



Weekend away

SEE IN SPRING WITH A WEEKEND ON THE CORNISH COAST AND LET THE SEA AIR AND SUNSHINE LIFT YOUR SPIRITS

Words: **REBECCA FRANK**

After a wet and wild winter, Spring feels all the more welcome and there are few better ways to blow off the cold-weather cobwebs than a weekend by the sea. Those in the know always head to Cornwall at this time of year, where the spring flowers bloom earlier and, on clear days, the mild climate makes it feel like summer, minus the crowds. It's time to be outdoors again, browsing beautiful gardens, walking the coastal path, pottering around harbour towns and eating fish and chips on a blowy seafront. This is a popular part of the world (and for good reason), but come at this time of year and if you look around the corner, there will always be a quiet beach, tiny gallery or pretty tearoom waiting to be discovered.



Where we stayed

The Farmhouse on Cant Farm, a private estate of four properties, ticks all your home-by-the-sea boxes. It's a handsome wisteria-clad house with a secluded lawn and large shared gardens leading down to the Camel estuary. Inside, it's modern and spacious with a large, bright kitchen with sea views and doors onto a sunny terrace, and three light and airy bedrooms with sparkling new ensuite bathrooms. We loved the house as much for its practical elements as its luxuries. What's not to love about a warm utility room for drying wet suits and wellies, and enough big squishy sofas for a large family or group of friends to curl up on of an evening without any squabbles? The icing on the cake was the sauna – the best way to warm up and soothe aching muscles after a session of paddleboarding.



What we ate

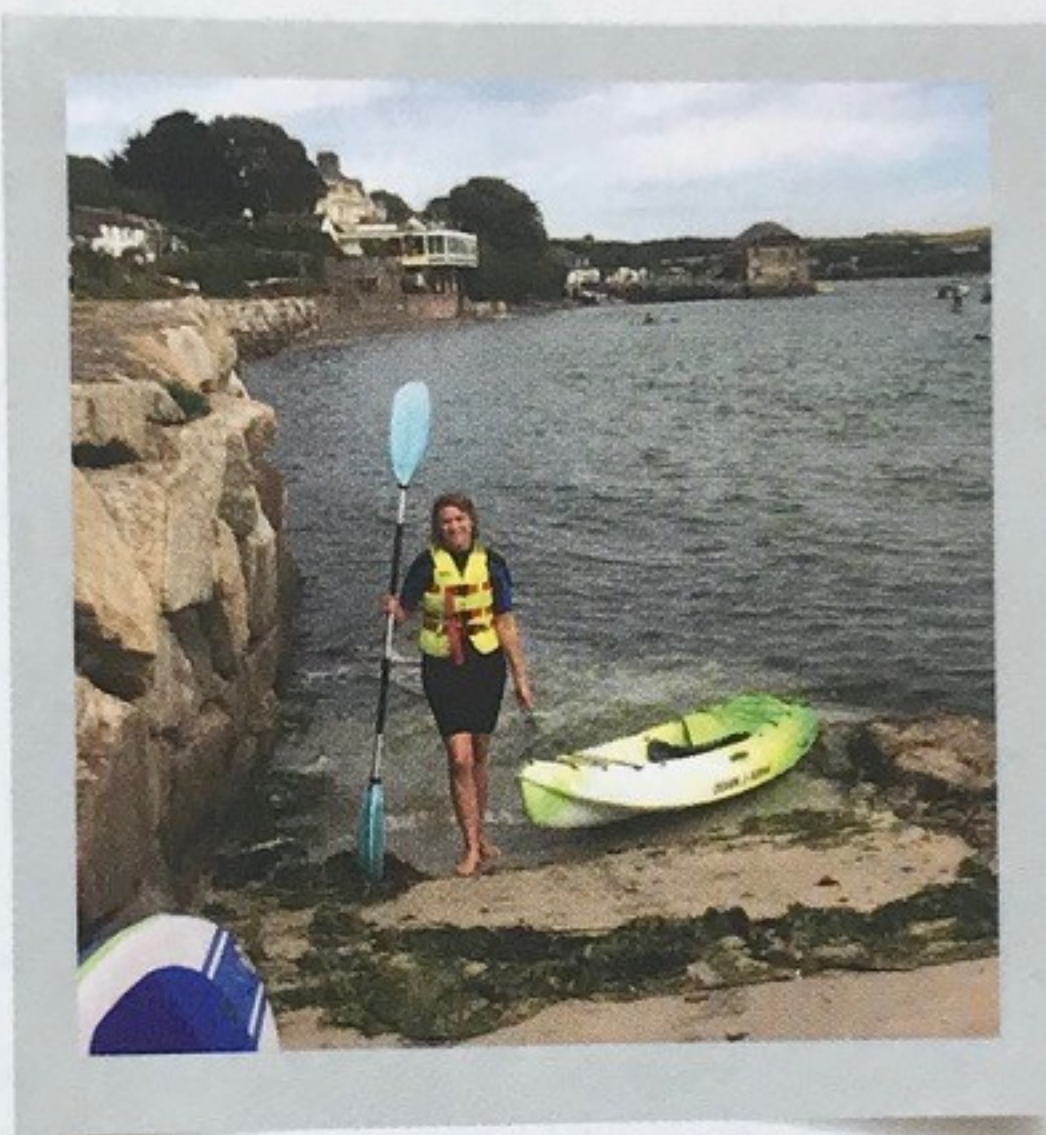
We arrived to a hamper of local produce, including Cornish sea salt and a bottle of Trevibban Mill fizz. Nearby Rock has a bunch of good restaurants, including The Mariner's, a seafront gastro pub by Paul Ainsworth. It serves small dishes such as Porthilly oysters and Cornish rarebit alongside traditional pub plates (the fish and triple-cooked Yukon Gold chips was amazing). The Blue Tomato Café on the seafront does generous salads, while just inland, The Pityme Inn is more of a local hang out with a taco van and stone-baked pizzas. Food shopping is a pleasure with a great local fishmonger, butcher and deli in Rock. Eating fish caught just a few miles away, cooked on our barbeque with a glass of Cornish sparkling wine was a highlight of the weekend.



