



Polzeath Beach in North Cornwall is magnificent. With its vast expanse of sand, great surfing waves and fabulous coastal scenery, it's one of those places that gives busy lives perspective. Who wouldn't want to take a well-earned break around its imposing shoreline? And where better to stay than in a newly built home that recently won Cornwall Tourism Awards' top self-catering prize and is a hot contender for being best in its category throughout the whole of the South West?

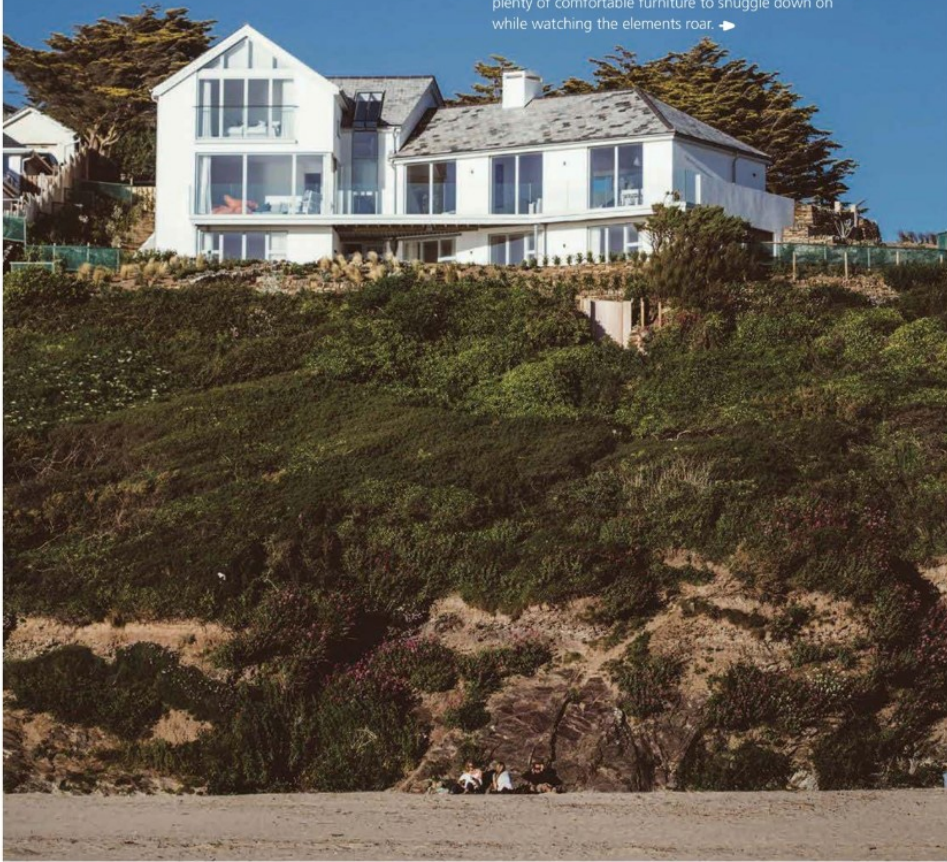
Carn Mar is in New Polzeath, a small adjunct to the main village that nestles amid land owned by the National Trust. The location is sublime and the house, constructed on the site of an old bungalow, quite simply remarkable.

I defy anyone not to walk into the large, light dining room and not stare, open-mouthed, at the sleek curved staircase, vaulted ceiling, wooden floors, bespoke designer furniture and, beyond the floor-to-ceiling French windows, the incredible sea view. Walk a little further, to the other side of the glass-fronted wood burner, and you find large, squishy

sofas and chairs, a state-of-the-art open-plan kitchen and, again, easy access to the veranda and its matchless panorama.

The rest of the interior is similarly jaw-dropping: six en-suite bedrooms (one of them with bunk beds to sleep four), a reading room that every bibliophile will want to immediately curl up in (me included), and a TV room with a 65" flat screen and Sonos surround sound (a great den for children and teenagers who want their own space). The effect is chic, minimalist and effortlessly high-end. Luxurious yet unpretentious. Intoxicating yet restful. Practical yet unashamedly self-indulgent.

Outside, the landscaped garden slopes gently down to a gate leading directly onto the South West Coast Path and the beach beyond. There's a handy outdoor shower and wetsuit storage to make emerging from the sea so much easier and, perfectly positioned to catch the impossibly beautiful sunsets that the north coast is known for, a fire pit with surrounding in-built seating. When the weather is kind, there are several outdoor seating areas to choose from and, when it isn't, plenty of comfortable furniture to snuggle down on while watching the elements roar. ➔



Every aspect of Carn Mar's holiday letting is managed on behalf of its owners by specialist north Cornwall agency Latitude50. The small, very friendly team runs a portfolio of properties focused on the Rock, Polzeath, Daymer Bay and Port Isaac area. "Carn Mar epitomises how very special taking a coastal break here can be," says sales and marketing manager Katy Austin-Waters. "People come here to escape, re-energise and enjoy a lifestyle that puts them back in touch with nature on a grand scale. When you've spent a day catching waves, building sandcastles, exploring rockpools, walking, sailing or cycling, you can't help but relax, reflect and re-connect with your loved ones."

Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman was one of those who clearly adored the banks of the river Camel as it merges with the Atlantic, between Stepper Point on one side and Pentire headland on the other. His parents owned a home in nearby Trebetherick, close to the quirky, unforgettable church of St Enodoc, where he's buried. From an early age, he made friends with the local children, played by the water's edge, made "long barefoot climbs to fetch the morning milk", discovered small coves and took part in treasure hunts. Some of those memories are immortalised in his poems:

*"We used to picnic where the thrift
Grew deep and tufted to the edge;
We saw the yellow foam flakes drift
In trembling sponges on the ledge
Below us, till the wind would lift
Them up the cliff and o'er the hedge."*

As Betjeman and many others have found, there's nothing like a beach for blowing away the cobwebs, restoring balance and rediscovering the simple, untarnished-by-life pastimes of youth. That's what's on offer at stylish Carn Mar, and you don't have to be millionaire to afford it. Sleeping 14, it's a good option for extended families and groups – especially out of season, when short breaks and low occupancy rates make a stay possible for just £31 per person, per night.

Little wonder that Carn Mar has been judged Cornwall's best self-catering holiday home and among the best in the South West. I'm obviously not alone in considering it a breathtaking cliff-top hideaway. 🏠

Book your stay at www.latitude50.co.uk

