

Bournemouth's welcome



PHOTOGRAPHS: BOURNEMOUTH TOURISM

Bournemouth is like Brighton's older cousin: well established, popular and just slightly less crazy and frenetic, but with much of the same seasoned charm. JANE VERNON SMITH takes a trip to the south coast.

Guido Schillig, Managing Director of Anglo-Continental School of English in Bournemouth, is passionate about his town. He notes that it has more language schools per capita than probably any other place in the world, and "a host of respected and talented EFL authors and professionals have taught in Bournemouth at the long established language schools, such as Anglo-Continental".

Moreover, "The people of Bournemouth warmly welcome students from literally all over the world and truly value their contribution to the area," he ventures,

concluding: "There is no better place where a student can learn and communicate in English with English people."

The fact that the local people have "a neutral accent that will not interfere with their developing listening and speaking skills", represents another advantage the town offers, according to David Jones, Principal of ETC International College. It is a further bonus that the town has the UK's greatest number of hours of sunlight and most temperate climate. Add to this its unspoilt parks and beaches, its proximity to Poole, Christchurch, the New Forest and places like Salisbury, the Cotswolds, Corfe Castle, Purbeck, Winchester and Dorchester, and it is not surprising that it is, as he highlights, a resort of choice for British holidaymakers.

Bournemouth today is a thriving university town and commercial centre that also boasts 12 kilometres of sandy beaches, which have been awarded the prestigious "blue flag" for cleanliness. It is also well known for its beautiful parks, gardens and extensive leisure facilities. As Spencer Fordham, Managing Director of Capital School of English, underlines, Bournemouth is "a safe, clean and incredibly green city".

"The well known local beach... stretches from Poole harbour in the west to Christchurch harbour in the east," notes Simon Freeman, Vice-Principal at Westbourne Academy, and it forms part of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. Also known as the Jurassic coast, this is a 95-mile stretch that represents a geological trip through

Bournemouth Eye

Taking flight over the Lower Gardens in the town, the Bournemouth Eye is a giant helium balloon that offers up to 30 people a spectacular view across the English Channel from 500 feet above the ground



time. With the New Forest also close at hand, there is plenty to see and do for those with a passion for the outdoors.

At EF, reports Karin Ackerman, the most popular trips within the local area are paintballing and cycling in the New Forest, having cream teas and walking along the Jurassic coast, surfing in Boscombe, playing beach volleyball at Durley Chine and having barbecues on the beach, while watching the sun go down. "The social side of Bournemouth is the best," she enthuses. "It is a very friendly place, making it extremely easy to meet people and form relationships that last for a lifetime – all the while improving your English."

At Westbourne Academy, excursions to the Dorset coast and villages are among the most popular local excursions, according to Freeman. "Students enjoy the opportunity to see the picturesque villages of the west Dorset area, as well as the wonder of visiting the Jurassic coast," he relates. "Other attractions for students to try out in and around the local area include boat trips in the bay, and visits to Monkey World [ape rescue centre], Compton Acres [historic gardens] and [the ancient stone circle at] Stonehenge."

Highlights of the activity programme at Kings School of English include regular day trips to nearby towns, such as Poole (which adjoins Bournemouth to the West), Christchurch and Salisbury. Poole, says Chantal Lockey at the school, is home to Bournemouth University as well as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. It boasts a bustling quay surrounded by modern cafés, shops and restaurants overlooking the harbour, and a medieval old town that was famous for smuggling.

She adds, "The old smugglers' town of Christchurch is also a favourite with Kings students who have been fascinated with the English quaintness of the town and also with the history of The Priory Church, which has been standing since 1094."

London, too, is a top excursion "for obvious reasons", according to Jones. "It's close enough to go up and down in the same day and still do [and] see a lot," he comments. However, it is not necessary to go far afield for entertainment and a number of activities can be enjoyed at very low cost.

For example, a chat evening at Starbucks Café inside Borders bookshop can be enjoyed for just the price of a cup of coffee, he says. Another interesting option – which is surprisingly popular in Bournemouth, according to Jones – is to visit a hubbly-bubbly café, and smoke a shisha pipe on



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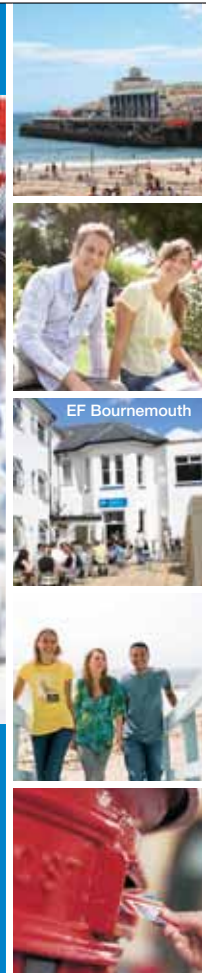
EF Bournemouth is located only minutes away from the town centre and the beach. The school offers a full range of EF programmes: Basic, General & Intensive Courses; TOEFL & IELTS preparation; Junior Programme and Academic Year Abroad.

