



Destination Cornwall



Cornish Sailing Adventure



Sailing in Cornwall

Traditional Sailing boats like Eve, Annabel J and Leader are powered by the wind, but to harness it requires quite a bit of satisfying physical effort and teamwork. There are no winches on board except the antique brass handled windlass, so you soon get to know your fellow guests as you haul on blocks and tackles as we glide effortlessly through the water with 180 tons of oak and larch propelled by the wind or tide.

Wildlife at Sea & Ashore

The remoteness of the Cornish coast this far west brings its own special reward to those who travel with us: Starry nights with no street lights; ocean sunsets, isolated lighthouses and tiny fishing harbours; cliffs sculptured by pounding winter gales; almost tropical white sands with sparkling mica sticking to your toes; woodlands stunted by the wind but with trees adorned with lichen (a sure sign of unpolluted air) and lush ferns and springs along the many coastal footpaths.

The Gulf Stream provides unexpected sightings of turtles, sunfish and more regular visits by dolphins (common, bottlenose and risso's dolphin), porpoises, whales and giant basking sharks. Gales often bring in wheeling gannets, tiny storm petrels, guillemots, razorbills and even puffins.

The Fal and Helford Estuaries are designated as Special Areas of Marine Interest. Breeding seals hide in sea caves and deep zawns, which is a West Cornwall term for 'chasm'. The drowned river valleys (called rias) have dense oak woodlands with branches sweeping down to deep green waters. At low tide the mudflats are home to egrets, curlews, oystercatchers and leggy herons—all the birds that go screech. At night you hear owls hooting in the moonlight, and a few guests have seen elusive otters in the early morning mists.

We record all wildlife sightings in the ships log and occasionally run specialist wildlife voyages or marine conservation breaks on Eve, but you only need to keep your eyes peeled on any voyage to see the best wildlife moments. Our Skippers have learned much from the wildlife experts we have invited on board. Both Debbie and Adam are accredited (Wise) wildlife safe operators and we encourage all new skippers to develop their wildlife expertise.

We have some world class dive spots locally and in the Scillies due to the lack of major sediment bearing rivers, rich underwater ecosystem and wrecks, so it is well worth bringing a snorkel, mask & wetsuit in summer in case you have mermaid (or merman) tendencies. Many of our anchorages are near interesting rock pools, eel grass, or maerl beds where seahorses hide.

All Inclusive Cornwall Activity Holiday

There is more to life than sailing and learning the difference between a gaff topsail sheet and a bobstay tackle. On our sailing holidays in Cornwall you can row a clinker dinghy with 13ft oars like a gig boat; Dive off the back of the boat at anchor; go wild swimming with our skippers; scramble amongst the rock pools; Jump off St Mawes or Coverack harbour wall with the locals; go snorkelling in a marine nature reserve; indulge in a bit of tightrope walking to reach the end of the 13ft bowsprit; and if the hauling on ropes and keeping your balance at sea is still not active enough for you then try some extreme watersports on the way home for example coasteering or kite surfing.



Store Your Toys with Us

If you join us for a voyage and want to combine it with other Cornish activity holiday plans - we have space at our Portsatho office or St Mawes to look after kayaks / surf boards / tents / back packing gear / bikes as long as you warn us in advance. We can suggest where you can hire Kayaks or mountain bikes locally, lend you a map, or just give you the benefit of our local knowledge.

You can hire sit-on Canoes in St Mawes harbour from Mark. He even has a few with a glass bottom section called Peek a Boo! www.stmaweskayaks.co.uk

Create your own multi activity expedition to Cornwall. A good general research site for planning your active outdoor break in Cornwall is the Cornwall Guide website.



So where do we sail to?

From our base in St Mawes it's easy to sail into Falmouth Bay - one of the biggest natural harbours in the world. We might go south west past the Manacles to small fishing villages like Cadgwith or Coverack, or further afield around the Lizard to Penzance, Newlyn and St Michaels Mount. The Helford estuary is great for an evening row to a pub and a return in the dark with stars above and phosphorescence in the water below. Eastwards, we can blast between famous headlands like The Dodman and Gribben, anchor off National Trust beaches or make a dramatic entrance into Fowey. In wilder weather there are plenty more sheltered options within the deep water inlets of the Fal. All voyages are determined by the wind. Below, you will find a handful of the most popular destinations, however we will always endeavour to incorporate a healthy mix of quiet and secluded anchorages, with busier harbour visits.



St Mawes - Home of the Pilot Cutters

In the 19th Century St Mawes was famous as the home port for many Falmouth registered pilot cutters. It all helps to give you a warm welcome and the locals are always keen to hear about your adventures when you return.

St Mawes has a long history of wooden boatbuilding and the Peters yard was famous for building the best six oared pilot gigs in Cornwall. In 2009 the Roseland Gig Club girls won the World Championships - an event with 120 gig boats racing - so give them a cheer when they row past.

