

England's south coast splendour

England's south coast is a popular destination among language travellers, who enjoy its many attractions, warm climate, heritage and architecture. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

Thirty years ago, the main demand for language courses came from Western Europe, primarily during the summer and preferably for the seaside. "As a result, there is a tremendous number of English language schools located on [England's] south coast," explains Stephen a'Barrow, Director of Harrow House International School in Swanage.

This concentration of English language schools along the UK's south coast means that there is a school and location to match every type of student's needs and expectations, from the student looking for a holiday-type experience to the serious language learner. Regardless of their motivation for study, all students enjoy the area's many attractions.

"The south coast attracts visitors because of its warmer climate, the sea itself and its proximity to London," says Dominic Sabetian, Director of Hastings English Language Centre in the historic town of Hastings, home to the ruins of a castle that dates from the Norman Conquest in the 11th century. Justine Ball, Marketing Manager of

Geos English Academy in Brighton, adds, "The south is seen more as a holiday destination for people generally."

Strung along the coast are lively university cities and towns, Victorian beach resorts and quiet fishing villages, while inland, the wide-open countryside is ideal for walking and discovering old English villages. The area is also steeped in history, with Roman ruins, castles and stately homes set in im-

maculate gardens.

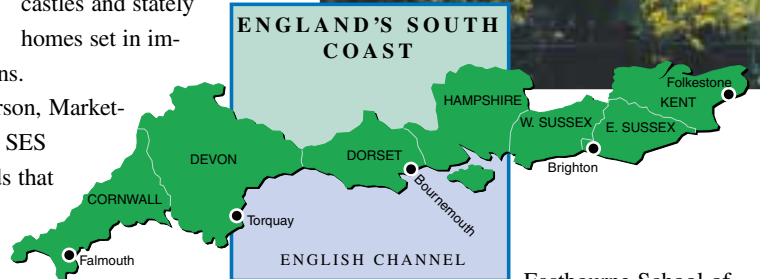
Scott Anderson, Marketing Manager of SES Folkestone, adds that Folkestone is ideal for those who want to explore two of Europe's most popular capital cities. "Especially attractive to those travelling from far-flung corners of the world is the option of spending weekends in London and Paris – which is only two-and-a-half hours away by train," he says.

Westwards of Folkestone is Eastbourne, an elegant 19th-century seaside resort. The

The Victorian architecture of Hove (top); the beach appeal of Bournemouth (right)



Hastings
This popular English fishing town is known around the world for the Battle of Hastings, when King Harold was defeated by William the Conqueror. Steeped in history, Hastings had its own mint in 928



Eastbourne School of English (ESE) caters for adults and offers a special course for students aged 50-plus. "Social activities for this age group include flower arranging, circle dancing [and] playing croquet," says ESE Principal, Graham White. "Groups also visit the Town Hall and see the Mayor's Parlour, decorated spectacularly in the Victorian style. They even have a

Agent viewpoint



"[We send students to] Eastbourne, Exeter, Torquay, Southbourne (Bournemouth), Brighton, Portsmouth and Margate. Southbourne [is most

popular] because our partner school has relatively low prices and Bournemouth is still attractive to foreign students; Torquay/Exeter [is popular because it is a lovely area; and Brighton because of easy transport to London and Gatwick. Our clients generally choose to study on

the south coast because of the sea, which they can't see here in Switzerland."