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Agent viewpoint

"Bournemouth is a cosmopolitan city, offering a safe and comfortable environment for international students all year round. [It] is a beautiful and incredibly green city, with nine kilometres of the most beautiful beaches in the country. Students feel relaxed and immediately at home, not just in school, but adapt very quickly to life in the UK. [A further plus point is] accessible home stay options in relation to school and the city centre."

Mehmet Gultekin, Horizon International Education Consultancy, Turkey

"Bournemouth [was] one of the first places where Swiss students went for a language stay, and has been popular ever since. The Swiss also like the south coast and, as Bournemouth offers a lot, and is not just lively in the summer, it is a great year-round destination. [Students] like [the fact] that the host families are almost all within walking distance. They like that Bournemouth is a town with a lot of variety and, besides the beaches, it offers a whole lot of activities to join."

Claudio Cesarano, globostudy, Switzerland

"I think many students do not know what to expect from the city, and choose Bournemouth first of all because of well-priced English courses. Once they are there, they realise what a nice city it is. They certainly like the beach as well as the little parks, shopping facilities, clubs, pubs and the aquarium. There are plenty of activities in Bournemouth, but students like also visiting other attractions in the area, such as Stonehenge, Salisbury, the New Forest, the Jurassic coast and Poole."

Antje Linnemann, Carpe Diem, Germany

the outdoor terrace. "I think it's something different for some of [our students] to try out, and it's a little bit of home comfort for the Middle Eastern students," he says.

A winter pastime that has proved very popular is the ice rink at the Bournemouth International Centre. And a summer highlight, according to Schillig, is the spectacular, free fireworks display that takes place every Friday

night. He also recommends the Bournemouth Air Festival. "The Red Arrows [famous Royal Airforce aerobatics display team] are often seen flying over the campus of Anglo-Continental, which is truly a breathtaking experience for the students." Meanwhile, he notes that a new artificial surf reef is being built in the Boscombe area of the town, and "[its completion] is eagerly anticipated by all who are looking forward to enjoying surfing at this new attraction."

Activity options aside, "Most students come because Bournemouth offers them a small town experience [that] is less intimidating than larger cities, like London. They are also attracted by the beach and the weather," says Nicole Arnot at Bournemouth Business School International. She believes that many students appreciate Bournemouth because it is "easy to get around and, due to its size, they are able to make many friends and regularly go out with them. They also enjoy the nightlife," she attests.

Ackerman concurs. "Bournemouth is a small, friendly, family town and, from the moment you arrive, you will feel welcome and know that you are going to have a great time."

Bournemouth Air Festival

Taking place in August each year, the Bournemouth Air Festival takes place over four days and features the Red Arrows, a Sea Vixen vintage jet and the Black Cats helicopters



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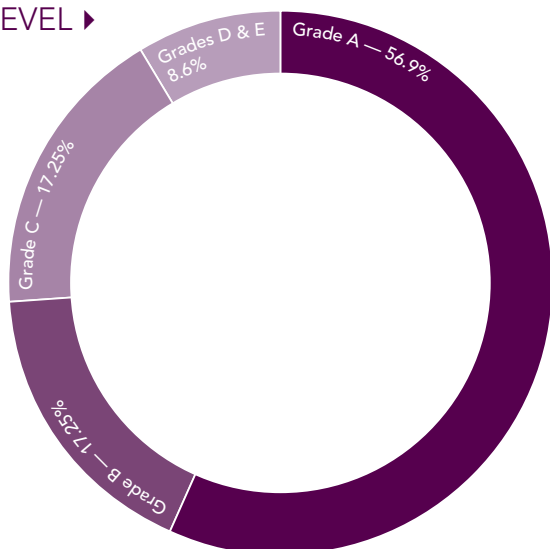




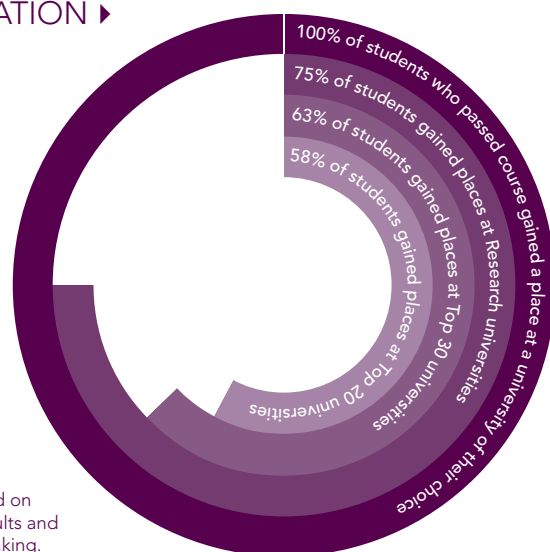
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