

MailOnline

Who needs a Mediterranean holiday this summer when Britain is basking in a heatwave? Here, we pick the nation's best 50 beaches

By [Frank Barrett, Mail on Sunday Travel Editor](#)

PUBLISHED: 20:55, 6 July 2013 | **UPDATED:** 10:42, 12 July 2013

According to forecasters, Britain has just embarked on a long-awaited heatwave – finally banishing an interminable period of awful weather. There's only one place the British want to be when the sun breaks through – and to help you make the very most of being beside the sea this summer, we've produced this indispensable guide to Britain's 50 best beaches, along with information on the country's best piers, seaside pubs and restaurants and, of course, fish and chips.



This summer's off to a flyer: Let's reignite our love affair with British coastal resorts (pic: Bamburgh in Northumberland)

The seaside has always enjoyed a special place in the affections of we Brits. When I was a boy in South Wales, a day trip to Barry Island or Weston-super-Mare was as much fun as any of us had the right to expect. Recalling some of my happiest childhood days, I conjure up those sunbaked afternoons (it was always sunny when we went to the seaside) eating 99s, as trails of ice cream ran down my arm. The British, more than any other nationality, have an unbridled delight in a day at the beach.



Sunshine at last: Britain is currently basking in gorgeous temperatures and there's never been a better time to explore our coastline...

One of the first tunes I can remember hearing on the radio was Reginald Dixon at the organ of the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool playing *Oh I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside*. When industrial labourers first earned the money – and the time – for holidays, they knew they wanted to be beside the sea: on summer's days, millions headed in trains and charabancs for resorts like Blackpool, Brighton and Scarborough. These were places that became wholly devoted to jollity ('There's a famous seaside place called Blackpool,' observed Stanley Holloway in the famous monologue *Albert And The Lion*, 'That's noted for fresh-air and fun.')

For a country once better known for its buttoned-up puritan work ethic than its ability to have a laugh, the seaside provided a rare annual opportunity for the British to loosen their stays. Shakespeare described England as 'this sceptered isle... this precious stone set in a silver sea'. The British are an island race, the sea is in our blood, so it was probably not surprising that a trip to the coast made all our pulses beat a little faster. The English countryside is lovely but there is an excitement in the wide sea views and the rolling waves that we find impossible to resist. With the rise of the package holiday in the 1960s, however, we British began to fall out of love with our seaside.

The Mediterranean had no piers, funfairs nor fish and chip shops (and, let's be honest, its beaches are terrible) – but it did have endless sunshine, cheap hotels, bargain booze and the sense of sophistication conferred by the very act of taking a plane to a foreign place. While the likes of

Benidorm boomed, British resorts struggled to get by. Boarding houses that once welcomed happy families became dole hostels.

But the wheel has turned again. Thanks to a huge rise in the cost of flying, a slump in the value of the pound and a tightening of family budgets, it's the Mediterranean package-holiday resorts that are under pressure now.

In 2013, Britain's seaside is enjoying a new lease of life. People who once boasted of their fondness for foreign parts, now express a new passion for Cornwall, Pembrokeshire or Fife. Padstow is the new St Tropez, Cardiganshire has the allure of Tuscany, Dorset the subtle charms of Mykonos. The British seaside, once all candy floss and chips, now has Michelin-starred eating places offering the finest seafood cuisine, affordable gastropubs and mouthwatering 'real food' shops. And where there were once Spartan boarding houses run by Medusan landladies, we can now luxuriate in boutique guest houses today more likely to be scented with potpourri than the reek of fry-ups.

The seaside still has its piers and penny arcades but now there are also arts festivals and literary events. So flop down in your deckchair, don a knotted handkerchief against that unfamiliar sunshine, and take a dip into this guide to the best that the British seaside has to offer.

SOUTH WEST

1 Blackpool Sands, Devon

This is the 'other' Blackpool – in Devon – and it couldn't be more different from Lancashire. Blackpool Sands, set in a sheltered bay surrounded by pines, is an award-winning privately managed family beach three miles west of Dartmouth. It offers family-friendly attractions from sand pits to a bathing raft, a range of delicious food and a beach shop.



