

Devon and Cornwall

From spectacular coastlines to cosy villages and bustling cities, Devon and Cornwall offer a vast array of experiences for international students who choose to study in this corner of England. ANNA ZACHARIASSEN reports.

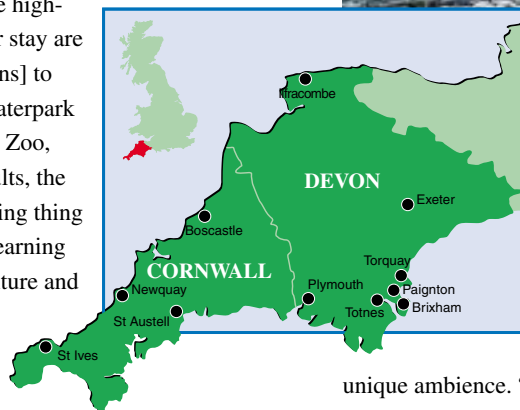
For many people, the rural landscape of Devon and Cornwall typifies their vision of the real England. Blessed with a wealth of awe-inspiring scenery, from secluded bays and beaches to rolling hills and vast expanses of moorland, the two counties have inspired writers, poets and musicians. But there is much more to this region than its picture-postcard image.

Situated on the south Devon coastline, the self-styled “English Riviera” – made up of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham – is home to some of the county’s most popular and lively seaside resorts. Cafés and bars are interspersed with palm trees to create an almost Mediterranean atmosphere, which appeals to local residents and tourists alike.

“Students are attracted to Devon and the ‘English Riviera’ because of its many beaches, generally temperate climate and clean, safe environment,” says Emily Butler at International House Torquay. “It provides a good environment for learning English, with smaller student numbers than some larger towns.” Torquay’s main beach, Abbey Sands, is a haven for sun-seekers during the


summer months. It can become very crowded, but there are also plenty of smaller, more secluded beaches nearby.


At Torbay International Academy, also in Torquay, excursions are arranged for students of all ages. “For the juniors and teenagers, the highlights of their stay are [the excursions] to Quaywest Waterpark and Paignton Zoo, while for adults, the most interesting thing is probably learning about our culture and experiencing our way of life,” says Dawn Edwards at the school. Students also visit Dartmoor National Park, a vast expanse of wilderness stretching from Exeter to Plymouth. At the heart of the park is Dartmoor Forest, characterised by tumbling streams and granite tors, which make it popular with hikers and ramblers. Pony trekking is another favourite activity and the moor boasts its own unique breed, the Dartmoor pony.




Totnes, on the west bank of the River Dart, is an unspoilt market town with a unique ambience. “Unlike many towns, Totnes still has many independent shops and has managed to avoid [the influx] of chain stores,” says Barry G Morris, Principal and Director of Totnes European School. “The town is also famous for its handmade shoes, art shops and excellent food stores which sell natural and organic produce.” Butler sums up the appeal of this area. “Torquay and the surrounding area offer something for everyone, from superb beaches to the de-

Agent viewpoint

 “There are many reasons why students choose to study in Devon and Cornwall. The climate there is very mild and the local people are always warm and friendly. Although there are not as many entertainment opportunities as there are in London, our students have reported that they [enjoyed studying here] and were very happy with the local host families. I would recommend this destination for both juniors and adults.”
Bianca Bugané, STI Travels, Italy

 “Although we have only sent students to Torquay, I know that the surrounding countryside and small villages are very popular, and many schools organise excursions to local places of interest. When I visited Torquay, the highlight of my stay was a traditional Devon cream tea; you won’t find it anywhere else in the UK! Compared with Australia and New Zealand, the UK is one of the most expensive English language learning destinations. Nevertheless, I would recommend this destination

to everyone, although juniors may find the journey from Heathrow Airport [in London] rather tiring.”
Tanja Di Berardo, Travel Club 12, Switzerland

