

Bournemouth's buzz

PHOTOGRAPHS: BRITAIN ON VIEW

With sandy beaches and plenty of entertainment for all ages, Bournemouth is one of the UK's traditional language travel destinations. And its appeal is as strong today as it ever was, as GILLIAN EVANS finds out.

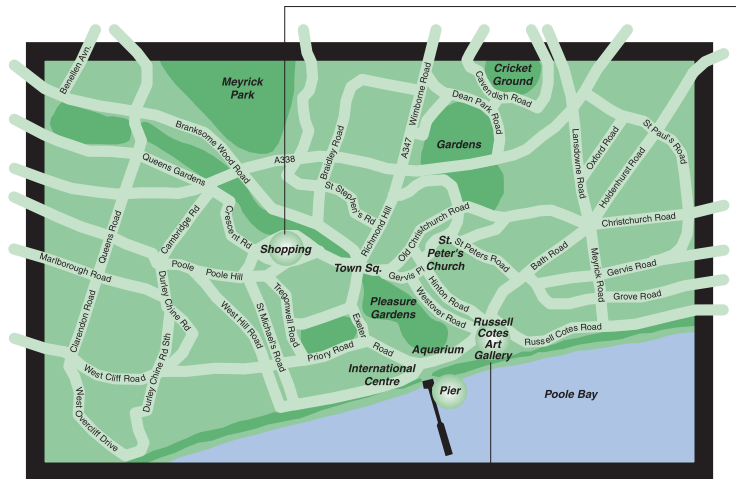
Situated on the sunny south coast of England, Bournemouth has long been a firm favourite with British and overseas visitors. It has seven miles of sandy beaches - which, according to the Bournemouth Tourism board, have won more awards for their safety and cleanliness than any other UK seaside destination - immaculate parks and gardens, and enviable shopping and recreational activities. Set in the county of Dorset, Bournemouth is also a good base from which to explore the surrounding beauty of the rugged coastline, forests, open fields and unspoilt fishing villages that have inspired world famous writers such as Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy through the ages.

For these reasons, too, Bournemouth has a long tradition of English language teaching. 'In a lot of respects, Bournemouth is the home of [English language teaching] with many schools starting here in the 1950s,' asserts Andrew Hardy, Principal of Scanbrit School of English. 'We ourselves were founded in 1956.'

As a popular English seaside resort and university town, there is never a lack of things to do or people to meet in Bourne-

mouth. 'Bournemouth is the perfect location for serious study, although there is plenty to do when classes are over,' confirms David Jones, Principal of ETC.

Sharon Giles,
Director of
Bournemouth



One-to-One English Language School, continues, 'There are many amenities - good shopping and sporting facilities, beautiful beaches, and lots of nightclubs, discos, cinemas and theatres.'

Wishing to dispel any misconceptions about the town, Guido Schillig of Anglo-Continental, adds,

'Bournemouth is definitely no sleepy town on the south coast of England. It is Britain's finest holiday resort offering excellent facilities for entertainment, sport and leisure all the year round and for all age groups.'

Being a seaside town, Bournemouth offers superb water sports possi-

bilities, with surfing just off Bournemouth Pier and Southbourne Beach or kite surfing and catamaran sailing at Sandbanks. There are also jet skiing and water skiing opportunities or cycling and roller blading along the seven-mile promenade, which runs from Southbourne all the way to Poole.

In the town itself, there is something for everyone. 'As well as the usual attractions such as cinemas, pubs, cafés and restaurants, Bournemouth also has an Imax cinema, an ice skating rink, an Oceanarium, hot air balloon [rides], and a wide selection of top quality sporting facilities, including several golf clubs,' says Hardy. Shopping is another popular pastime, with Bournemouth's pedestrianised boulevards and arcades filled with well-known department stores and unique boutiques. Indeed, the *Sunday Times* news-



Russell Cotes Museum
Overlooking Poole Bay and the Isle of Wight, the Russell Cotes Museum was once a private house. It was built to house the many interesting objects acquired during the owner's travels

Agent viewpoint

'We send several hundreds of students to various schools in Bournemouth for durations of one to 48 weeks. Bournemouth is by far the most popular choice for our students. Over 80 per cent of our business is conducted there. The weather tends to be better [on the south coast] than in most [other] parts of Britain; and the white sandy beaches and the student atmosphere are the main draws. In April and in the summer we also operate a weekly bus shuttle that connects Brussels directly to Bournemouth, therefore, it is easy for youngsters to travel with us. Almost every leisure activity is available, from tennis to windsurfing, horse riding ▶

Bournemouth's popular pier (main picture)



Shopping centre

Bournemouth's pedestrianised shopping centre boasts a number of well-known high street outlets as well as street performers and other entertainment, particularly in the summer months

paper recently included some of Bournemouth's boutiques in its guide to the best shops in Britain. Bournemouth also has over 250 restaurants serving up a whole range of world cuisine from the traditional fish and chips to Lebanese, Thai and Greek dishes, and numerous pavement cafés from which to relax and watch the world go by.

