

Downe Cottages - Nearby Pubs & Restaurants

Pubs

We are delighted to say that *The Hart in the Square in Hartland* now provides excellent meals.

The Wreckers' Retreat, which is a bar in *The Hartland Quay Hotel*, is stunningly located and a pint at the Wreckers is a must for those jaded souls who have journeyed to us from the Land of Starbuck in the East. It is about a mile and a half away on the other side of Stoke and the hotel nestles on the side of the cliffs. It is well worth a visit just for the view and on a stormy evening it is an exhilarating place for a drink. If there is a good sunset it can be memorable.

Children are very welcome and they can play around you as you sit drinking on the benches outside the bar.

Hartland Quay Hotel provides very basic pub food that doesn't try to be of restaurant quality but the Wreckers Retreat has a lovely atmosphere and on a nice day is crowded with walkers and day-trippers down to see the Quay.

The Anchor Inn in Hartland provides simple pub food in the village – please ring 01237 441414 as booking is advisable.

A little further away is *The Red Lion in Clovelly harbour*. Another superb location and a lovely place to go for a drink on a summer's evening. Regular informal folk music evenings are held here. If you are going to the Red Lion at night you can drive down to the hotel and park on the pebbles.

The Coach and Horses at Buckland Brewer (01237 451395) is one of the pubs in the area that we really enthuse over. It is a lovely pub and has good food, good beer, bags of atmosphere and in Oliver a very friendly landlord. It's worth booking a table in the bar before travelling over. The only down side is that service can be very slow if the pub is crowded.

The Bush Inn at Morewenstowe is a lovely looking pub that serves good pub food. It also serves a very acceptable Sunday lunch using locally reared beef and pork.

The Bell at Parkham (01237 451201) serves good food and, because its larger, booking tends not to be necessary. (For Sunday lunch however booking is essential.) Michael and Rachel are the landlord and lady. We particularly like the chicken breast cooked in garlic butter. Ideal if you are watching the calories.

The Beaver Inn on Irsha Street in Appledore (01237 474822) is very acceptable with an emphasis on fresh fish. Do try and get a window table looking out to the Estuary. On a Saturday you will often find a folk singer or band in the bar.

The location of The Beaver is excellent. It has lovely views over the estuary and Irsha Street is lovely to walk through on a nice evening, tremendous charm and character.

One pub that we should mention that is not 'nearby' and is not really a pub anymore! – but is a good stopping point for lunch or dinner on the way to or from Downe Cottages is *The Mason's Arms at Knowstone*. Knowstone is a mile off the A361 and about twelve miles from Junction 27 of the M5. The Mason's Arms is signposted and it's well worth planning your journey so that you can stop here for lunch. More restaurant than pub in the kitchen, the pub is now the proud possessor of a Michelin Star. We call there for lunch or dinner if we're travelling to and from the wide world beyond Bristol. (01398 341231)

If you do eat at one of the above pubs please mention to the proprietors that you are staying at Downe Cottages.

Restaurants

Appropriately for such a coastal area the best news about the local restaurants is that there is a selection of good fish restaurants very near to us and one of the best fish restaurants in the country not so far away. The only caveat is that it is always sensible to book before you begin your journey because some of the restaurants are quite small.

Going North from Hartland on the A39 takes you to Appledore on this side of Bideford. (Appledore is a lovely old fishing village and well worth a visit on a sunny afternoon.) The village hosts a restaurant called *Benson's at No 22 The Quay*. The service is friendly. The food is good and the restaurant has real atmosphere. It's necessary to book on most evenings during the season (01237 424 093) as it's a very small restaurant.

Instow is on the other side of the Estuary to Appledore and has a number of places to eat along Marine Parade, the road running along the sea front.

The most imposing of these is *The Commodore Hotel*. The Commodore is beautifully located with lovely views across the estuary. The snacks in the bar are quite good and we particularly enjoy morning coffee or afternoon tea on the terrace looking across the bay to Appledore when the weather is fine. At the far end of Marine Parade is the Boat House which provides pleasant food in a boisterous, holiday atmosphere.

Phansit's Kitchen just off the High Street in Bideford (9 Grenville Street) provides very pleasant Thai and Fusion food. Do phone to book (01237 429 942). Their website is www.phansitskitchen.com

The coffee shop attached to the Burton Art Gallery and Museum in Bideford is a good place for a coffee or a light lunch. The Gallery is located in Kingsley Road adjacent to Victoria Park that in turn is next to the large car park by the Quay. The opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm.