Not that one! Blackpool Sands in Devon is privately managed and has garnered awards for its facilities

2 Studland Beach, Dorset

This picturesque four-mile stretch of golden sand is near the Poole Harbour starting point of the South West coastal path (incredibly it terminates 630 miles away in Minehead). So this is the perfect place to combine a beach visit with a good walk: you can choose everything from a short sandy stroll to a day's hike. The nearby heathland – which appears in Hardy's Wessex novels as Egdon Heath – is brimming with wildlife and offers more walking opportunities. At this time of year the barbecue-friendly, perfect for picnics Dorset beach comes alive, with many taking to the seas in boats available to hire.

3 Bournemouth

One of Bournemouth's attractions is that the town overlooks seven miles of golden sand, providing

arguably one of the best city beaches in the UK. Its soft sand and acres of space mean it is perfect for families who will also welcome the fact it has won awards for cleanliness. On a clear day you can see the Needles on the Isle of Wight. Not a deserted paradise, but you can't ask for much more so close to a major town.



Super sands: Weston-super-Mare continues to be a favourite for British seaside goers and now has its famous pier back

4 Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

Weston's star, which burnt so bright until the 1960s, has dimmed since (its low point came in 2008 when the Grand Pier burnt down). The pier is back, however, and so is Weston because it offers all you want from a seaside resort (including donkey rides). A huge beach where at low tide the sea practically disappears, this is a day-trip place par excellence.

5 Woolacombe, Devon

People arriving at the beach are horrified when told to pay £6 for a day's parking. But everybody leaves satisfied and delighted with their day by the sea. And why shouldn't they? Woolacombe holds the VisitEngland Awards For Excellence gold award for best family resort and was previously voted the Best British Beach by The Mail on Sunday. Its beach lies between Morte Point and Baggy Point: a three-mile stretch of luscious golden sands famous for their cleanliness, water quality and facilities.

6 Croyde Bay, Devon

If your inner Beach Boy is keen to discover what surfing is all about there is no better place to find

out than this attractive beach. Powerful waves and excellent surf schools and surf shops have helped establish Croyde Bay's reputation as North Devon's best beach for catching waves. Despite armies of young surfers keen to party, the village still boasts an olde worlde charm. If you're not interested in surfing, there is plenty of room for sunbathers, swimmers and beach cricketers.

7 Saunton Sands, North Devon

This three-and-a-half-mile stretch of golden sand, backed by the rolling expanse of Braunton Burrows, provides one of the most impressive dune systems in the country. The beach faces west and is cut off to the south by the combined estuaries of the rivers Taw and Torridge. This vast expanse of sand is perfect for families who want to spread out. It's also a favourite for its excellent surf, while other sports include kite surfing, kayaking and paddle boarding



Soft underfoot: Saunton Sands near Braunton on the North Devon coast boasts an impressive dune system

8 Watergate Bay, Cornwall

The most fashionable of Cornwall's beaches, two miles north of Newquay, this is where you can try the latest surf craze: last year stand-up paddleboarding, this year 'dually bodyboarding' (two people clinging to a double-sized bodyboard with four handles and launching headfirst into the surf). All this plus the estimable Watergate Bay Hotel and the excellent Jamie Oliver Fifteen restaurant.

9 Crantock, Cornwall

Crantock is a short drive from the big resort of Newquay but a world away from all the rough-and-tough surfer dudes and raucous pubs; this is a splendidly delightful hidden cove situated beside a charming village with a brace of equally charming old English pubs. It's a great place for families, nicely sheltered and patrolled by lifeguards in summer. Access is via the National Trust car park. To reach the beach, you need to clamber over a giant sand dune. You'll discover a cove that's more Caribbean than Cornwall. On the right is the tidal River Gannel, where you can catch a ferry to Fern Pit. Here you can order a cooked lobster, caught that morning, or opt for a stunning cliff-top walk.

10 Porthmeor Beach, St Ives, Cornwall

Opposite Tate St Ives is one of Cornwall's prettiest beaches. Here, the long white sands are overlooked by the Porthmeor Beach Cafe which serves great tapas and cakes in heated outdoor booths. The Yellow Canary cafe is the place for the best pasties, plus great tea and coffee in relaxed, contemporary surroundings. For a break from the beach, head to the Barbara Hepworth sculpture garden.



