

ST IVES

Jessica Basi rides the waves, befriends a sea captain and searches out the best seafood in town as she gets to grips with the popular Cornish holiday hangout

Why go? Go for the art scene. Go for the surf schools and sunshine. By all means go for the pasties. But once you've spent a couple of days in this southerly stretch of Cornish coast line, it will be down to the all-consuming contentment that just being around glimmering water and a warm, unassuming local crowd brings, that you won't want to leave.

What to do The pink Parisian-like hue that lights St Ives has been drawing abstract artists here since the 1920s. Works from the likes of Barbara Hepworth and Linder adorn The Tate - a Guggenheim-style structure backing on to Porthmeor Beach (tate.org.uk). If you're so inspired, drop in to an art class at nearby St Ives School of Painting (stivesartschool.co.uk). Courses vary from full-week boot camps to a half-day dabble. Mapping out shapes in the sand with bamboo sticks may not be what you expect, but it certainly eradicates any artistic inhibitions. A smuggler's scurry through The Digey (a cobbled street running the stretch of the city where pilferers used to stow their booty) brings you to the harbour front, where Skipper Derek runs tours out to Seal Island aboard Dolly P (stivesboats.co.uk). Say hello to pups sprawled across the rocks before speeding back to base and hopping in a dinghy boat to return to shore. In a style of fishing that brings the title of 'sport' into sharp focus, you'll see local residents kicking back with bottles of cider along the harbour walls, paying little attention to their rods propped up against the railings. Hire some equipment from one of the many tackle shops around and see how you fare. The waves at Porthminster Beach on the other side of town can reach over ten metres high on their most ferocious days, ideal for testing your surf skills with a crash course (stivessurfschool.co.uk). Back on neighbouring Porthmeor, the beachside café will provide you with blankets to warm up after battling the breakers (porthmeor-beach.co.uk). Yes, sunsets are cliché. Suffice to say the ones in St Ives are special, and a weekend spent here without catching the gradual morphing of blue to hazy purple would be an error.

Travel information

St Ives is about five and a half hours by train from London, or around six hours' drive.

Getting there

South West Trains (southwesttrains.co.uk) runs regular services from London Paddington to St Ives.

First Great Western (firstgreatwestern.co.uk) also operates a service departing from London Paddington.

AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min °C	4	4	5	6	9	11	13	14	12	9	7	5
Max °C	9	9	10	12	15	17	19	19	18	15	12	9
mm	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	4

Clockwise from top left: a choice of tipples at Boskerris Hotel's bar; the pad's cosy living room; St Ives harbour; a view of The Island; fresh seafood; a classic pasty; an offering from Seagrass Restaurant; Porthminster Beach Café; a lazy lunch at Seagrass; a room with a view at Boskerris

