



# Devon

The county of Devon, in the southwest of the UK, is an outdoor enthusiast's paradise encompassing the wild and beautiful Dartmoor National Park as well as numerous fishing villages, surfing beaches and places of historical interest. The area is a popular seasonal holiday destination for those from overseas and also visitors from other parts of the UK, yet it largely manages to retain its old world charm due to its many cobbled streets and quaint villages.

Visitors to Devon are usually drawn to Dartmoor National Park, which encompasses some of the wildest countryside in England, for activities such as hiking, horse riding, fishing, climbing or discovering some of the many prehistoric remains that are contained within its boundaries. Grimspound, in the centre of the park, is the most complete Bronze Age village site in England, while cairns and tumuli dot the landscape throughout the park marking the burial grounds of ancient chieftains.

There are many hiking routes traversing the park, as well as over 4,000 "letter boxes" that provide the focus for a practice started in the Victorian era called "letterboxing". Hikers have to find the boxes that are carefully hidden throughout the park and contain a visitor's book as well as an inkpad and stamp for the visitor to mark their record books. Those with over 100 stamps can apply to join the "100 club" that sends out clue books for the remaining boxes.

The nearest large city to Dartmoor is the coastal port of Plymouth, which played an important role in British naval history as an anchorage for the British fleet in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today the city has strong nautical influences and there are many opportunities to explore the city's naval and military history. Crownhill Fort was built to defend the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and now displays the only example of the Moncrieff Counterweight Disappearing Gun in the world. The gun car-

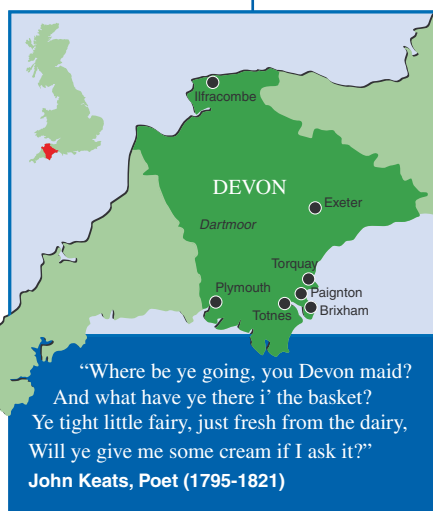
riage features an ingenious design that enables the gun to retreat to a safe position underground to be reloaded after firing. Plymouth is also home to the UK's largest aquarium, containing the deepest tank in Europe, and featuring rare and endangered marine species.

For those wanting to see local marine animals in their natural setting, Devon provides opportunities for scuba diving off the north coast. Lundy Island, 10 miles out in the Bristol Channel, provides a base for visitors wanting to dive in one of England's three Marine Nature Reserves, which surrounds the island. The island is an important site for marine animals and sea birds, including grey seals, puffins and Manx shearwaters, and is named after an ancient Norse word for puffin.

A number of small towns and villages span the south coast of Devon, which, due to its position, is blessed with the most favourable climate in the UK. The resort towns of Torquay – home of the famous mystery author Agatha Christie – Paignton and Brixham describe themselves as the English Riviera and are popular with holidaymakers eager to make the most of the beaches in the area and soak up some of the summer sun. Brixham was once the country's busiest fishing port and the first fishing trawler was invented there. Visitors can now go on fishing trips to fish for conger, ling and coalfish around the wrecks in the bay, as well as on mackerel fishing trips further out to sea.

Away from Devon's two coastlines lie many of the small rural villages that provide a traditional image of Devon's thatched cottages and small town charm. Thatched cottages can be found throughout the county and are popular due to the large number of houses built with cob walls. Cob is a mixture of clay and straw moulded into bricks that are durable but unable to stand the weight of slate roofs. Many new cottages in Devon are still built from cob today and, therefore, thatching is a common roofing method in this area.

Most visitors don't leave Devon without sampling a traditional cream tea, which consists of scones, clotted cream and jam as well as a pot of tea. Clotted cream is traditionally made in both Devon and Cornwall in small farms or dairies and gains its distinctive thick texture by being heated to a high temperature and allowed to cool slowly.



"Where be ye going, you Devon maid?  
And what have ye there i' the basket?  
Ye tight little fairy, just fresh from the dairy,  
Will ye give me some cream if I ask it?"  
John Keats, Poet (1795-1821)