Cornish beauty: The rugged landscape at Porthcurno, just southeast of Land's End, is a sight to behold

11 St Martin's, Isles of Scilly

St Martin's offers you an ideal location for a family break with amazingly secluded, clean beaches

and gobsmacking scenery (you have to keep reminding yourself you're just a ten-minute flight away from Penzance). St Martin's is the third largest of the Isles of Scilly, arguably the most seductive, and reached by a frequent boat service from the main island, St Mary's. There are also boat links to other islands. You can take boat trips to the Eastern Isles to view seal and bird colonies, or to the amazing Bishop Rock lighthouse.

Need a break from the sand? Try the...



Best fish and chips Hanbury's, Babbacombe (hanburys.net) has served local fish for three decades.

Best pub Old Coastguard, Mousehole (oldcoastguardhotel.co.uk), St Austell beer and great views.

Best ice cream Treleavens, Polperro (treleavens.co.uk). Award-winning Cornish ice creams and sorbets using local cream and milk.

Best restaurant Fifteen, Watergate Bay (fifteencornwall.co.uk). Jamie Oliver's coastal venture.

12 Porthcurno, Cornwall

Three miles southeast of Land's End, this gloriously unspoilt beach, hugged by craggy cliffs, has fine white sand made from millennia of sea shells being ground down. There are spectacular cliff-top paths, rock pools and a stream trickling down the beach. Adjacent is the extraordinary Minack Theatre, which stages open-air plays with the Atlantic Ocean as a backdrop. A large car park 200 yards from the beach leads to a wide footpath which gently slopes to the shore. There is a cafe just across the road from the car park; and the Cable Station Inn, just up the road from the park, serves meals and drinks all day in the holiday season.

13 Kynance Cove, Cornwall

This secluded cove two miles north-west of Lizard village has been called one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. The country around is famous for rare wildlife, such as the rare Cornish chough (a red-legged, red-billed crow). At low tide, walk down to the sand and picnic surrounded by multicoloured rocks. Great to relax peacefully. No need to bring a picnic. Clean sea water. Lots of fun and games.

14 Slapton Sands, Devon

Not sandy, in fact, but a fine three-mile pebble beach with wonderful views. The main access points are at the village of Torcross at the southern end, the memorial car park at mid-point (the memorial commemorates the tragic deaths of 946 US servicemen in an exercise preparing for D-Day) and in

the north, the Strete Gate car park (decency warning: the part of Slapton Sands beyond Strete Gate is an unofficial nudist beach). This shingle bar is a wonderfully serene hideaway, the perfect escape if you're looking for some solitude after suffering crowded seaside places.

Wales

15 Rhossili Bay, Gower Peninsula

Regularly voted the best beach in the UK – and this year chosen as the third best beach in Europe (tenth in the world!) – this is well worth the journey. Rhossili Bay, with its three miles of sand, is one of the finest places on Earth. From the top of Rhossili Down, you can see across the sea to West Wales, Lundy Island and the North Devon coast. From the Rhossili National Trust shop there is a level walk along the cliff-top to the Old Coastguard Lookout. If the tide is out, the adventurous can cross the causeway to the tidal island of Worm's Head, where grey seals laze on the rocks below.



A career in construction? Rhossili on the Gower in Wales is perfect for building sandcastles

16 Barafundle Bay, Pembrokeshire

There are probably more fabulous beaches in South Wales than in the whole of Greece and its islands. Jump in the car and head for Swansea and points west, and you'll be spoilt for choice. Why not begin your beach hunt at Pembrokeshire's Barafundle Bay? You need to take the cliff path from

nearby Stackpole Quay where you can see the green-topped sand dunes and lush woodland scattered throughout the area. Step through a stone archway, and you've entered seaside nirvana. Set among grand limestone cliffs, the blue waters of this secluded beach are popular with families for swimming and kayaking expeditions to explore the many small coves and creeks.



Welsh wonders: The seafront of the Victorian resort town of Llandudno (left) and pretty thrift growing on the cliffs above Marloes Sands in Pembrokeshire

17 Marloes Sands, Pembrokeshire

This is a beach so stunning, it's a surprise it's taken so long to be signed up by Hollywood, making its first appearance in last year's *Snow White And The Huntsman*. Locals have been coming here for years, many in the hopes of picking up a fossil, but now Marloes is firmly on the list of 'must visit' beaches for tourists from all over the world. The beach itself is blessedly uncommercialised, but in nearby Marloes village there are toilets, cafes and the excellent pub cuisine of the Lobster Pot Inn. The bay offers fabulous sea views – look out to the uninhabited wildlife reserve island of Skokholm in the distance.

