



Glynn Barton holiday cottages in Bodmin



Learning to surf on the beach at Polzeath

Cornish coastline offers time out, treats and togetherness

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I'm laying belly down on a board bigger than me, catching a wave all the way back to the shore with a Cheshire-cat grin spread across my face.

It's taken me 44 years to have a go at surfing, and I can't believe how much I like it. Polzeath beach, on the north coast of Cornwall, is abuzz with cafes, galleries, dog walkers and sandcastle builders, as we arrive for our two-hour surf lesson (from £45, wavehunters.co.uk).

I'm here with my family – seasonal surfer husband James, and my two daughters, Rosie, 14 and Poppy, 11. We squeeze our bodies into delightfully damp and sandy wetsuits, ace our instruction from surf bum Grace (at least whilst we're on the sand) and then head into the water, where all the tips and tricks disappear from my brain. I do get better the more I try, but even by the end of the session, I get as close to standing up as the Atlantic is from the Tasman Sea.

But I'm having a ball, am not remotely cold and I'm loving watching my kids catch waves and almost master riding them in. I'm only a bit sad it's taken me until now to do it with them.

We don dry-robos and pootle back to our base for the week – Glynn Barton holiday cottages in Bodmin – a 45-minute drive away.

Surrounded by 13 acres of forest, Glynn Barton is a hit with families. Pippa and Jim, who run this giant operation almost single-handedly, bar a few cleaners and one member of staff who now works 16 hours a week, met at school.

They seem to have thought of everything, from a ride-on area for toddlers, mini soft play and morning animal feeds, to an adventure playground, games room, and secret passageways to mud kitchens and hidey holes. Kids of all ages – including moody teenagers – will be chuffed.



Flying above the forest at Hangloose Adventure, which offers England's fastest zip wire

self-catering cottage, Hayloft – a cosy and quaint upside-down house. There are eight cottages and four 'glamps' here – the whole site sleeps up to 60, but it can often feel like you're on your own.

To relax into the holiday, I book a massage in our cottage (from £50 an hour) and boot out the family to buy supplies and have a dip in the pool (anyone can swim between 4-7pm and you can book a private slot at all other times, completely free of charge).

My therapist Carole sets everything up – spa music and electric diffuser included – and gets to work kneading out my stiff back and knotty shoulders, even doing some reflexology as I drift in and out of consciousness.

There's so much to do in Cornwall and although riding a bike in the rain is rarely on my holiday hit list, here I am, telling my kids (and myself) to try and have fun anyway.

The Camel Trail in Bodmin, and advises us on the various routes we can take – as well as the all-important cafe pit stops en route.

More rainy-day fun awaits on a Wavehunters Sea Safari (£42.50pp), where we board a rib boat and splash and splatter our way across the ocean. The wildlife watching is in short supply, no matter how hard we pray to the sea gods for dolphins. It's just the birds manning the waves today.

For food and drink, we mainly cook in the cottage, but one night, we take a four-minute drive to the flashy location of Bodmin Flooring & Carpet Centre car park. Wild Bake pizza trailer (wildbake.co.uk) sets up here every Tuesday night (and comes highly recommended by the locals, who all turn up to collect their pre-orders).

As a holiday treat, we eat at the delectable Duchy of Cornwall Nursery café (duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk) and drive away.

I decide to finish our trip to Cornwall in a similar way to how it started – facing fears and embracing adventure. After a morning learning about sustainability, exploring biomes and building dens at the Eden Project (adult tickets from £33, children from £11), we head next door to Hangloose Adventure, where we throw ourselves across the forest on England's fastest zipwire (£42pp). Afraid of heights, speed and plummeting to the ground, I gingerly spread my arms out like Superman and squeal uncontrollably as I launch my shaking body into the sky.

Cornwall has so much adventure to offer families, and you're never too old to get started.

● Glynn Barton in Cornwall comprises eight cottages and four luxury glamping tents, sleeping two to six per unit. Prices start at £800 per week. To book, visit farmstay.co.uk or call 01208 821 104. **Farm Stay UK** is a not for profit, promoting farm and rural holidays.

