

Travel

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'Jet-skis are out: eFoil, electric surfboards that levitate over the sea, are the new must have'

Bridget Harrison tries the trend of the summer



2 Three Cliffs Bay, Gower Peninsula

The 50 best beaches in Britain

Wild Welsh shores, tiny Cornish coves, sandy Scottish bays: our writers pick this summer's top coastal spots — plus where to stay

Wales

1 Llanbedrog Llyn Peninsula

Pretty multicoloured beach huts line this sheltered beach near Pwllheli on the wild and unspoilt Llyn Peninsula. The sand slopes gently into the water, making it ideal for younger families. From the southern end of the beach you can climb a steep path through a wooded glen on to a towering headland known as Mynydd Tir-y-Cwmwd, with sweeping views over Cardigan Bay. A little stream tumbles on to the sands below the Aqua Beach Bar (aquabeachbar.co.uk), a sleek café serving everything from gourmet burgers to pan-seared scallops.

Where to stay Plas Bodegroes, a restaurant with ten chic rooms near Pwllheli. B&B doubles cost from £110 (01758 612363, bodegroes.co.uk)

2 Three Cliffs Bay Gower Peninsula

When it comes to sheer spectacle, Three Cliffs Bay is hard to beat. Walk for a mile along the valley past a ruined castle to reach this vast expanse of sand next to the namesake craggy limestone cliffs. There are no toilets, but lifeguards patrol in summer. Treat yourself to a slice of carrot cake at Three Cliffs Coffee Shop (threecliffs.co.uk).



Plas Bodegroes, near Pwllheli

Where to stay A well-equipped yurt on the Three Cliffs Bay campsite overlooking the bay. Three nights for five costs from £349 (01792 371218, threecliffsbay.com)

3 Rhossili Gower Peninsula

This three-mile stretch of sand on the Gower Peninsula often tops lists of Britain's best beaches — and for good reason. Dotted with the skeletal remains of shipwrecked boats, it is swept by dramatic waves that offer some of the best surfing in the region. The laid-back Bay Bistro (thebaybistro.co.uk) serves daily specials such as panko ▶

38 St Anne's Beach Huts, Lancashire

36 Central Beach
Skegness, Lincolnshire

One of Britain's ultimate beach resorts, Skegness, which has Blue Flag status, has an aquarium at one end, a seal sanctuary and butterfly conservatory at the other, and donkey rides, crazy golf, a paddling pool and half a mile of golden sand in between. Lifeguards are on patrol until September.

Where to stay Five miles west of Skegness, the Chestnuts is a collection of stylish, rural cottages. A three-bedroom barn costs from £1,260 for a week (01754 810904, chestnutsfarmbreaks.com)

North West

37 Formby Beach
Merseyside

Backed by dunes and pine woodlands, Formby's shore, north of Liverpool, is broad and bonny. It's also blowy, making kite-flying an option, while there are views of north Wales and occasionally visible 5,000-year-old footprints to look for. Five miles south, and just offshore from Crosby's beach, stand Antony Gormley's *Another Place* statues, and a little way inland is the pleasant town of Formby, home to the Kitchen (4 Chapel Alley) and its homemade quiches.

Where to stay A 15-minute drive away is the cool Vincent Hotel in Southport with B&B doubles from £118 (01704 883800, thevincenthotel.com)

38 St Anne's Beach
nr Blackpool, Lancashire

Like Blackpool, four miles north, St Anne's promenade has classic entertainment: miniature trains, crazy golf, paddling pools and donkey rides. Yet here it is much lower-key. A Victorian pier endures and there's a huge swathe of sand. Chic, pastel-painted beach huts with fridges and microwaves can be hired (stannesbeachhuts.co.uk). Inland, the Vinyl Groove Café serves great bacon butties (vinylgroovecafe.co.uk).

Where to stay Try to book the Queens Hotel's large Victoria room, which has a freestanding bathtub and Ribble Estuary views. B&B costs from £120 a night, (01253 737316, queenslytham.co.uk)

39 St Bees Cumbria

Sandy and vast when the tide is out — and pebbly otherwise — the long, pristine beach at St Bees (sometimes called Seacote Beach), four miles south of Whitehaven, has a faintly wild feel

courtesy of its crashing Irish Sea breakers. Rock pools and a playground make it tempting for families, as do the afternoon teas and homemade ice cream at Hartley's Beach Café (stbees.org.uk). Dogs are welcome too.