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips D Fecci & Sons, Tenby. Family-owned since 1935 and minutes from the beach.

Best pub Stackpole Inn, Stackpole (stackpoleinn.co.uk). Great ales near Pembrokeshire coastal path.

Best ice cream Red Boat Ice Cream, Beaumaris, Anglesey (redboatgelato.com). Serves flavours such as strawberry, mascapone and balsamic.

Best restaurant Gwesty Cymru, Aberystwyth (gwestycymru.com). Welsh sirloin on the prom.

18 Newgale Sands, Pembrokeshire

This is an impressive piece of beach, even by Pembrokeshire standards. Hardpacked sand, flecked with shells and stones, stretching for more than two miles; the scene belongs in an Impressionist painting. There are also spectacular views to Skomer and Ramsey islands. Look out for scoters (sea ducks) and gannets cruising over from their huge colony on Grassholm. There is a large campsite across the road, along with cafes, ice cream shop, pub and a surf shop. There are plenty of car parks, with free parking at the southern end: access to the beach is via a path over the pebble bank.

19 Abersoch, Gwynedd

If you think North Wales beaches are all about Llandudno and Rhyl, take a look at this gem on the wonderful Llyn Peninsula. The Abersoch main beach is a glorious sweep of sheltered sand, ideal for bathers and watersports lovers alike. Boat trips are available to the St Tudwal and Bardsey islands. Abersoch beach faces the mountains of West Wales, offering spectacular views from the beach. A motor boat exclusion zone provides a secure area for bathers. There is a shop and cafe, and beach huts are available to rent.

20 Llandudno

The Queen of North Wales resorts...the Naples of the North...however you call it, Llandudno is a special place for a breath of sea air. An afternoon on Llandudno's North Shore is a chance to enjoy the seaside as it should be, complete with a Victorian pier and a long promenade. You won't be on your own, of course – this is the most popular beach in the area. The sandy West Shore has a play area on the seafront, impressive views of Anglesey and the mountains, the sea cliffs of the Great

Orme and some incredible sunsets over the water.

PICK OF THE PIERS: FIVE QUINTESSENTIALLY BRITISH WALKWAYS INTO THE SEA

1. Blackpool

Blackpool Central Pier has always been synonymous with British seaside entertainment and fun since it opened in 1868 with the nicknamed 'The People's Pier'. Back in the day, the main attraction was open-air dancing but having survived two fires, the pier is now home to a funfair and a 32m-high Big Wheel along with a theatre, bars and amusement arcades. The most fun at sea since Leonardo DiCaprio drew Kate Winslet.



Into the sea: The pier at Southend stretches a whopping 1.34miles...and there's a train if your legs can't take it

2. Brighton

Unofficially known as the Palace Pier, Brighton Pier opened in 1899 after costing a massive £27,000 to build. The iconic Victorian pier has featured in a host of TV dramas and films, notably *Quadrophenia*. Free deckchairs, an amusement arcade and fairground attractions: er, what's not to like?

3. Weston-Super-Mare Grand Pier

To be burned down once is a misfortune, to be destroyed by fire twice sounds like carelessness. After its second fire in 2008, the pier has been impressively remodelled as an 'indoor theme park' with the biggest ride a 1000ft go-kart track split over two levels. It also houses Britain's smallest rollercoaster, a 4D cinema and a three-storey helter skelter.

4. Llandudno Pier

The listed Victorian pier was opened in 1858 and is the longest in Wales and the fifth longest in

Britain. It is said to be Indian Gothic in style and appears to “float” in the water. It is open every day and a fifteen-minute walk to the end of the pier gives a beautiful view of the surrounding coastline. Arcades, ice cream, candy floss and other seaside attractions can be sampled along the way.