What we did

We were blessed with warm spring sunshine and pretty much clung to the coast. The nearest beach, Porthilly, is a gem of a bay with St Michael's Church right on the water's edge and calm waters ideal for kayaking and paddleboarding. Come at sunset and you'll see huddles of families and friends wrapped in blankets, sharing bottles of wine and barbequed sausages. There's a fab little gallery here, too, with a pretty sculpture garden,

home to resident artist Jethro Jackson, who paints evocative seascapes from the nearby cliff-top paths (porthillygallery.co.uk). Round the corner is Rock with its golden dune-backed beach, sand spit and turquoise waters – blink and you could be in the Caribbean. We forgot we weren't and took to the water, some of us swimming, others hiring a kayak or paddleboard from Camel Ski School. Let's say it rinsed off the cobwebs and we were very glad of the sauna back at The Farmhouse.



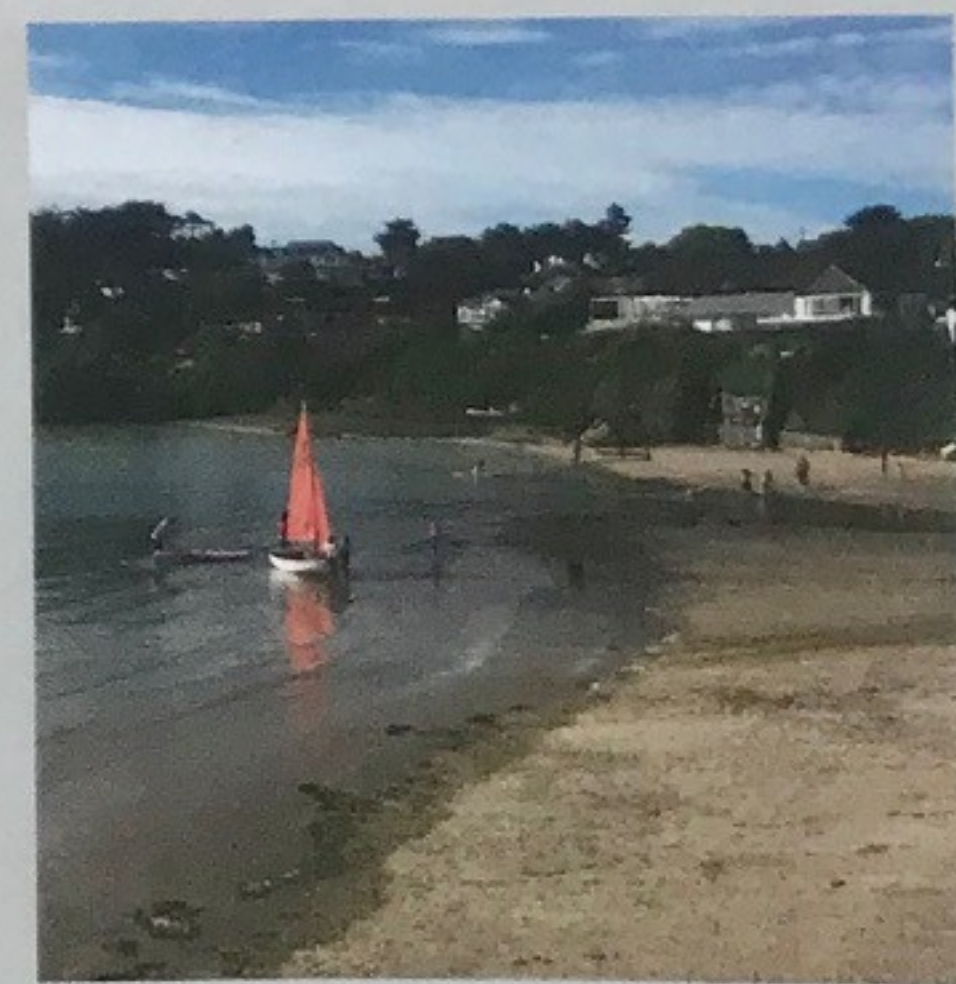
We also liked

Living out our big-house-by-the-sea fantasy, playing tennis on the shared courts and rounders in the garden, preparing local food for picnics and just slowing down. We wandered through the estate gardens to the estuary, where, at low tide, you can see the remains of three shipwrecks on the sand. It's a magical sight, but swampy, so pack wellies and a pair of binoculars for spotting birdlife and otters. We walked along the beach and coastal path from Rock through Daymer Bay and on to Polzeath, a stunner of a beach where we sipped hot chocolates at the Oystercatcher Bar while watching the surfers. If you prefer two wheels, the Camel Trail cycle route travels along the estuary from Padstow into the bluebell woods of the Camel Valley.



The best thing

Its prime location. You're a short drive from upmarket Rock with its good restaurants, boutiques and watersports, and Porthilly Cove. Padstow is just across the water by ferry from Rock, too, but we were glad to come back to a more peaceful spot. There was plenty to do without going far at all, but if you have longer, there are great days out to be had: such as The Eden Project or The Lost Gardens of Heligan. Thanks to The Farmhouse's combination of the comforts of an upmarket hotel with the space and freedom of our own home, we'd soon forgotten about winter and by the time we left, were brimming with the joys of spring.



A three-night stay at The Farmhouse costs from £511; Latitude50.co.uk