal or a cream tea at one of the restaurants in Instow.

The Waterside Gallery at No 2 Marine Terrace is a very pleasant little gallery with works by local artists available. It is open from 10.00am to 5.00pm Tuesday to Saturday with an hour's break for lunch at 1.00pm.

Barnstaple is a town with a very pleasing town centre that offers comfortable and relaxed shopping. Ideal for a visit on a wet day if you need to get your weekly fix of M&S. The only problem is that the rest of the world will have the same idea and traffic will be a problem.

The Barnstaple Pannier Market on Butcher's Row is well worth visiting. It is open from 9.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Saturday throughout the year and has different types of market on different days.

- It has a Collectors' Market every Wednesday with antiquarian and second hand books, antiques, coins, stamps and collectables;
- On Tuesday, Friday and Saturday it has a traditional market; and
- On Monday and Thursday from late March to Christmas it has a Craft Market.

Barnstaple's flowers are a feature of the town and it regularly wins prizes for the flower tubs and flowerbeds that make such a lovely contribution.

The best place for a relaxed coffee or tea is "The Royal Fortescue" on Boutport Street. .

The best place for a pleasant lunch whilst shopping is The Glass House which is at 2 Cross Street in Barnstable. (Do book ahead 01271 323 311).

Lundy Island is a lovely day out for any visitor to Hartland if the weather is good. Rugged, beautiful, remote and fascinating. (See the section titled Boat Trips above which contains the travel details.)

Going South on the A39 from Downe takes you into Cornwall and everything that the North Cornish Coast has to offer. *Bude is the nearest Cornish town to Downe* (about 12 miles away) and its centre

is a remarkably untouched Edwardian seaside resort. Two very nice beaches and a lovely “beach side bistro” (“Life’s a Beach” see the section on Restaurants.)

Located just off the A386 about six miles past Okehampton, *Lydford Gorge* is well worth the hour’s drive from Downe Cottages. It is a beautiful gorge cut through the rocks by the River Lyd that is fed by the waters that pour off Dartmoor. Stop at the Waterfall Entrance and walk down the steep steps to the White Lady Waterfall then walk the footpath cut into the rocks down to the Devil’s Cauldron.

The complete circuit is about 3 miles and takes an easy two hours for a wonderful walk. Don’t miss the Devil’s Cauldron or the walk beyond the Cauldron to Marker 30 that ends the walk. One of the National Trusts little known treasures it makes for a glorious morning or afternoon. Do wear good walking shoes, as some of the path that is cut into the rocks alongside the Lyd is steep and can be slippery.

Rick Stein has made *Padstow* one of the most popular of Cornish fishing villages to visit and he runs a restaurant, bistro and café in the town which draw food lovers from afar. It is a lovely village with an attractive harbour but for us there are too many tourists, which has resulted in too many Cornish pasty bars and sea front eating-places. In summer it’s packed with visitors wandering around watching other visitors wander around watching visitors wander around. It’s the sort of place teenagers like to visit and “hang out” in because it’s obviously an “in place”.

To enjoy Padstow at it’s best book an evening meal at Rick Stein’s Fish Restaurant or Rick Stein’s Bistro (one number for both: 01841 532 700) and then walk around Padstow after the meal when the crowds have gone. Don’t bother to try and get a meal at Rick Stein’s unless you have booked a table. The queue for the café when we were last there was out into the street. (See the section headed “Restaurants” above for more details.)

Craft Centres and Historic Buildings

In addition to the above towns and villages a number of craft centres and historic buildings are worth visiting. Many of the following are worth noting if the weather turns bad:

A surprisingly enjoyable morning or afternoon can be spent at *The Dartington Crystal Factory*. The visitor centre explains the story of glass making through the ages and you can see glass making in the factory on the factory tour. (Much more interesting than it sounds!). The factory shop can provide excellent value and there is also a giftware shop. The restaurant provides very good value casual lunches in the middle of a day spent visiting places.

Dartington will also take an impression of a young child’s foot and a few days later provide a glass moulding of the foot. It’s quite a nice memento of a baby for fond and doting parents to possess. (Fond and doting parents are the only parents we allow to stay at Downe!)

The Burton Gallery and Museum is a delightful little gallery with very accessible exhibitions regularly showing. Well worth a visit. In addition the Coffee Shop provides pleasant light lunches and snacks that are good value for money.