5. Southend Pier

Sir John Betjeman said “The Pier is Southend, Southend is the Pier”. It’s the longest pleasure pier in the world - measuring 1.34 miles. It has had a troubled history with many fires destroying different parts of the structure. However, in the past decade reinvestment has given the pier a new lease of life. A brand new Cultural Centre is a venue for concerts, exhibitions and comedy festivals and has an in house café. A railway runs the length of it, if the end of the pier seems too far to walk.

South East

21 Frinton-on-Sea, Essex

A world away from the kiss-me-quick hat world of nearby Clacton or Walton. The hype is that Frinton is Monaco to Clacton's Nice and, boy, does it play on its reputation. It has a certain antique charm: you can imagine Miss Marple stalking its tree-lined avenues, which sweep down to the elegant esplanade. The beach is sandy and secluded and the seafront lined by Victorian-style beach huts, reminiscent of the days when the town was a favourite retreat for the aristocracy.

22 West Beach Clacton-on-Sea, Essex

Part of the charmingly branded 'Sunshine Coast of Essex', this is a traditional sandy beach with a pier, the Pavilion Fun Park and a good range of bars and restaurants. The beach is nigh on perfect for children, with gently shelving sand; Clacton also operates a child-safety wristband scheme for those who get lost on the beach. Good road and rail connections.

23 Three Shells Beach, Southend-on-Sea, Essex

A compact sandy beach, just a few minutes' walk from the centre of this ultimate Essex resort. Also nearby are Adventure Island, the pier, the High Street and cafes, shops and amusements. It's the perfect spot for anyone who wants to swim or paddle. The beach is thoroughly cleaned daily and family amenities include a shower and play equipment. I'm reminded of a Cleo Laine song 'Sarf-end, just meant for you, from the first cup of tea to the queue for the loo...' Crikey, was that Cleo Laine...?

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips Pilot Inn, Dungeness, Kent (thepilot.uk.com). A stone's throw from the sea.

Best pub The Coastguard, Dover (thecoastguard.co.uk). The closest pub to France.

Best ice cream Pelosi's, Ramsgate, Kent. Dailies such as tiramisu and right by the harbour.

Best restaurant Pebble Beach, Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire (pebblebeach-uk.com). Al fresco dining on a cliff top

24 Ramsgate, Kent

There's a fine collection of excellent beaches on the Isle of Thanet's coast, running north from Pegwell to Minnis Bay. For ease of access, Ramsgate is hard to beat. The sandy beach is several hundred yards deep, backed by a promenade. There are cafes close to the beach with outdoor tables. A bustling Blue Flag bearer, it's an old-fashioned resort with lifeguards, a bay inspector and a summer dogs ban.

25 Camber Sands, East Sussex

If you like your beaches big and bare, this is the place to come to enjoy wide expanses of sand beneath a huge sky. Backed by an alpine range of golden dunes, you will find a beach that stretches for seven miles and, at low tide, the sea retreats for half a mile (practically begging you to bring the football or the cricket bat). If you're planning to bask in the sun, bring a windbreak – for the same reason it's the perfect spot to fly a kite. Easy to park and even easier to find a quiet spot.

26 Brighton

This has been London's favourite seaside place since the Prince Regent first came to take the waters 200 years ago. It's been knocked about a bit since (the famous clashes between Mods and Rockers in the 1960s didn't help) but Brighton is still the quintessential beach place for many. It's loud, quirky and brash – but then this is what most of us expect. The pebbles are a bit hard on the feet and the sea can be rough – but it's a short walk from the station and you'll never go hungry or thirsty.

27 Littlehampton, West Sussex

The town's rebirth began with a brace of beach cafes designed by leading British architects: the West Beach Cafe masterminded by Asif Khan and the undulating, sculptural East Beach Cafe dreamed up by Thomas Heatherwick, the man behind London's Olympic cauldron. But there is much more to this enchanting place than top-class fish and chips. Families will be delighted with the shingle beach and a child-friendly fun fair.



Walk this way...Camber Sands (left) in East Sussex stretches for seven miles while Priory Bay on the Isle of Wight (right) has an almost tropical feel to it

28 West Wittering, West Sussex

A devoted band of fans has managed to preserve this as one of the beach world's best-kept secrets. Down a turning off the A27 just beyond Chichester, it's the English seaside as you might remember it. Ample parking and a long beach where you will have plenty of space to stretch out. Bring a kite and a picnic – apart from a perfectly fine small cafe, toilets and shower, there's very little here in the way of organised facilities. But that's what keeps bringing people back.

