



THREE MILE
BEACH



Swell

My Endless
SUMMER

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Time spent at Three Mile Beach, where the nostalgia of days past meets laid-back luxury in the dunes.

Turn the clock back some 30 years and I find my teenage self, surfboard under arm, standing on the dunes overlooking what, to me, is one of the most magical bays in the world. Stretching from Godrevy, marked by the iconic lighthouse of the same name, across Gwithian sands, on past Mexico Towans and then to Hayle, this three-mile stretch of beach is the playground of my youth. It feels like the sand and the surf here is perpetual; I close my eyes and the sound of the waves and the call of the gulls offer an ocean soundtrack that soothes body and mind. This is the start of my endless summer.



School's out, and after days of waves and summer sun, each one ends with a yearning gaze to the rows of wooden beach shacks that back the dunes above the beach. Every one individual, many a little ramshackle, all with their faces to the ocean. This clapboard community is where I dreamed of staying, sharing the excitement of the day with a beer on a veranda, watching one of Gwithian's dramatic and beautiful sunsets.

Back then, my recollection of Cornish coastal accommodation was restricted to Hi-de-Hi! style holiday camps or Fawlty Towers-esque hotels. I was in awe of those who were lucky enough to happen upon these quirky coastal holiday homes in an age when the internet didn't afford searching at the touch of a button. Today, the quality and quantity of holiday accommodation in Cornwall has surpassed that which anyone could have imagined. More than a year of travel restrictions to the rest of the world has meant that the great and the good are now choosing the Duchy as their holiday destination of choice.

While a plethora of opulent seaside hotels, boutique cottages and high-end lodge sites across the Duchy offer the ultimate holiday, I was in search of a stay that would rekindle that endless summer of my youth, while catering to my now 50-year-old self's desire for a combination of family fun with more than a little touch of luxury. I happened upon Three Mile Beach, the brainchild of Audley Travel founder Craig Burkinshaw and his partner Jo Le Bon.





RETREAT



With an aim to ‘redefine the self-catering experience’, these 15 beach houses are hidden amongst those very dunes that hold such a special place in my heart. We pack up like excited teenagers on their first foreign holiday. It’s been a while since we’ve been away from home (Covid saw off our annual forays to warmer climes) and so our children are beside themselves at the thought of a holiday. With the car packed, we drive the short distance from home to Gwithian, but on arrival we could be a world away. Our holiday home, Ruby Tuesday - named after the songs of Jo’s life that conjure fun, freedom, and positivity and read like the ultimate holiday soundtrack - is clothed in resplendent deep pink clapboard, much to my daughter’s delight, and couldn’t be a more sympathetic nod to those seaside shanty huts that I idolised as a child. Set back a little from the road, Ruby Tuesday hunkers down in a little hollow, sheltered from the prevailing winds and orientated in such a way that affords total privacy from its near neighbour.

Entry is effortless, which if travelling from further afield makes a big difference. There’s no waiting to be let in, no hunting for keys, just a simple keycode that is emailed to you in your welcome pack. I find myself taking a breath before I open the door; the anticipation of somewhere new always makes me feel somewhat nervous. I had no need to worry - I exhale deeply as I step into the cool, high-ceilinged entrance hall and my shoulders drop. But only for a moment, as a small stampede of excited children rush past eager to ‘bag’ the best bedroom! A difficult choice as they are all huge. The twin rooms have an extra, mezzanine bed in each, accessed by a little ladder, perfect for being a teenager. I lose mine to this private eyrie which allows me the chance to explore my own bedroom...

The bed is enormous, with a mattress so deep I feel a little like the Princess and the Pea as I jump onto its inviting, crisp cotton sheets. I lie there for a moment looking up at the ceiling, watching the fronds of an enormous jellyfish-like lampshade sway in the ocean breeze. I am in heaven and can’t wait to further soothe my soul in the slipper bath that lies at the foot of the bed. As I luxuriate in the peace, with the sweet scent of the sea in the air, a little hand grasps mine... “come on mummy, you have to see what else there is, it’s so brilliant!”

