

Tim Davey enjoys a stay in Porth – Newquay’s more sedate and attractive neighbour



Breath of fresh air near holiday Mecca

YOU do feel under-dressed in Newquay if: one, you’re not clad in a wetsuit; and, two, you don’t happen to be carrying a surfboard.

As anyone with an old-style Volkswagen caravanette will tell you, the Cornish town and its surrounding hinterland have thrown their lot in with those who worship the surf, no matter what season of the year it happens to be.

It’s brought the area worldwide recognition but there’s a heavy price being paid with the construction of some of the naffest, ugliest developments in prime locations you could wish for.

The mid boggles as you cast your eye across the skyline at how planning permission was ever obtained.

No matter, Newquay itself still manages to be jolly enough, though our visit, to be fair, was not at the height of its jam-packed season.

We headed down to Cornwall just ahead of the Easter weekend. British Summertime was ushered in on the Saturday night of our weekend break, which helped too.

But what really won us over was our choice of opting to stay not in Newquay, but somewhere just around the corner... Porth.

We liked Porth.

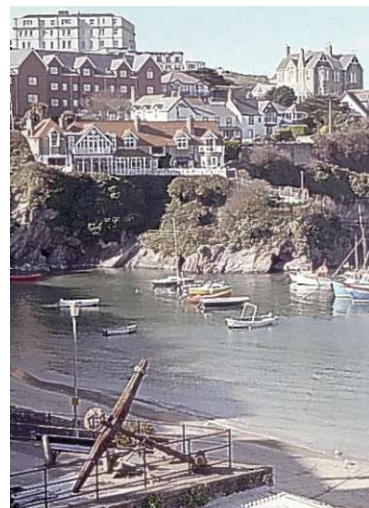
It is no more than five minutes by car to the very heart of Newquay yet it refuses to be overwhelmed by its brasher big brother of a neighbour.

It seems to stand its own ground. For example, no surfing of any sort is allowed on its beach come summer.

Which is sensible, it gives us mortals who don’t participate somewhere to seek refuge on a rather pleasant expanse of sand. A river runs through the beach too, and there’s a rather impressive headland.

Our choice of hotel was the Porth Veor Manor Hotel. This three-star establishment has a wonderful location. Its grounds (and our bedroom) looked right out across Porth beach and that headland.

It’s actually more than an hotel. Tastefully constructed around a heated outdoor pool adjacent to the main hotel building are a collection of impressive self-catering homes. In



Popular: Newquay harbour

fact, they complement the hotel architecturally and are rather like mini-homes.

The hotel itself is also exceedingly pleasant with a large conservatory which runs the full width of the property and offers those outstanding views too.

Porth Veor Manor, besides those self-catering add-ons, also comes with another bonus, a rather excellent restaurant called Beaucliffe’s which, judging by its popularity on the two nights we stayed there, has a firm following locally as well as from visitors like us.

We booked our first night’s meals there and decided it was so good we wouldn’t bother looking for anywhere else different on the second. We left it late, though, and it was only thanks to some help from Andrew the hotel manager that we squeezed into the place the following night.

Our two-night break covered the Saturday and Sunday evenings and the nice thing about travelling down to the South West from Bristol is that you can stop off at places, both on the way down and back. Which we did.

Arriving late morning, we decided to do the Newquay thing and, as we headed for the town’s old harbour, we were treated to a practice air-sea rescue with the lifeboats and RAF helicopter going through their drill.

We then headed to the hotel, dropped our bags in our room, and, as the sun was shining, wandered through its grounds and straight down the footpath leading to the local beach. From there we headed on to the headland with its Iron Age remains.

Next day, the weather forecast was all wrong. The sun was shining again. So we drove the 11 or so miles up the road a bit, passing through Watergate Bay, another surfers’ mecca and home to Jamie Oliver’s Fifteen restaurant. Onwards then to the place where yet another celeb chef resides, Padstow.

We didn’t see Rick Stein, nor dine in his restaurant, chippy, bistro or any of the myriad businesses which have led to this place being dubbed Padstein.

No, we caught the ferry (£6 return for two) to Rock, across the estuary from Padstow and walked its glorious sands and cliff edge paths to Polzeath and back.

Hopping off the ferry in Padstow again, we headed for the nearest pub to down a pint of St Austell Brewery’s finest ale. And bought a pasty because you just have to when in Padstow.

By now the weather was changing and not for the better. My wife suggested taking a peek at Perranporth, which is what we did. One peek was enough. We didn’t like what we saw.

However, we did like Crantock, just up the road, a picture postcard place with a superb (National Trust) beach and a wonderful parish church which was one of the late Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman’s favourites.

The weather was now appallingly inclement and we drove back to the hotel and psyched ourselves up for another wonderful meal at Beaucliffe’s that night.

Not only was the menu imaginative but the staff were top

notch too, in the way they served drinks at the bar and the food at the table.

Those storm clouds were still hovering as we left Porth Veor Manor Hotel on Monday morning but our two-day break had been a real breath of fresh air and a reminder how good Cornwall can be.

We made one more stop en route to Bristol though, taking a detour into the Dartmoor National Park to visit Castle Drogo, the awesome structure, designed by Lutyens, that is the last castle ever built in Britain. It was finished in the 1930s.

It didn’t disappoint. Neither did Porth Veor Manor, come to that.

Factfile

Tim Davey stayed at Porth Veor Manor Hotel, Porth Way, Porth, Cornwall, TR7 3LW. Contact them on 01637 873274 or check out www.porthveormanor.com.

Porth Veor Manor is offering *Evening Post* readers a two-night break from £99, down from the usual price of £156 for stays up to May 19, or from £119 for stays between May 28 and June 30. This price includes one three-course dinner on the first evening at Beaucliffe’s.

To book a stay at the special offer price, call Travelsmith Holidays on 01621 784666 quoting BEP/398.