29 Priory Bay, Isle of Wight

An utterley delightful, privately-owned beach accessed via the Priory Bay Hotel. It lies to the east of the village of Nettlestone and faces towards Selsey Bill. If you are keen to visit in style, the hotel has an oyster bar which offers striking sea views. It is surrounded by attractive woodland which gives this quiet spot an intriguing sense of adventure. To make it the perfect location for a Famous Five yarn, all it needs is a mysterious boat and a couple of dodgy-looking strangers.

East



Lincolnshire lovelies: Cleethorpes and Skegness both offer traditional donkey rides on their wide, sweeping beaches

30 Central Beach, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire

A town on the Humber estuary doesn't sound promising beach resort territory. However, Cleethorpes Central is an unspoilt, fine sandy beach with a gentle gradient perfect for family fun and beach sports. There is a traditional promenade running parallel to Victorian gardens (parking availability on the front is usually pretty good). Nobody will mistake quiet Cleethorpes for Las Vegas but then so much the better.

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips Platten's, Wells-Next-The-Sea, Norfolk (plattensfishandchips.co.uk). Fresh fish cooked to order for the past 50 years.

Best pub The Bell Inn, Walberswick, Suffolk (bellinwalberswick.co.uk). With Adnams ales.

Best ice cream Lammiman's Newsagents, Sutton-on-Sea, Lincolnshire. Sells Farmer Brown's tubs.

Best restaurant Captain's Table, Cleethorpes (thecaptainstable.co.uk). Run by local fishermen.

31 Central Beach, Skegness, Lincolnshire

For generations, 'Skeggie' – home of the jolly fisherman ('Skegness is SO bracing!') – was the most perfect seaside place on earth. Soft golden sand between the toes, building giant sandcastles, beach football, a trip down the pier. And no trip to the seaside would be complete without a ride on a Skeggie donkey. The Central Beach is right next to the main promenade so when you've had enough of the beach you can quickly pack up your deck chair and go and have a bit of fun at the fair or take a trip to the shops. Here you will also find ice cream kiosks, cafes and novelty shops, as well as toilet and first aid facilities.

32 Holkham, Norfolk

This is a beach which invites you to stroll rather than stretch out: the yellow sands have been described as 'mesmerically vast'. Gwyneth Paltrow paced her way across them in Shakespeare In Love while the Queen likes to walk her corgis here. Towards the back of the beach a line of mismatched huts sit in front of a shady pine wood perfect for hide and seek. Wend your way on powdery sand across the maze of shallow lagoons to the sea.



Norfolk winner: Holkham has enjoyed moments on the big screen - Shakespeare in Love was filmed here

33 Cley-Next-The-Sea, Norfolk

A stretch of coastline that attracts walkers, bird-watchers, artists and food connoisseurs as well as people looking to bask in the sun and do a spot of paddling. Here you will find both a fine beach and a very nice village: perfectly preserved Cley-Next-The-Sea, between Blakeney and Salthouse, is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The pebbly beach is a quieter alternative to busier places along the North Norfolk coast.

34 Southwold, Suffolk

This Suffolk town is that rare British phenomenon, a posh seaside place aimed squarely at people who know how to pronounce hors d'oeuvres without making it sound like something unpleasant involving horses. The beach is a treat: a regular winner of the acclaimed Blue Flag award, with its golden sands providing exquisite summer relaxation or long walks all year round. The promenade is a great place for an afternoon stroll. Or you might prefer to take in the view with a glass of Adnams' highly regarded local beer.

Scotland

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips The Bay, Stonehaven (thebayfishandchips.co.uk). Voted UK No1 takeaway.

Best pub The Old Inn, Gairloch, Wester Ross (theoldinn.net). Has its own microbrewery.

Best ice cream Nardini's Cafe, Largs (nardinis.co.uk) – 35 flavours include peach and passion fruit.

Best restaurant Three Chimneys, Isle of Skye (threechimneys.co.uk). Local crab and oysters.