Nick Gibbons, Castle's English Institute, Switzerland

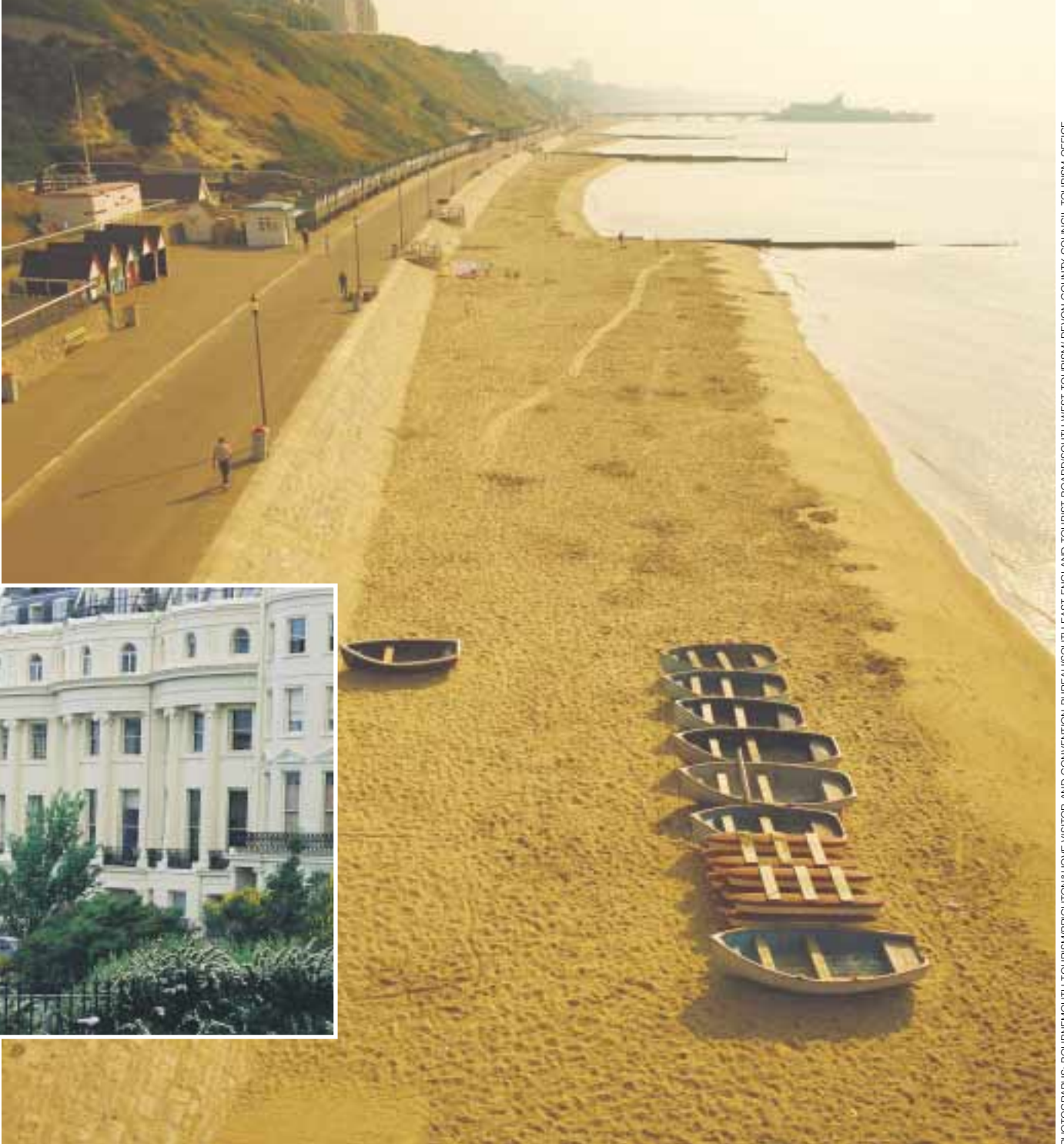


"The Czech Republic is [a land-locked] country, therefore, people like to go to the seaside when going on holidays or language stays. The UK is a very popular destination in general and when there is a

possibility to stay by the sea, most clients go for it. [Both] serious students as well as [those looking for] a holiday [choose the south coast]. There is a wide range of courses and schools that specialise either in adult or junior courses."

Jarmila Dratnalova, Student Agency, Czech Republic

"We send students mainly to Bournemouth, Brighton, Oxford and London. Oxford is very well



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chance to hold the Mayor’s mace and wear his chain of office.” Offering students a rather more lively experience is Brighton & Hove, which was once two fishing villages and is now one vibrant city. “Brighton & Hove has many nationalities residing here and boasts a plethora of international restaurants, serving traditional foods from all around the world,” says Tony Eke of Inten-

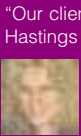
sive School of English in Hove. “The Brighton Festival, in May, is the second-largest festival in the UK after Edinburgh. [Brighton] is also a university city hosting two major universities and, as with all cities of this nature, there is an abundance of year-round entertainment and nightclubs.” Ball at Geos adds, “[Brighton] also has a reputation for being trendy, fashionable and

a little ‘off the wall’.” As well as its interesting nightlife scene, Brighton & Hove has many places of interest, including the impressive Royal Pavilion and Brighton Pier.” Like Brighton, Bournemouth is a popular, lively seaside resort with a thriving student population – and it has the additional attraction of a long sandy beach. “Bournemouth is an academic town, not



known, then comes Bournemouth, Brighton and London. [Of the south coast, students] like the unspoilt scenery, extensive coastline and mixing with [students of] many other nationalities. There are many first-class schools on the south coast, with [extensive] experience and [good] prices, although some of them are expensive when compared with schools in the north. The only disadvantage is nationality ratio.