In Summer you will also see many Falmouth Oyster Boats racing with their colourful jackyard topsails. From the 1st of October each year the oyster dredging season starts - a rare sustainable fishery where the oysters must be fished under sail or oar alone. It is an evocative sight if you sail late or early season so bring a camera.

Also a regular visitor to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is her bigger pilot cutter 'sister' 'Annabel J'. She comes down for our annual pilot cutter gathering and racing in June and spends most the summer in Cornwall, Isles of Scilly and Brittany. 120 year old Brixham Trawler 'Leader' will also be sailing in Cornish waters this summer, with three 6 day voyages to the Isles of Scilly.



Fowey, pronounced Foy to rhyme with Joy! Situated on the south coast of Cornwall between Looe and Mevagissey, Fowey is not only an historic town but also a commercial seaport. Over the centuries Fowey has grown and now stretches for about a mile along the west bank of the River Fowey to the mouth of the river. Situated on the opposite bank, also at the mouth of the river, is the village of Polruan. A regular passenger ferry connects the two and further up river a car ferry runs from Fowey to Bodinnick on the other side of the river.

Designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Fowey has much to offer with something for everyone. A natural harbour, it is a haven for yachtsmen and has had as many as 7,000 visiting yachts in a season. Fowey is an exporting port for china clay and as such you may see the ships making their way in and out of the harbour. Over the last few years Fowey has been a popular destination for several cruise liners, whose passengers are able to enjoy the delights of the town. What a sight to see these enormous ships come through the narrow harbour entrance, turn in the middle of the river and be pulled upstream to their mooring. If you are interested in walking, albeit a gentle stroll along the Esplanade on a warm summer's evening or a hike around the cliffs, then there is something for everyone to enjoy.



The town boasts an excellent selection of quality shops and galleries, many exhibiting local works. If you are looking for refreshment be it a pint, a cream tea, fish and chips, a family meal or a gourmet dinner for a special occasion, then there is something to suit all tastes.

Fowey is a very special place and has been home to many famous people over the years.

Mevagissey is an attractive old town, whose name is derived from two saints, St Meva and St Issey. It was once the centre of Cornwall's pilchard fishery and which still boasts a working harbour. It has a tradition of boat building dating back to 1745. Many of the old buildings, constructed of slate and cob, bear testimony to a time when the large shoals of pilchards were the livelihood of the whole village. The streets here are very thin and narrow, which makes arriving by sea all the more enjoyable, as pedestrians often overrule cars in this very popular village. However, if you find yourself mooring overnight on the harbour wall, it will test your skills if happening upon a spring tide, as the tidal range can be enormous.



The Helford River is a delightful unspoilt estuary stretching from the outer edge of Falmouth Bay up to the old port of Gweek. It offers the visiting sailor many nooks and crannies to explore, good food to eat and a very interesting sailing area.

In the broad lower reaches open fields run down to a rocky shore dotted with little beaches. On the north bank the beautiful valley gardens of Glendurgan and Trebah lead down to Durgan village and Polwigwidden Cove; famous for its part in the D-day embarkation.

Where the river narrows, Helford on the south shore and Helford Passage on the north are still linked by a pedestrian ferry that has been in operation since the Middle Ages. This part of the river is now largely given over to yacht moorings, with a handful of active fishing boats.

Around the corner in Port Navas, where huge granite blocks were once loaded for shipment to London, the Duchy Oyster Farm is now thriving again. Further up river, past the oyster beds and beyond Frenchman's Creek to the south and Polwheveral to the north, ancient oak woods line the banks creating a truly timeless atmosphere.

Falmouth has been shaped and influenced by its strong connection to the sea. A fascinating maritime heritage sits comfortably alongside the creative and contemporary, building a name for itself as one of the South West's leading food, cultural and festival destinations.

Henry VIII built Pendennis Castle to defend the Carrick Roads in 1540, which, together with St Mawes Castle on the east side meant that the estuary entrance was well guarded. Sir John Killigrew created the town of Falmouth shortly after 1613, which received a charter from Charles II in 1661. A new church was consecrated in 1665 and there was soon a cluster of a few hundred homes around the Church of "King Charles the Martyr".

In 1688, Falmouth was made the Royal Mail packet station. In 1805, the news of Britain's victory (and Admiral Nelson's death) at Trafalgar was landed here at the steps of Fishstrand Quay from the schooner H.M.S. Pickle and taken to London by stagecoach.

The development of Falmouth Docks began in 1858 with the first ship entering in 1861. The railway reached the town soon after, in 1863. This brought prosperity and also tourism to the town. Perhaps surprisingly, Falmouth boasts three railway stations; Falmouth Docks, Falmouth Town and Penmere.