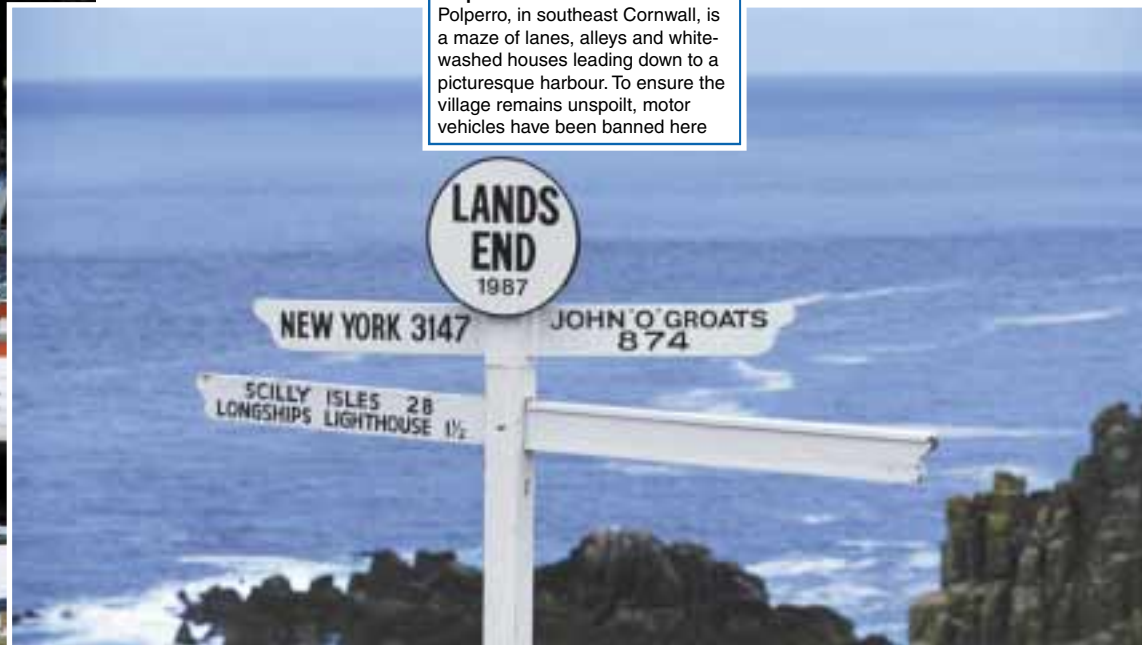
 “The sea in Devon is very warm compared to other parts of the UK and students enjoy sunbathing and walking on the beach. In their spare time, students enjoy exploring Dartmoor National Park. None of our students have mentioned that they have found it difficult to meet the local people and,



Clovelly in north Devon (main picture); the coast on either side of Land's End is some of the most spectacular in Britain (below)



Polperro
Polperro, in southeast Cornwall, is a maze of lanes, alleys and white-washed houses leading down to a picturesque harbour. To ensure the village remains unspoilt, motor vehicles have been banned here



lights of Dartmoor National Park and nearby towns such as the medieval Totnes and the picturesque naval town of Dartmouth.”

Founded by the Romans, Exeter is one of England’s oldest towns and a popular destination for language travel students. The city’s skyline is dominated by the impressive St Peter’s Cathedral, a Norman construction which has remained relatively unchanged despite heavy bombing raids on the city during the Second World War.

The port area, in the southwest of the city, is almost wholly devoted to leisure activities, particularly around the Quayside where pubs, shops and cafés share space

with faithfully restored 19th-century warehouses, some of which have been converted into nightclubs. The Globe English Centre is situated in the heart of Exeter and feedback from previous students gives an idea of the city’s popularity. “One student loved Exeter so much he [has studied English] at every single language school [in the city], but he always comes back to us to say hello,” says Scott Taylor, Assistant Director of Studies at the school.

The Exeter Festival is the perfect place for international students to mingle with locals and practise their English language skills. Held annually in July, the festival features jazz and blues concerts as

well as classical performances and cabaret. When it comes to meeting local people, Taylor highlights the importance of host family accommodation, especially for students who have never studied abroad before. “The majority of our students stay with host families so they get to meet [local] people through them or through our social programme,” he says.

Further down the south coast in Devon is Plymouth, an historic naval base which is proud of its famous maritime associations. It was from here that Sir Francis Drake sailed to defeat the Spanish Armada in 1588, and 32 years later, the port was the last departure point for



St Michael’s Mount
In 1070, St Michael’s Mount was granted to the same monks who built Mont St Michel near Normandy in France. A long, granite causeway separates the island from the mainland

compared to London, Devon and Cornwall are not so expensive. I would recommend this destination to students aged between five and 100 as it has something to offer everyone.”

Hanka Jurikova, Student Agency, Czech Republic



“Students choose to study in Devon because they appreciate it is a beautiful [part of the country]. They particularly enjoy the landscape and the small

villages on the coast. In their spare time, students like to go on boat trips and take part in activities on the beach, but of course, this depends on the weather. Italian students find it fairly easy to adapt to the way of life in Devon and they find that there are few cultural differences to overcome, apart from the food and the fact that Italians tend to stay up later at night. I am sure that both adults and teenagers will appreciate this destination very much.”

Luisa Prandi, Oxbridge Studio, Italy

the Pilgrim Fathers whose New Plymouth colonists became the founders of the English settlement of North America. Today, Plymouth is a thriving, commercial town where reminders of great events in the city’s history can be found alongside modern entertainment attractions. The Barbican district, situated close to the harbour, is home to some of the city’s oldest buildings

Did you know?