Seven miles North East of Barnstaple on the A39 *Arlington Court is a Regency House on the edge of Exmoor*. It is a lovely building with various collections including model ships, costumes, pewter and 19th Century furniture. Carriage rides are available and the carriage collection is quite well known. The gardens are open to the public.

The house is open from April to October inclusive, everyday except Saturday, from 11.00am to 17.30pm.

Two miles North of Tiverton, *Knights Hayes Court* was built in the 1860's on the back the Heathcoat-Amory's fortune (from lace making) and is a classic Victorian country mansion. The gardens are delightful and richly reward a visit.

Located at Drewsteignton, two miles northeast of Chagford in the Dartmoor National Park and one mile off the A30, *Castle Drogo* is architecturally among the most remarkable buildings owned by the National Trust. It was built by Sir Edward Lutyens between 1911 and 1930 and is one of his finest achievements. The location of the property is stunning set as it is on a granite bluff that commands the deep defile of the river Teign immediately below. It is the product of the romanticism of client and architect.

Located on the west bank of the Tamar, eight miles southwest of Tavistock and fourteen miles from Plymouth, *Cotehele* is among the most authentic surviving examples of a knightly dwelling built in the late medieval tradition. It is sheltered by woods and lies above the steep banks of the Tamar it is built in the local grey granite stone.

Lanhydrock is two miles south of Bodmin. It was built in the Seventeenth Century and then rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1881. The long gallery in the north wing is original (it is 116 feet long) and gives a good idea of how wonderful the original decorations must have been. The rebuilding was consistent with the original plan and has considerable period charm.

Pencarrow is a lovely Georgian house that is located four miles northwest of Bodmin off the A389. The house is open from April to October and the doors open at 11.00 a.m. A guided tour of the house takes just over the hour and is a very relaxed and informal way to learn about the house and the families that have lived there.

The Appledore Crafts Company is a gallery set up in 1991 by fourteen local craftsmen and shows a range of furniture, paintings, ceramics, glass, woodcarving, jewellery and textiles. It is located on Bude Street in Appledore that runs at right angles to the Quay.

The Hartland Quay Museum is a fascinating little museum located in the first floor of the former fisherman's cottages beside the Hartland Quay Hotel. It really is worth a visit and we happily spent an hour and a half studying the exhibits on our first visit. The museum contains a lot of material about Hartland Quay and the last four hundred years of its existence. (The Hartland Quay Company at one time issued its own bank notes!) The history of the innumerable wrecks around the immediate coast is fascinating.

It's open for Easter Week and then Whitsun to September 30th between 11.00 am and 5.00 p.m.

The North Devon Maritime Museum is located on Odun Road in Appledore. Appledore is a lovely village and the museum is very informative about the history of the fishing industry in this part of the world. Check on 01237 422 064 for opening times.

Days with Young Children

Beaches

The first point to bear in mind is that the beaches in North Devon are very different at high tide and at low tide, some are super when the tide's out and very disappointing when the tide's in. There is therefore a Tides Table in every cottage to help you plan your day on the beach. We strongly recommend that you do plan when you are going to be on the beach taking into account the tides. It can make a world of difference to your enjoyment of the beach.

The second point to bear in mind is that there are deserted beaches and coves all around. We've just highlighted those that are particularly convenient for children.

The closest beach is no more than a mile walk from Downe. To get there you turn right outside Downe and walk towards Berry Farm. Just before Berry Farm the road swings left and then runs through the farmyard. As the road starts to swing left before Berry there is a five-barred gate and stile. You walk through the gate, along the track (which is a public footpath) and through a second gate a hundred yards further along. You then follow the track down to the cliffs.

When standing on the cliffs looking out over the sea will notice a stile to your right. Climb over that and follow the path down to the sea. The path is steep and there are steps cut out of the cliff. It's quite manageable for the able bodied but the elderly and the very young are better off taking a gentler route to the sea.

Berry Beach is rocky except at low tide when quite a lot of sand is exposed. It's great for rock pools and exploring when the tides coming in or going out. It's also very quiet, often you'll be the only ones on the beach even in mid-August. The scenery at Berry is lovely but the beach is particularly attractive to us because it's deserted most of the time and it's so close to the cottages.

For those of you who prefer a more sedate route to the sea try driving to *Hartland Quay* where you can park your car right at the bottom of the cliffs and walk down the causeway to the sea. It's a lovely first evening compromise when the children are very keen to see the sea and you would prefer a quiet drink to recover from the joys and calms of a long car journey with the children. They can have their first day encounter with the waves and you can have your quiet drink. The cost to you is a gentle stroll from bar to beach and back again for a re-fill. The gain to you is children who think you're wonderful to take them onto the beach on their first night on holiday after a long drive.