35 Huisinis, Isle of Harris

Situated 30 miles off the north-west coast of Scotland, you might expect something spectacular in its remoteness. But the first sight of Huisinis will astonish you. You won't find anywhere selling choc ices or offering deckchairs for hire – what you will find, however, is an exquisite cuticle of white sand at the end of a 15-mile, single-track road on the mountainous north coast. This beach is overlooked by a cluster of crofts and cottages with views across the Atlantic to the uninhabited island of Scarp.

36 Dornoch, Highlands

This is a beautiful expanse of golden sand located on the tranquil Dornoch Firth. Visitors can enjoy vast swathes of open sand that stretch from Dornoch Point, heading past Embo beach to the mouth of Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve. There isn't much in the way of facilities but bring your own food and you can enjoy a sumptuous picnic.



Brooding: The wild beach at Huisinis, North Harris on the Outer Hebrides

37 St Andrews, Fife

The opening scenes of Chariots Of Fire, which are supposed to be of Broadstairs in Kent, were actually shot on West Sands beach in St Andrews – one of the most glorious stretches of sea and sand in the whole of the United Kingdom. The film's 'Carlton Hotel, Broadstairs' was actually the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, the home of golf. With St Andrews town centre so close to the beach, daytrippers are well served for all their needs.

38 Burntisland, Fife

This fine little beach, to the east of Burntisland overlooking the Firth of Forth, has been a Blue Flag winner for 13 consecutive years. There's plenty of ancillary fun: crazy golf, bouncy castles and a summer fairground nearby, and – if the weather fails – there's a swimming pool with flumes and a wave machine a short walk away.

39 Talisker Bay, Skye

Talisker Bay stands on the west coast of Skye, one of the most magical places in the UK , and boasts one of the island's few sandy beaches. The beach is quite small, dwarfed by impressive cliffs at either end. This is a beautiful beach of stones and sand, best visited at low tide. There is both black and white sand on the beach, often mottled together to create patterns. A beach to come and be awed by rather than to come and sunbathe.

North West

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips Richardson's Fish Bar, Fleetwood (richardsonsfishbar.co.uk). Family-run favourite.

Best pub Taps, Lytham, Lancashire (thetaps.net). Eight beers on tap and near the beach.

Best ice cream Notarianni, Blackpool (notarianniicecreamblackpool.co.uk). Italian institution.

Best restaurant The Waterfront, Whitehaven (waterfrontwhitehaven.co.uk). Fresh fish.

40 Morecambe Bay

Morecambe has been described as a 'mini-Blackpool', which actually doesn't do this classic English seaside town sufficient justice. The first thing that the visitor notices is the spectacular view across the sands of the bay to the Lake District. Check out the wonderful Midland Hotel, a classic piece of Thirties architecture which has been recently restored. Stroll the promenade, admire the statue of

comedian Eric Morecambe, fly a kite or simply build sandcastles, a perfect afternoon in the sun beckons.

41 Blackpool

Europe's most popular costal town, attracting ten million visitors a year. It's big, it's brash, it's saucy. There's Blackpool Tower, the trams and the Pleasure Beach with white-knuckle rides. It's not everyone's cup of tea, the sea water may not be perfect and there are much quieter places, but you can bet your kiss-me-quick hat nowhere else tries quite so hard to put a smile on your face.

42 Lytham St Annes

Ten out of ten for effort for those working to restore St Annes to its former glory. 'Picture a perfect beach with glimmering sea, golden sands; take a deep breath and imagine the freshness of salty sea air and listen to the laughter of family and friends,' runs its hand-out. Not the Costa del Sol but a jolly beach stay.





North of the border: Picturesque East Sands in St Andrews (left) and a dramatic sunset highlights the exceptional beauty of Talisker Bay on the Isle of Skye (right)

43 Southport, Merseyside

Southport manages to combine being a seaside place at the same time as a grownup town. Step away from busy Lord Street and within minutes find yourself wandering among deserted sand dunes next to the sea. The beach is the ideal antidote to the hustle and bustle of the town centre. Marvel at the coastal views through the seaside telescopes.

44 Formby, Merseyside

On a clear day you can probably spot Blackpool Tower from here, but Formby's no Blackpool. The sweeping sands of Formby beach are big and broad and families can run and play to their hearts' content. Spectacular skyscapes can be glimpsed at sunset and, if you stand on top of a sand dune, the beach stretches as far as the eye can see. A closer look reveals thickets of pine woodland, home to local celebrities, the red squirrels.