Falmouth was the launching point for "Operation Chariot" in WWII, the famous Commando raid on the heavily defended docks of St Nazaire in France. This led directly to the sinking of the Bismarck by depriving her of a repair port.

The National Maritime Museum Cornwall was formerly opened on 14th March 2003 by the Duke of York, HRH Prince Andrew. Falmouth now has its own university, the University College Falmouth; with two campuses located at Wood Lane and Tremough offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses mainly in the fields of Art, Design and Media.



It is possible to sail to Truro, by heading North up the Carrick Roads. The channel will take you past Mylor, where Ben Ainsley learnt to sail, and indeed where Tom Phipps, Dart 18's 2010 World Champion, sails from. Continuing on, you will pass Restouquet Point, following the channel past Loe Beach and up towards the King Harry Ferry. Shortly after this point you pass Smugglers Cottage and the huge tankers moored here, which is a site to be seen to be believed! The river turns into the Truro River and continues to Truro. Along the way there are secluded moorings, and wonderful creeks to explore, un-navigable by anything other than a row boat. A great safe area to sail when there is a storm at sea, or an interesting exercise to navigate at low tide. This area alone could provide a few days of leisurely summer fun, enjoying glorious river scenes, long lunches and good company.

Exploring ashore is part of why we sail. Our skippers know the shoreline like smugglers and have spent years finding every small stone landing stage and secret cove to land a boat. We want to share the delights of unspoilt Cornwall with you.

Newlyn is home to one of largest fishing fleets in the UK, with over 40 acres of harbour. The industry is one of the most important in the county, contributing millions of pounds to the Cornish economy each year. All sorts of fishing vessels can be seen in the harbour, beam trawlers, long liners, crabbers, and even small open boats used for hand lining for mackerel in the bay.

The port was sacked and torched by a Spanish raiding party in the 16th century, then rebuilt. Today very little of old Newlyn remains. Many of the white painted or stone faced granite cottages, separated by steep narrow lanes, were only saved by the outbreak of the second world war. The medieval harbour walls are dwarfed by the hundred year old walls of the North and South piers.

Newlyn has several galleries, a chandlers and a handful of other shops, but not much else in the way of high street shopping. The fish market is certainly worth a visit early in the morning, and the annual Newlyn fish festival attracts people from far and wide, held every year on August Bank Holiday Monday.



Penzance owes its name ('holy headland' from the Cornish *pen* and *sans*) to the small rocky headland to the south of the harbour and the chapel which once stood just inland (on or close to the site of the present church).

The settlement of Penzance would have been not a great deal more than this for much of its history until the sixteenth century, Mousehole being the principal harbour on Mount's Bay before then. Following its burning by the Spanish in 1565, much of the infant town had to be rebuilt and it was not long before it was incorporated as a borough.

In 1663 Charles II made Penzance a new coinage town for the tin industry, removing this privilege from Bodmin and Lostwithiel at the same time and thus marking the westward movement of mining activity. From then on Penzance did not look back: its maritime trade became increasingly varied and vigorous and the town developed as a market for the whole of West Cornwall. Today Penzance is undeniably one of Cornwall's most attractive towns, both in terms of its architecture and position and, perhaps more importantly, its spirit.

Mousehole (pronounced "Mowzel") is one of Cornwall's most picturesque hamlets; a stunning collection of yellow-lichened houses, built from the local finely grained Lamorna granite, huddled together around the inner edge of the harbour - protected from the force of the sea coming across Mounts Bay by two sturdy breakwaters.



Mousehole is a very attractive tourist destination. A small and very safe beach is located in a sheltered part of the harbour which is popular with families, particularly those with small children- an ideal location for family days out, with safe bathing, quite literally at your feet.

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2012 Dates for your diary

Oyster Weekend, Flushing	24th and 25th March
Oyster Gathering and Seafood Fest, Mylor	30th Mar - 1st April
Golowan Maritime Festival	22, 23 and 24th May
6th Annual Pilot Cutter Review	26, 27 and 28th May
Fastnet Race for Pilot Cutters	28th May - 4th June
Falmouth River Festival	1st - 10th June
Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festival	15, 16 and 17th June
J Class Regatta	26th - 30th June
Pendennis Cup	2nd - 7th July
Sea, Salt and Sails	6, 7 and 8th July
Falmouth Oyster Festival	13th - 18th October

There is lots going on in Cornwall, so why not combine a sailing holiday with some land based adventure, try some of our exquisite seafood, visit the Eden Project, the Tate in St Ives, or if you want to walk a bit of the South West Coast Path then the official SW Coast Path website is brilliant, with maps and circular walks and accommodation suggestions.

We want your visit to Cornwall to be a fantastic experience, and will do whatever we can to ensure that you take away some wonderful memories. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding our holidays to Cornwall or if you need help to combine it with another adventure.

