

It's never too late to try something new in family favourite holiday hotspot Cornwall

Claire Spreadbury and her family head to the coast for time out, treats and togetherness

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-robies 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.

"I used to work in luxury fashion, as you can tell," Pippa jokes, gesturing towards her green



Hangloose Adventure's fastest zipwire in England

wellies, mud-stained denim shorts and an old hoody. They both worked out in the Middle East and loved it, but when kids came along, something had to change.

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 have a ball here, because it feels safe enough to let them roam free. It feels like a

welcome return to the Eighties, as our girls leave their phones behind and disappear to wherever they want, only checking what time they need to be back.

The animals here have excellent names – Shane the wallaby after late cricketer Shane Warne and Alan the black and white goat after former Newcastle footballer Alan Shearer. Bert and Ernie, the alpacas, bask in the sunshine,

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watching on as Rosie and Poppy give Flo Jo and Heggy – the Shetland ponies – a good brush.

We're staying in three-bedroom 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. Martin from Explore by Bike (explorebybike.co.uk) has a hut near 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.

We hire bikes (£14 for a half day) and pedal off to Poley's Bridge – a 12-mile round trip with plenty of tree cover to hide us from the rain. Nature envelops the trail in all directions as the whoosh of the weir blocks out any sounds in my head, and gravel crunches beneath me as my wheels whirl over it. Droplets of rain patter on my helmet, but I really don't have a care in the world. There is lush greenery everywhere I look, and the kids keep me entertained with chants of, 'Look, I've mastered my one-handed bum clench!'

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, with cormorants drying their wings in the breeze like old men in flasher macs, gannets circling above our heads hoping for a catch and three very rare Manx shearwaters skimming the surf. But two hours ogling utterly stunning rock faces, secret sea caves and every shade of green the earth can create, all the while squealing and laughing as we lose our stomachs crash landing into white water, is time thoroughly well spent.

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). We pick a pizza each (prices from £9) and indulge in a cheeky Snickers and banana calzone for £7.

As a holiday treat, we eat at the delectable Duchy of Cornwall Nursery café (duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk) in Lostwithiel – a 15-minute drive away. Beautifully decorated in earthy shades, with square wooden tables and wood-trimmed archway windows, baskets hang

from the ceiling and glass cloches spill over with delicious cakes. One wall is hand-painted with bountiful botanicals by Florence Super, who has also painted murals for chefs Rick Stein and Nathan Outlaw.

We feast on giant, flavoursome salads (around £15), salty skinny fries (£4), homemade lemonade (£4) and garden spritzes (£5). Steaming cups of coffee and Earl Grey tea are served in striped crockery, with enormous slabs of cake (£5) and a chocolate and peanut sundae (£7.50) that is so rich and flavoursome, two spoons might have been a better option.

Outside, tables and chairs come with cosy blankets to wrap up in, and the garden centre is bursting with homeware, plants and information.

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 biomass 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.

How to plan your trip

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. Bookings go direct to the farm owner, providing a better deal for holidaymakers and farmers alike.