

10 BEST HISTORIC SEASIDE DESTINATIONS

For more than 150 years British holidaymakers and daytrippers have escaped to the coast for leisure, pleasure and to boost wellbeing – here's our pick of history-rich resorts

WORDS OLIVER-JAMES CAMPBELL

Sticks of rock, ice cream, donkey rides, sandcastles, fish and chips, Punch and Judy, saucy postcards, grand hotels, pretty cottages and friendly B&Bs – we British love a seaside escape. So much so, that the traditional seaside experience has become woven into our national consciousness. It all took off with the advent of the railways in the mid-19th

century, bringing coastal destinations within easy reach of city dwellers and giving seaside towns the impetus to provide all kinds of fun and entertainment. Now, as domestic holidays are more popular than ever, and with piers, sea bathing pools and promenades being restored and revived, this rich seam of history is ripe for rediscovery.





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1 FOR... VICTORIAN ATMOSPHERE SCARBOROUGH, NORTH YORKSHIRE

As one of Britain's earliest seaside resorts, Scarborough is steeped in Victorian history, seen throughout the town's architecture, such as the railway station, the Grand Hotel, the spa and the cliffside tram, opened in 1875 and still in use today. South Bay contains an array of shops, amusements and amenities and is connected to North Bay via Marine Drive, an extensive promenade. Meanwhile, the town's rocky promontory supports the looming 12th-century Scarborough Castle.

Where to stay: The Grand Hotel was the largest hotel in Europe when it opened in 1867. Price from £72 per room per night. To book, call 0871 222 0047 or go to britanniahotels.com/hotels/the-grand-hotel-Scarborough.

2 FOR... BRIGHT LIGHTS BLACKPOOL, LANCASHIRE

One of Britain's most famous seaside resorts, Blackpool has

always been a beacon of pleasure. Hard-working families of the industrial north flocked there to enjoy the piers, the Winter Gardens, Blackpool Tower and Blackpool Pleasure Beach. The town boasts the country's only surviving first-generation tramway, which our Victorian ancestors would certainly have used. It whisks visitors to the various piers that host a large ferris wheel, fairground rides, amusement arcades and more.

Where to stay: The Clifton Arms Hotel has seafront views. Prices from £155 per room per night. To book, call 01253 739898 or go to cliftonarmslytham.com.

3 FOR... ROYAL RELICS RAMSGATE, KENT

Within striking distance of continental Europe, it's no wonder Ramsgate has a cosmopolitan aura. The former garrison town rose to prominence during the Napoleonic Wars when it became the main embarkation point for soldiers, and is full of Georgian and Regency properties. At its heart is Royal Harbour, as decreed



by King George IV in 1821, and the nearby marina, which is packed with elegant yachts. At the Main Sands are deep shelter tunnels from World War II, now open to the public for tours.

Where to stay: Albion House Hotel has entertained royalty, politicians and artists. Prices from £110 per room per night. To book, call 01843 606630 or go to albionhouseramsgate.co.uk.

4 FOR... SCOTTISH STYLE FIRTH OF CLYDE, SCOTLAND

Located off the west coast of Scotland, the Firth first became popular with Glaswegians who would travel on Clyde Steamers to reach the assortment of small towns and islands strung along the coastline. Along with the Isle of Arran and the sacred Holy Isle, the Isle of Bute bristles with interest. The main town of Rothesay has palm trees and a promenade, as well as the most complete Victorian toilets in Britain (clad in tiles bearing the crest of the Royal Burgh of Rothesay). Another star turn is the palatial Mount Stuart, built in the late 19th century by the 3rd Marquess



of Bute, and now open to public appreciation.

Where to stay: Cannon House Hotel on Bute overlooks Rothesay Bay and the Kyles. Prices from £70 per room per night. To book, call 01700 502819 or go to cannonhousehotel.co.uk.

5 FOR... FIGHTING SPIRIT CROYDE, NORTH DEVON

One of the UK's best surfing spots, the village of Croyde is blessed with sandy beaches and spectacular coastal scenery including Baggy Point, owned by the National Trust. Emerging as a resort in the 1930s, Croyde Bay was originally earmarked as a seaside retreat for members of the NALGO union (now UNISON), but during World War II became the headquarters of the US Army. Find out how troops practised D-Day manoeuvres at the Morthoe Museum.

Where to stay: The Art Deco-style Saunton Sands Hotel & Spa is perched on the cliff-tops. Prices from £164 per room per night. To book, call 01271 890212 or go to sauntonsands.co.uk. ➡➡➡



6 FOR... WELSH HOSPITALITY LLANDUDNO, WALES

The largest seaside town in Wales, Llandudno is hailed as the 'Queen of the Welsh resorts' due to its multitude of sandy beaches and Victorian cable tramway. The town, which first emerged as a seaside star in 1848, is sheltered by the Great Orme, an unspoilt limestone headland that juts out into the sea. Dominating the North Shore Promenade is The Grand Hotel, dating to 1901 and castle-like in appearance, which has hosted the likes of Sir Winston Churchill and The Beatles. Every May bank holiday weekend, the town puts on a three-day Victorian period carnival that delights tourists and locals alike.