Where to stay Fifteen miles southeast, the dog-friendly Bower House Inn has rooms from £80, B&B (01946 723244, bowerhouseinn.com)

40 Silecroft Cumbria

At the southeastern edge of the Lake District National Park, Silecroft's shoreline is simply vast at low tide. Meadows stretch inland to the green and brown fell of Black Combe; the beach is on a section of the Cumbria Coastal Way. There's lots of free parking and toilets, plus a simple beach cabin serving strawberry milkshakes and vegan sorbets. In Silecroft village, the Miners Arms pub on Main Street wins regular praise for its burgers.

Where to stay Herdwick's near Haverigg Beach, five miles away, has B&B doubles from £135 (01229 778758, herdwicksboutiquehotel.com)

Scotland

41 West Sands
St Andrews, Fife

The sand pounded by runners in the film *Chariots of Fire* is a glorious two-mile Blue Flag stretch, backed by dunes and bordered by one of the most famous golf courses in the world. There's plenty of parking, the toilets won gold in the 2018 National Loo of the Year awards and there are lifeguards during the summer. The Seafood Ristorante (theseafoodrestaurant.com) teeters on the cliff overlooking the beach or it's a 15-minute walk to the town, with its fish and chip shops and ice-cream parlours, such as the legendary Jannettas (jannettas.co.uk) for a tub of Irn-Bru sorbet.

Where to stay Overlooking West Sands, Hotel du Vin has 36 rooms, many with sea views, from £235 B&B (hotelduvin.com)

42 Luskentyre Sands
Isle of Harris

On a sunny day the turquoise waters lapping the shimmering white sands of Luskentyre beach on the west coast of Harris in the Outer Hebrides could almost pass as Caribbean. Fringed by sand dunes and cradled by rolling hills,

44 Greywalls Hotel, East Lothian



37 Vincent Hotel, Southport



the beach looks on to the isle of Taransay. At the end of a single-track road there's a car park with toilets. For lunch head to the Machair Kitchen, run by the Hotel Hebrides, overlooking Niseaboist Beach (hotel-hebrides.com).

Where to stay The Seaside House is a cute crofter's cottage overlooking the beach. A week for six costs £1,250 (seasidehouse.luskentyre.com)

43 Portobello
Edinburgh

This two-mile sandy city beach, divided by wooden groynes, is just a couple of miles southeast of the centre, looking out on to the Firth of Forth. It has a retro vibe: stroll along the promenade eating an ice cream, or try the pubs and eateries, such as the buzzing Beach House Café (beachhousecafe.co.uk), which serves a mean "Porty Smash" (smashed avocado, Portobello mushroom, toasted seeds and balsamic drizzle). Many of the buildings form part of a conservation area, including the Victorian Portobello Swim



Formby Beach, Merseyside

Centre, a pool and Turkish baths.

Where to stay Abercorn Guesthouse is just a couple of minutes' walk from the beach. It has free parking and lavishly decorated rooms from £90 B&B (0131 669 6139, abercornguesthouse.com)

44 Yellowcraig
East Lothian

A popular family beach southwest of North Berwick, Yellowcraig is a broad sandy bay backed by sweeping dunes, grasslands and woods, and threaded with a network of nature trails. The nearest café is the homey Amalfi ice-cream and coffee parlour in the nearby village of Dirleton (also the location of a romantic 13th-century castle). There are toilets and showers, a play area and a wheelchair-accessible path and ramp to the top of the dunes. Dogs can run freely on the beach, which has views to the 19th-century lighthouse on Fidra Island.

Where to stay The elegant Edwardian Greywalls Hotel, designed by Edward Lutyens, is three miles away and has 23 double rooms, from £200 B&B (01620 842144, greywalls.co.uk)

45 Dunnet Bay Caithness

This two-mile arc of white sand near Dunnet Head is backed by giant grass-tangled dunes. The A836 on the other side hugs the coast, and about halfway down, a mile from the village of Dunnet, the Seadrift Visitor Centre has a free car park and toilets. The beach is popular with dog walkers, surfers and families hunkering behind windbreaks. Dunnet, at its northern end, is the home of Rock Rose Gin; the smart new craft distillery has tours and tastings (dunnetbaydistillers.co.uk), and you can grab lunch at the Northern Sands Hotel (northernsands.co.uk).