- *Mystery writer, Agatha Christie, was born in Devon on 14 September 1890 and the house in which she lived most of her life can be seen from the River Dart in Dartmouth.*
- *The first lighthouse in England was built in 1619 at the Lizard, Cornwall. Local legend suggested the man who built it, Sir John Killigrew, was actually a pirate and wanted to lure ships close to the shore in order to plunder them.*
- *Devon is the only county in the UK to have two coasts.*
- *In the early 1990s, reports began to circulate of big cats being sighted on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. The leopard-like creature has since become known as the Beast of Bodmin Moor.*
- *Cornish pasties, made with a variety of sweet or savoury fillings, were the staple diet of Cornish miners and fishermen about 150 years ago. Each pasty was marked with the owner's initials at one end so that if it was not eaten all at once it could still be identified later on.*
- *During the annual Obby 'Oss festival, held on May Day in Padstow, Cornwall, a man dressed as a horse is led through the streets and dancing takes place in the market square.*
- *Sir John Betjeman, a poet and television personality, was born in Cornwall and lived for many years on the north coast of the county. He is buried in the church by the beach at Trebetherick.*
- *Parts of the Beatles' film, Magical Mystery Tour, made in 1967, were filmed in Teignmouth and Plymouth.*
- *Dartmoor is thought to be the setting for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic tale, The Hound of the Baskervilles. Thick mist descends regularly on parts of the moor, reducing visibility dramatically and providing the perfect backdrop to the eerie Sherlock Holmes mystery.*

as well as an eclectic range of restaurants, many of which take advantage of the plentiful supply of fresh fish.

Kari Kosunen at Plymouth English Centre says that students at the school are encouraged to sample local cuisine. "We provide students with the chance to try out a variety of seafood dishes as well as Devon cream teas and other local specialities." According to Kosunen, another advantage of studying English in one of the country's lesser-known destinations is the slower pace of life, which creates a more relaxed study environment. "[Our students] enjoy learning the language in a caring, relaxed atmosphere and finding out about life in England," he says. North of Plymouth is Buckland Abbey, the former residence of Sir Francis Drake. The abbey houses an impressive collection of maps, portraits and mementos, including Drake's Drum, which is said to beat a warning if danger is about to strike.

Utting out into the English Channel, the Penwith Peninsula in Cornwall has a rugged landscape made up of cliffs and headlands, and many language schools in the area organise outdoor excursions, during which students are taught about the coastal environment and the region's heritage. "[We] organise two walks a week which usually include the cliff paths, beaches, ancient stone formations and fishing coves," says Gabriela Meier, Director of Focus Language School in Penzance. "There are spectacular granite cliffs, sandy beaches, Celtic and other prehistoric sites for students to explore."

Mersedeh Procter at Mercator Language School in St Austell adds, "Cornwall has excellent water sports activities and our students enjoy canoeing, kayaking, snorkelling, windsurfing and sailing as



The Eden Centre
Built on the site of a Cornish clay-pit, the Eden Centre is the world's largest environmentally controlled glasshouse containing information about all the world's major plant species in four giant glass domes

part of the course, in addition to the usual indoor activities." Situated between Penzance and Plymouth, St Austell is a combination of narrow streets and modern pedestrianised shopping precincts and the town is home to a number of impressive buildings such as

the Italianate town hall.

North of St Austell is the old fishing port of Boscastle, where winding lanes and picturesque river valleys create an idyllic study environment. "Boscastle has a rare charm that calls people back here," says Chris Johnson, Director of Boscastle Language School. "Seals, sharks, deer, puffins and buzzards are among the wildlife that can be spotted along the coast."

Students are encouraged to integrate themselves into village life in Boscastle. "We host a party [for students] during the first few days of their stay to introduce them

to local people and [we] also take them to local music and pub events," says Johnson.

During the 19th century, an "artist's colony" of painters and sculptors was

drawn to Cornwall by the magnificent seascapes and tranquil way of life. Their artistic endeavours, including pottery and glassware, are celebrated in the St Ives branch of the Tate Gallery, which presents modern art created in, or associated with, Cornwall.

Opened in 1993, the gallery is an imposing building, flooded with light during the day, making it the perfect venue to exhibit the collections.

South of Land's End, the most southerly point in England, are the Scilly Isles, a group of 140 rocky islands, only five of which are inhabited.

White, sandy beaches and crystal-clear waters make the islands popular with divers in search of long-forgotten shipwrecks. □



Golden Hind
Sir Francis Drake captained the Golden Hind when he circumnavigated the world between 1577 and 1580. The ship is now moored in Brixham where Drake lived and worked