



Cornwall in the off season

Wild beaches, winter walks and hunkering down at THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay

Forget the summer crowds. From October until early April, discover a wilder, more elemental side of North Cornwall, where empty beaches, bracing coastal walks and cosy country-house comforts make winter the season to escape.

There's Cornwall in summer, with ice creams on the harbour, suncream on sandy shoulders and the familiar hunt for a parking space. And then there's Cornwall in the off season - when the crowds have disappeared, the Atlantic feels gloriously untamed and the landscape takes centre stage.

From October through to early April, the coastline around Harlyn Bay and Constantine Bay reveals a different side of North Cornwall. Beaches that heave in the summer months become wonderfully spacious, the light shifts from silver to slate in a matter of moments, and a walk along the coast path can feel like having the whole world to yourself. There may be a little mizzle, but that's part of the charm: this is Cornwall at its most atmospheric, with the added pleasure of somewhere inviting to return to when the wind picks up.

Hunker down at THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay

For those who like their coastal adventures balanced with a generous dose of comfort, THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay is the place to head. Set in a breathtakingly beautiful manor house near Harlyn Beach, this characterful Cornish PIG is made for winter escapes, with inky wall colours, rustic timber-clad bedrooms and tucked-away snugs that invite guests to settle in with a book or linger over an aperitif beside one of the many wood burning fires.

The dining room glows by candlelight, while the kitchen celebrates seasonal produce and the local Cornish larder, in keeping with THE PIG's distinctive 25-mile menu philosophy. After a day

outdoors, there is something particularly satisfying about sitting down to a proper supper, knowing the weather can do its worst beyond the windows.

For a little extra winter rejuvenation, the Potting Sheds tucked away in the kitchen garden offers treatments using nourishing and natural products by Tribe517. Add a bracing walk on Harlyn Beach, a hot chocolate on returning and an evening with nowhere else to be, and the appeal of the off season becomes obvious.

Constantine Bay: Cornwall without the crowds

Just along the coast, Constantine Bay is every bit as beautiful in winter as it is in summer - arguably more so. Its sweeping golden beach, rolling waves and rock pools invite long walks and unhurried exploration, while the dunes offer shelter when the breeze gets up.

In the warmer months, parking can be a challenge, and tables at popular restaurants need planning well ahead. In winter, there is more room to roam and often more freedom to be spontaneous. Pick up a pasty and steaming coffee, wait for the mizzle to lift, then head down to the sand to watch the waves roll in.

For those up for a longer yomp, the Southwest Coast Path opens up the dramatic headlands around Trevoze Head, with Mother Ivey's Bay and other beautiful beaches within reach. Nearby Padstow, so lively in summer, becomes a more relaxed place to browse its shops, settle into a historic pub or enjoy a long lunch.

The pleasure of doing less

The beauty of a winter break in North Cornwall is that it doesn't require an elaborate itinerary. Mornings can begin with a walk beside the Atlantic; afternoons might involve exploring Padstow or simply returning to the warmth of THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay; evenings are for good food, a comfortable room and the luxury of not having to rush anywhere.

It is also a chance to experience Cornwall as a living, working place beyond the main holiday season, supporting the local businesses and hospitality venues that keep the area thriving throughout the year.

The off season isn't about making summer last longer. It is about discovering something different: the rawness of the landscape, the drama of the weather, the quiet of the beaches and the pleasure of hunkering down somewhere that feels like home.

THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay offers room-only doubles from £245 - thepighotel.com/at-harlyn-bay.