Where to stay: It has to be The Grand Hotel. Price from £79 per room per night. To book, call 0871 222 0046 or go to britanniahotels.com/hotels/the-grand-hotel-llandudno.





7 FOR... NORTHERN CLIMES TYNEMOUTH, TYNE & WEAR

PALACE PIER PHOTOGRAPH VISIT BRIGHTON
Golden sands, azure seas, surfing and staggering cliffs – Geordieland is still regularly voted one of the best stretches of beach in the UK, and Tynemouth's Longsands has been popular with bathers for more than 150 years. The railway station, which opened in 1882 to accommodate day-trippers, is noted for its ornate interior of Victorian ironwork, while the view towards Tynemouth Priory and Castle with King Edward's Bay below is breathtaking.

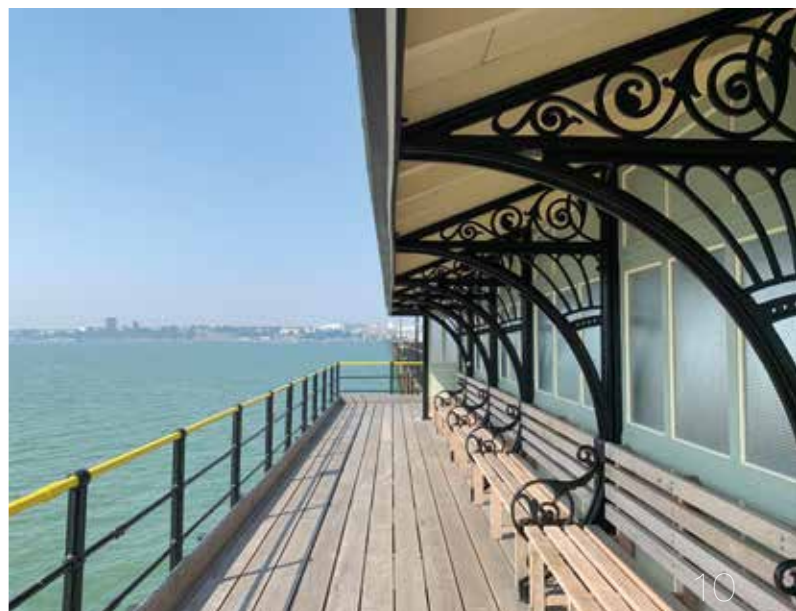
Where to stay: The View, Old Coastguard Cottage, sleeps 10 and once belonged to the Queen. Prices from £549 for a week's stay. To book, go to cottageworld.com.



8 FOR... CROWDED BEACHES BRIGHTON, EAST SUSSEX

Home to Brighton Pier, the fifth-most visited tourist destination in the UK, Brighton is known as the 'hippest city', the 'happiest place to live in the UK' and the unofficial 'gay capital of the UK'. Every year, hundreds of thousands of day-trippers arrive to enjoy eight miles of beach, Regency architecture, the Royal Pavilion (King George IV's seaside pleasure palace), and sometimes Cliff Beach, Britain's first naturist spot. Close by are the iconic Hove Beach Huts, erected in 1923.

Where to stay: Red Brighton Blue is a Grade II listed Georgian townhouse. Prices from £89 per room per night, B&B. To book, call 01273 256300 or go to redbrightonblue.com. ➡➡➡



PORTRUSH PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS HILL PHOTOGRAPHIC
DUNLUCE CASTLE PHOTOGRAPH BRIAN MORRISON
PIER PHOTOGRAPH SOUTHEND BOROUGH COUNCIL

9 FOR... OCEAN GOLF PORTRUSH, NORTHERN IRELAND

If golf is your thing, then Portrush is the place. The County Antrim resort is home to the Royal Portrush Golf Club, the only Irish golf club to have hosted the prestigious Open Championship twice. Renowned for its three Blue Flag beaches – the West Strand, East Strand and the Whiterocks – the resort is brimming with restaurants, bars, oh, and students from the University of Ulster campus in Coleraine. RNLI lifeboats have operated out of Portrush Harbour since 1860, and the brave crews have won 28 awards for gallantry.

Where to stay: Carnalbanagh House is a tranquil B&B. Prices from £85 per room per night. To book, call 028 7083 6294 or go to carnban.com.

10 FOR... A SENSE OF TRADITION SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, ESSEX

Home to the longest pleasure pier in the world, Southend was a fishing village before being stirred into life by Princess Caroline of Brunswick (the wife of King George IV). Given the royal nod, Southend's stock grew exponentially, blossoming out into an array of amusements and amenities, and a cliff lift connecting the seafront to the High Street of what's now a city. Soak up the ancient past at the ruins of Prittlewell Priory, where a 12th-century doorway still stands, then chill in Priory Park, 45 beautiful acres featuring a Victorian bandstand and formal gardens.

Where to stay: Suenos Guesthouse is a luxury B&B with Spanish flair. Prices from £79 a room per night. To book, call 01702 584180 or go to suenosguesthouse.com.