North East

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips Pantrini's, Whitley Bay (pantrinis.co.uk). A classic, just yards from the seafront.

Best pub Olde Ship Inn, Seahouses (seahouses.co.uk). Garden overlooks harbour.

Best ice cream Harbour Bar, Scarborough (theharbourbar.co.uk). Unchanged since 1945.

Best restaurant The Ship Inn, Low Newton-by-the-Sea (shipinnnewton.co.uk). Lobster served straight from Newton Bay.

45 Bamburgh, Northumberland

The stretch of Northumbrian coastline north of Newcastle is quietly spectacular – someone described it as 'sombre and strangely exhilarating'. My favourite bit is Bamburgh beach, where the horseshoeshaped stretch of sand is overlooked by the turrets and towers of Bamburgh Castle. The beach stretches three miles from Bamburgh to Seahouses and, from the shoreline, there are views of Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands. Don't expect a café selling mozzarella paninis and glasses of merlot, this is simply a great beach offering spectacular views.

46 West Cliff Beach, Whitby, North Yorkshire

A sandy and rocky beach backed by cliffs, this is a place to enjoy the traditional charms of the seaside. There is a wealth of traditional amusements, including a summer theatre and a museum close to the majestic ruins of Whitby Abbey on the cliff top. Take children to the beach-side shop selling buckets, spades and ice creams, buy several of each and head to the sand for immediate fun. Perhaps best not to mention Dracula: Author Bram Stoker stayed here in the 1890s and took vampiric inspiration from Whitby and its abbey.





Sands and spectacles: The whale bones on Whitby's West Cliff frame Whitby Abbey and, right, the limestone cliffs behind Whiterocks beach in Portrush, County Antrim

47 South Bay, Scarborough

The busiest of Scarborough's beaches offers fine, soft sand and calm water sheltered from the north by the castle headland. The arching bay almost faces south at the harbour, creating a fabulous sun trap. The beach is handily placed for the town centre shops, theatres, amusement arcades, eateries and harbour. The tide rarely reaches the promenade, so more often than not you'll find a part of the beach untouched by the sea, giving you true soft sand, perfect for sunbathing.



Rainbow resort: Scarborough's multi-coloured beach chalets on the North Bay seafront

48 Filey Bay, North Yorkshire

Situated between Bridlington and Scarborough on the North Yorkshire coast, this was a fishing village that became a busy tourist resort, becoming well known as the home of a Butlin's Holiday Camp (at its peak, the camp was catering for 10,000 people a week – it closed in 1984 and the site has since been redeveloped for housing). The beach is sandy, safe and well cleaned and scenically outstanding.

N.Ireland

Need a break from the sand? Try the...

Best fish and chips Pit-Stop Fast Food 26 Bridge St, Kilkeel, Co Down (pitstopfastfood.com).

Best pub Harbour Bar, Portrush, County Antrim (ramorerestaurant.com/harbour-bar.htm).

Best ice cream Morelli's, The Promenade, ([Portstewart.morellisofportstewart.co.uk](http://portstewart.morellisofportstewart.co.uk))

Best restaurant 55 North, Causeway Street, Portrush (55-north.com)

49 Portstewart Strand, Co Londonderry

People tend not to associate Northern Ireland with great seaside places, but here you will find beaches to equal the best in the whole of the British Isles. Portstewart offers a glorious two-mile stretch of golden sand known locally as The Strand, a much-loved regional treasure. You will enjoy plenty of open space if you are looking to have a family picnic while you spend a day making sandcastles or kicking a football.

50 Whiterocks, Portrush, Co Antrim

Not just a great beach – here you will also enjoy the spectacular limestone cliffs of the White Rocks, which stretch from Curran Strand to Dunluce Castle. These are soft rocks, carved through centuries into a labyrinth of caves and arches. On the main coast road, you will find pull-in areas and a large car park where you can take in the incredible views to the Giant's Causeway. Portstewart Strand Whiterocks, Portrush

Book your travel

- [Holidays](#)
- [Hotels](#)
- [Flights](#)
- [City Breaks](#)

Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd

Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

[© Associated Newspapers Ltd](#)