As the self-styled entertainment capital of the south coast, the town offers many cultural opportunities, from offbeat theatre productions and West End plays to concerts

by famous pop and rock bands - Def Leppard recently played at the Bournemouth International Centre. According to Jones, some of the popular night spots for language travel students are the

Elements and Alcatraz nightclubs, both of which have special international student nights, the Tot, Klute and K-Bar, and the Red Panda, Jimmy's and Casa restaurants near the town centre.

In addition to all the attractions in the town itself, language schools organise their own packed activity programmes. For exam-

ple, Scanbrit offers students Salsa dancing tuition and cricket matches, while ETC organises international food parties, boat trips, football matches and has a drama club. Jones adds, 'We encourage students to participate in our sports and social activities programme, and host families, staff and friends are invited to ensure that students meet native English speakers.'

At Scanbrit, Hardy reports, 'Several of our long-term students now take evening classes as a way to meet English people. These courses are provided by the local authority and are very reasonably priced.'

Despite being a university town and popular with younger language travellers, ▶

and golf, and visits to various places of interest like Brownsea Island, Poole or Christchurch. Tuition and accommodation costs tend to be much lower than in London and a bit lower than in other places in the south of England.'

Alain Bertholet, Langues Vivantes-Interlingua, Belgium

'Students choose Bournemouth because the city offers not only a wide long beach but also a well-known nightlife [scene]. Despite its size, it is quite a safe town and has all the advantages of a city but one can easily avoid the crowds by staying in a nice suburb. Bournemouth has very friendly host families and offers a well-organised public

transport service. The only downside is that the weather is not so good in the winter.'

Claudio Cesarano, Globo-Study Sprachreisen, Switzerland

'[Bournemouth] is one of the most popular cities [for our students] to study English. [Students choose Bournemouth because of the] lower cost of living compared to London [and because it is a] cosmopolitan city yet small enough to find one's way around. Apart from English language schools there are other options if you want to study other things in your free time - dance, cooking etc. Bournemouth is easy to reach by train, coach or air and there are [also] many opportunities to find a

student job. Students like the milder weather and also the fact that host families are generally located very close to the schools.'

Leonor de Gimenez, Access Asesoría Educativa, Venezuela

'Bournemouth has been one of our most popular cities in 2003, as in previous years. Our clients like to study at the seaside and also appreciate the proximity to London and other cities. They can easily combine studying and leisure activities. Our partner school also organises a weekly activity programme, with beach parties, pub trips, etc.'

Antje Linnerman, Carpe Diem Sprachreisen, Germany

Bournemouth offers a wealth of opportunities to older language travellers, too.

'Students on Anglo-Continental's special

programmes for over-50s enjoy activities such as tea dancing at the Bournemouth Pavilion or going to a concert performed by the world-renowned Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra,' reports Schillig. Jones points out that many older language travellers prefer to visit the town in the off-peak season. 'Bournemouth seems to be

popular with different age groups at different times of the year: with juniors at Easter and in the summer months and with 'golden age' students in the autumn,' he says.

Being a popular holiday resort means that there are events throughout the year. 'Bournemouth's livelihood is dependent on keeping our visitors entertained, so there is something for everyone here,' says Schillig. He mentions free firework displays in the Pier area

during the summer months and Morris dancing at the Wimbourne Festival, while Hardy tells of an annual kite festival which is held at Hengistbury Head.

And you do not have travel far to explore rural Dorset, as Giles points out. 'There are many places of interest in the neighbourhood, including the New Forest, the Purbeck Hills and Stonehenge, as well as the historic towns of Salisbury, Winchester, Southampton and Portsmouth.'

All in all, Bournemouth offers students the perfect mix of entertainment and heritage in a safe and secure environment. 'You would be hard pushed to find someone who did not like this town,' concludes Schillig. □



Along the promenade
The beach huts along the length of the promenade at Bournemouth are owned by local people who use them year round. A passenger lift provides access up and down the steep cliff face