We have received very good reports about Hartland Quay beach at low tide. One middle-aged visitor with young children stated that a day spent on the beach at Hartland Quay was one of the nicest days that he'd ever spent on a beach. Lovely sand with beautiful waves. On a lovely summer's day the locals use Hartland Quay at high tide for swimming. The water is warmed by the pebbles and it makes a very calm pool.

There are a number of particularly lovely sandy beaches nearby. *Sandy Mouth* and *Duckpool* lie halfway between Bude and Hartland. Take the A39 towards Bude and Sandy Mouth and Duckpool are signposted just after Kilkhampton. Sandy Mouth is a super beach at low or mid tide. At high tide it's more a case of Rocky Mouth. There are tide tables in your Cottage and these will help you to avoid visiting Sandy Mouth at high tide. Duckpool is a very pretty beach but smaller. Sandy Mouth is reasonably safe for young swimmers.

The sea front at Bude is a remarkably unspoiled Edwardian seaside resort. It has good beaches (with good surfing) but it can be crowded. At high tide head for the Bude beaches.

Beyond Bude there is a lovely long beach at *Widemouth Bay*. Often crowded with surfers and swimmers it really looks the part of an Atlantic beach in the summer.

A number of the parents of children visiting Downe have purchased wet suits for their children whilst here which enables the children to stay in the cold sea for much longer at a time. The suits cost about £20 for one for a ten year old. We do suggest you think about it if you have water-loving children.

If the children would like a boat trip and perhaps a little fishing Appledore or Clovelly quays are the place to go.

Rainy Day Activities

If the weather isn't good (or if the children are fed up of long, lazy, sunny days on the beach!) each of the following provides excellent facilities for children up to the age of ten.

The Big Sheep is located on the A39 just before Bideford this has a series of events and activities based on sheep e.g. sheep racing, sheep shearing, sheep feeding etc. Very well received by the younger children with much of the activity being under cover.

This is an excellent facility, well maintained with friendly and helpful staff. We particularly liked the covered play area where parents could sit drinking coffee whilst the children played in a super complex of tunnels and slides, climbing netting and ropes. It is often voted the favourite “visitor attraction” by our young visitors who are enthralled by their close involvement with animals during their visit.

The Milky Way Adventure Park is located on the A39 towards Bideford this is Devon’s largest indoor adventure facility. It has adventure rides, slides, ball pools, multi level assault courses, puppet shows, sheepdog displays, animals to feed, ride on railway etc. It is very highly recommended by families with young children who live in the area and is the largest of the nearby visitor attractions.

Splash Leisure Pool is an indoor leisure pool with wave machines located in Bude. The wave machines are great fun and the pool is well worth thinking about on a wet day. The changing areas aren’t marvelous (cramped and uni-sex) but the children won’t mind that.

Some Advice on Weather Management

1. Plan your day to get the best of the weather. We don’t have too many days when it rains all day. We are much more likely to have a day with a wet morning or a wet afternoon or intermittent rain. If that’s the pattern plan your day to optimize the day. If it’s a wet morning lie abed for the morning and enjoy the comfort of the cottage or book at therapy in the Spa and enjoy your morning being pampered. If it’s going to be a wet afternoon get up with the sun and enjoy the morning.
2. Be very aware that the weather is incredibly local along the coast and on a Peninsula in particular. If it’s raining in Hartland it may well not be raining five miles north or south along the coast. If it’s raining all along the coast it may well not be raining inland. Note the weather forecast and go to where the better weather is predicted. We often have lovely days where a few miles down the coast the weather is poor.
3. Do use the fact that Downe has the Health Spa to manage the weather. If the weather’s poor, see if we have any availability for a therapy or two.
4. If the weather is going to be bad all day, plan to go out on one of our day trips and combine the trip with a long lunch at one of the restaurants we recommend. A two or three hour lunch can have a massively beneficial impact upon a bad weather day. We have thoroughly enjoyed some of our days when the weather has made us slow down and take a French man’s approach to lunch.
5. Finally, don’t forget that you can really enjoy a walk along the cliff tops in bad weather. Provided you are dressed properly in your wet weather gear, go out and walk the cliffs and feel the wind and the rain on your face. After your walk come back in time for a good soak in the spa bath and a sauna or a session in the steam room. You will feel wonderful after you have lazed in the Spa following a healthy walk in the wild elements.