Where to stay It's a short drive to Granary Lodge, Prince Charles's new guesthouse in the grounds of the Castle of Mey, which has B&B doubles from £145 (01847 851473, castleofmey.org.uk)

46 Sandwood Bay
Sutherland

Some say this is the most beautiful beach in Britain. It's definitely one of the least accessible. Sandwood Bay is part of the Sandwood Estate on the northwest coast of Sutherland. It's backed by dunes and a trout-rich freshwater loch, flanked by towering cliffs and can only be reached on foot. The four-mile hike in is a fairly

More beaches overleaf



50 Achmelvich Bay, Lochinver, Sutherland

flat tramp along a rough track from the car park at Blairmore (also the nearest toilets). But it's worth it. Wild Atlantic breakers crash on to the mile and a half of pink sand.

Where to stay Take your tent (wild camping is legal in Scotland), and just make sure you pack enough provisions. You can stock up on smoked cheeses and charcuteries from the Highland Charcuterie based in nearby Oldshoremore (highlandcharcute.com)

47 Dornoch Sutherland

This Blue Flag-flying, golden-sand beach on the tranquil Dornoch Firth stretches for miles from Dornoch Point to the Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve. It's popular with dog walkers, as well as wildlife watchers scanning the waves for seals and dolphins playing in the firth. It's also bucket-and-spade territory; the sand shelves gently, so is perfect for paddling, and is sheltered by towering dunes. There's a car park, toilets and a children's play area, and it's just a short flip-flop away from picture-postcard-perfect Dornoch, with its famous golf course, cathedral and eateries.

Where to stay Once a 19th-century manse, Links House is a sumptuous five-star hotel with 15 individually designed rooms decked out in tasteful tartans and tweeds. B&B doubles cost from £330 (01862 810279, linkshousedornoch.com)

48 Camusdarach Arisaig

The cult Scottish film *Local Hero* was shot on and around Camusdarach Beach

on the west coast, a mile from the village of Morar. With its sugary white sands, crystal-clear waters (perfect for snorkelling) and backdrop of grassy dunes, it's one of the most beautiful beaches in Scotland. You might be lucky enough to see otters playing in the shallow water, seals basking on the sand or dolphins in the bay. From the westward-facing beach, the sunsets are spectacular, as are the views out towards the craggy Cuillins on Skye and the islands of Rum and Eigg. There is a car park, but no facilities, so pack a picnic.

Where to stay Camusdarach Campsite has five wooden camping pods sleeping up to five (four adults), with a minimum three-night stay, from £50 a night (01687 450221, camusdarach.co.uk)

49 Traigh Mhor Barra, Outer Hebrides

The wide sweep of Traigh Mhor bay on the northern tip of Barra is popular with beachcombers and foragers collecting cockles on the shore. But if the orange windsock is flying, signs warn you to stay off the sand because the beach doubles as a runway. Barra is the only island in the world where scheduled flights land on the sand and the runways disappear at high tide. Taking off in one of Loganair's Twin Otters, spray spattering the windows, is one of those bucket-list adrenaline rushes. As for facilities: there's a café and toilets in the airport.

Where to stay The Heathbank Hotel, a former 19th-century church house in

Northbay (a couple of miles from Traigh Mhor) has a restaurant serving locally caught seafood, six rooms (from £130 B&B) and a glamping log pod, which costs £90 a night room only (01871 890266, barrahotel.co.uk)

50 Achmelvich Bay Lochinver, Sutherland

Waterskiers, windsurfers and kayakers jostle for space on the sea, while from the rocks, anglers cast their lines. Just four miles northwest of the village of Lochinver, much of it snaking along a single-track lane, it's worth the tortuous journey. The sea is aquamarine, the sand bleached white, and over your shoulder looms the iconic mountain of Suilven. The small beach car park has toilets, but not much in the way of facilities. Stock up in Lochinver from the famous pie shop and restaurant Lochinver Larder (piesbypost.co.uk). Dogs are not allowed on the beach during the summer.

Where to stay Achmelvich Beach Youth Hostel sleeps 20 in three rooms (one twin, two five-bed and one eight-bed). You can opt for the "wee breakfast" of cereal, yoghurt, fruit and tea and coffee (£4.50), there are "heat it and eat it" pre-prepared three-course evening meals (£8) and a self-catering kitchen. Beds cost from £22 a night (hostellingscotland.org.uk)

Compiled by Ellie Ross, Richard Mellor, Liz Bird and Lucy Gillmore. All prices quoted are for stays this summer

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