And my daughter’s not wrong. The kitchen is equipped with all you could ask for, including must-have gadgets and a cocktail cabinet in a jerry can - I kid you not!. A welcome tray groans with Cornish treats alongside spices and oils and there are cold drinks already chilling in the fridge. An expansive dining table with convivial benches takes centre stage in the open plan living area, with an enormous sofa designed specifically for loafing. There’s also another of those hideaway mezzanines in the apex of the living area - note to self, this is where I will be heading with my book.

The interiors are inspired by Jo’s travels and fit effortlessly within their surroundings. Nautical they are not, they don’t need to be; the ocean is on the doorstep and speaks for itself. Instead, the blank white canvas is peppered with unignorable finds from Jo’s travels, unusual artefacts and local artisanal treasures. The hairdryers find homes in straw bags, rice sacks and brightly coloured slippers are pinned to the walls, a set of bright crocheted juggling balls sit on the shelf next to a little library of well-chosen reads, while my favourites, an exuberant ceramic cactus and a deep red melon bowl adorn the dining table - it’s all joyous.

ABOVE
Bohemian beachside living



RETREAT



ABOVE
Ruby Tuesday, a special place to be enjoyed indoors and out.

We pull back the bi-fold doors that open out from the living area and find that Ruby Tuesday is the gift that keeps on giving. A vast decked area incorporates a sunken cedar hot tub, a barrel sauna, all-weather bean bags, an outdoor shower, surfboard storage, BeefEater BBQ and a large outdoor table under a sail canopy, providing shade for sunny days or shelter for al fresco dining on inclement ones. The landscaping, although in its infancy, sits perfectly within this coastal vernacular and its planting will mature to become a microcosm of the large dunes beyond. What strikes me here is that, although both the interior and exterior invite the use of as many superlatives as I can muster, Ruby Tuesday is not pretentious. She has no airs and graces, she's a place where bohemian beachside living is at its most authentic.

In a bid to give me a night off the cooking, we have booked a Ooni pizza oven (one of the many bookable extras on offer here that make holiday-life easier) which comes with a hamper stocked with enough fresh dough and ingredients to fuel a small army and is delivered at the time of our choosing by a Three Mile Beach 'host' who couldn't be friendlier and more helpful. She is immediately idolised by my daughter for her beach blonde hair, denim cut offs and retro 80s-style sandals and is representative of the super-relaxed and breezy vibe that Craig and Jo have worked so hard to create.

Our first evening sees us stroll along the beach which is so close it takes only minutes before you'll feel the sand between your feet. A quick dip is followed by the return to Ruby (as she's become affectionately known) and the first of many soaks in the hot tub. It takes a while to extract ourselves from the restorative warmth of the water, but it's happily followed

by a fun family evening of pizza and cards under the stars. Happy heads hit soft pillows and we drift off to the sound of the waves, dreams are of what our forthcoming beach days will hold.

Morning dawns and eager children don wetsuits for a surf lesson. Three Mile Beach collaborates with the nearby Global Boarders Surf School, offering lessons for every ability with arguably Cornwall's best surf coaches. This gives us a chance for a child-free couple of hours of gentle strolling along the beach, reconnecting with ourselves and each other. We notice that our pace has changed, even the children are happy to chill. There is no mad rush or tear, no need to go anywhere, we have all we need.

Although the kitchens are equipped so you can dine in your beach houses themselves, there is also the option to book a private chef, or visit the Three Mile Beach street food truck. We chose street food, it feels right with still salty skin and sandy toes. Our selection of tapas-style dishes burst with flavour and include fresh fish, fat mussels and crispy squid. As we feast, sun-kissed faces all round, there is eager chatter of the day and plans made for more adventures to follow. We retire once more, replete in every way.

We only stayed for days, but it felt like forever; this place is beyond what I could have imagined. It's for families and for friends. It's where you can relax and recharge but also where you can let your hair down and party. Craig and Jo's own house is just behind Three Mile Beach and you can feel their shared love for this unique place. I can only thank them for rekindling my endless summer.

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