The fish and chip shop on the Quay in Bideford is very good for traditional fish and chips.

The best restaurant in Bideford is Lathwells. Located in Cooper Street just off Mill Street in the centre of Bideford it is an intimate little restaurant and provides a very pleasant restaurant experience. Do book – 01237 476 447.

A very nice place to have a coffee and a cake in the area is *Tea on the Green on Golf Links Road in Westward Ho!* Located on the front it is a beautifully decorated and maintained little tea room. To check opening hours do phone 01237 479 265.

Going in South on the A39 from Downe takes you into Bude.

The restaurant we enjoy most in Bude is *Life's a Beach* which is a beach bistro. Located on Summerleaze Beach in Bude it has a sensational location overlooking the sea. Getting there might discourage you (past the public loos, through two car parks) but don't be discouraged – persevere! It's casual, crowded and fun. The food is very good. Lovely views through open glass doors with the waves crashing below. (Do book if you can: 01288 355222)

Another interesting restaurant in Bude is the *El Barco* restaurant in *The Bencoolen pub*. Juan, the proprietor and chef, is Spanish and the food has a heavy Spanish influence. The fish is the best choice but do be careful of the quantities, there can be very substantial portions on the plate and it's easy to over order.

El Barco's particular contribution to our recommended fish evenings is the paella. We suggest you consider ordering the paella when booking your table to avoid disappointment or an overlong wait. But do beware of quantities. The 'Paella for Two' is much more than the two of us can manage. El Barco does however provide 'doggy bags' to take the remnants of the paella home for lunch the next day. (We recommend that you book: 01288 354 694).

Going a few miles past Bude on the coast road between Bude and Widemouth Bay is Elements a restaurant that has lovely views over the ocean. The food is modern and international with the chef and owner having trained at *The Castle in Taunton*. The phone number is 01288 352386 and booking is essential.

If you have deep pockets and are prepared to travel a good hour for your meal we do have the following recommendations:

The first recommendation is either of the two restaurants run by the television celebrity Rick Stein at Padstow: *Rick Stein's Fish Restaurant or Rick Stein's Bistro* (one number for both: 01841 532700). Don't bother to try and get a meal at these unless you have booked a table. The food in his restaurants is excellent although we do prefer the Fish Restaurant to the Bistro. (We take an hour and a quarter to drive to Padstow from Downe and we know the road.)

The second recommendation is *Northcote Manor at Burrington near Umberleigh*. This has established itself as one of the places to eat in Devon over the last three years. Lovely food, lovely surroundings. Light lunches are also served. Do book before travelling over. (The phone number is 01769 560501.)

Northcote Manor is off the A377 from Barnstaple. The entrance is on the right hand side of the road four and a half miles past Umberleigh. The entrance is signposted just past the Portsmouth Arms Railway Station and opposite the Portsmouth Arms public house.

It's worth noting that morning coffee and cream tea is available to non-residents. It can make a lovely stop in the middle of a busy day. Beautiful service in lovely surroundings.

Our third recommendation is *Percy's at Virginstow*. Percy's is a forty-five minute drive from Downe and is just off the A388 just south of Holsworthy. (Drive south to St Giles-on-the-Heath and just as you enter St Giles-on-the-Heath turn left. Percy's is signposted from there.) Tina Bricknell-Webb, the chef-cum-proprietor, is an excellent chef. Her cooking is rated as a five in the latest Good Food Guide and is original and intelligent. Do book (01409 211 236). Children under 12 are however not permitted in the restaurant. (We take forty-five minutes to drive to Percy's.)

The fourth recommendation is the furthest from us which is *'Andrews on the Weir' at Porlock Weir*.

Our Advice

Our advice to every visitor to Downe is enjoy the cuisine close to Downe and we recommend that you seriously consider the following during your visit as your basic mealtime agenda:

1. For your first night at Downe order a meal from our menu of meals served in the cottages. This avoids any problems in the event of delay on your journey down. We suggest a two or three course Gourmet Dinner in your cottage on the first night. The standard of the meal is very high.
2. Eat at the Hart in Hartland on on night at least.
3. If time permits do eat at Decks in Instow and at Life's a Beach in Bude.
4. Thereafter the choice is to run through our recommended list or to repeat a visit to one of the above.

If you do eat in any of the above restaurants or tearooms please mention to the proprietors that you are staying at Downe Cottages.