Too many Arabs are also choosing the south coast, so some schools are crowded with Arabs.” **Samaan Saad, Saad Educ. Consultants, Syria**



“Our clients speak favourably mainly of Brighton, Hastings and Bournemouth. They appreciate the historical heritage and monuments of the first two and maybe, their lively ambience. Eastbourne, however, is valued for its beautiful coastline, flower-

decked promenade and, of course, Beachy Head. [We are located in] an industrial city with no access [to the coast] so students like to [study] at a seaside town with many attractions. They are fascinated by the white cliffs, Victorian piers, lively pubs and friendly people.” **Iza Swierczynska, Almatrap, Poland**

“The most popular [south coast] cities for our clients are Hastings and Bournemouth, then



Plymouth Hoe, Devon
Smeaton's Tower at Plymouth Hoe was once a lighthouse at sea, but it was moved when its foundations eroded. The Hoe is where Sir Francis Drake played bowls prior to taking on the Spanish Armada

shine and good weather than the rest of England, the so-called English Riviera, which comprises Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, claims to enjoy some of the country's most favourable weather conditions. "Torbay is a beautiful sheltered bay," says Jules Bowles, Customer Services Manager at

only famous for language schools but also for the college of further education and the university," says Pat Marchiori-White, Academic Principal of Southbourne School of English. "It is buzzing with students all year round and the town has acknowledged this by developing amenities for student life."

Just on the other side of the bay to Bournemouth is Swanage. "People come to this part of the south coast for its natural beauty, tranquillity, incredible coastal walks and to enjoy its friendly atmosphere, great

country pubs and selection of seafood restaurants," asserts a'Barrow. Harrow House in Swanage is, according to a'Barrow, the only school in Swanage that caters for both adults and children, and they often arrange courses for whole families. "The kids are [occupied and supervised all the time] and the parents can relax and enjoy their study holiday," he says. "The only interruption usually comes when the children have run out of pocket money!"

Using language in real-life situations and with native-English speakers is something that all schools

on the south coast encourage. For example, ESE helps students to find volunteer work. "One of our Japanese students is currently helping out at the local Age Concern branch," says White.

To enable long-term students to get the most out of their stay, Swandean School of English in Worthing encourages students to become involved in the local community "through joining local evening classes, gyms and health clubs, flower arranging classes, a local orchestral group and other clubs and societies", says the school's Principal, Bruce Noble. The school itself is situated just a few minutes walk from the town centre and beach, where there is plenty to do, but Noble adds, "Many [students] are surprised by the attractive countryside in the South Downs

just behind the town, where there are lovely walks." He adds that there is a wide range of historical and cultural venues to visit, such as Arundel Castle and Cathedral, Fishbourne Roman Palace and Chichester Cathedral.

Although the whole of the south coast is said to benefit from more sun-

Torbay Language Centre in Torquay. "The climate is almost Mediterranean in the summer, and there is plenty of typically Mediterranean flora, such as palm trees."

The Torbay area has something for everyone, with younger students enjoying the beaches, visits to Paignton zoo, go-karting, bowling and trips to the cinema, as well as the "summer junior discos for foreign students", says Bowles. Older students prefer to explore the Devon countryside and traditional villages, pubs and restaurants, and the many bars and live bands on the seafront during the summer months.

A little off the beaten track for the language traveller is Cornwall, tucked away in the southwestern corner of England. "There are opportunities for surfing, sailing, diving and other water sports [in Cornwall]," says Keith Owen of Coast to Coast Language Advancement in Falmouth. International Surfing Competitions are held in Cornwall attracting a large number of students from all over the world. Owen adds, "The southwest is recognised as [being] safe and its people are friendly, warm and welcoming."

From the very tip of Lands End in the southwest to the eastern edge of Kent, England's south coast has much to offer language travellers. Summing up the attractions of Bournemouth, Marchiori-White could very well be speaking of the south coast as a whole. "The climate, the position on the south coast, the wonderful countryside around it, the places of interest to visit all make it the best place ever!" □

"Friedl Theiler is our oldest student. She's 95 years old, from Switzerland and comes on our 50-plus course every year. She loves the one-armed bandits [fruit machines] on the Pier and once she lost all her spending money and had to ask for additional funds to be sent over by her family in Switzerland."

Graham White, Eastbourne School of English, Eastbourne



St. Ives
A fishing harbour enclosed by a circle of magnificent beaches, St Ives is one of Cornwall's most popular destinations. In 1993, Tate St Ives was built; sister museum to the Tate museums in London

Torquay and Brighton. Brighton is number-four because of the fact that we have included the destination as a new one this year. Hastings and Bournemouth are very popular because [they] offer good value for money. There are many possibilities for social activities as well. People



like the charm of these cities with their splendid historical architecture, the shops, restaurants and also of course, the nightlife. We have been offering

these destinations for a long time with very good feedback from clients. Bournemouth as a bigger city offers a great variety of things to do. Hastings is a smaller city, but people like that because they can get in contact with the inhabitants easily."

Torsten Pankok, Carpe Diem Sprachreisen, Germany

"Our students choose to study on the south coast to learn English and enjoy the seaside-holiday

atmosphere. We send our students to Swanage, Bournemouth and Brighton. Those towns have turned out to be popular, safer than some other bigger towns and they also offer excellent social, holiday and sports activities. Our students are mostly teenagers and travel abroad mainly during their summer holidays, which makes [these] seaside resorts an even more popular destination."

Vesna Kezic, Kompas, Slovenia

