

PADDLING BRITAIN

50 BEST PLACES TO EXPLORE BY SUP, KAYAK & CANOE

LIZZIE CARR (UPDATED BY PAT KINSELLA)

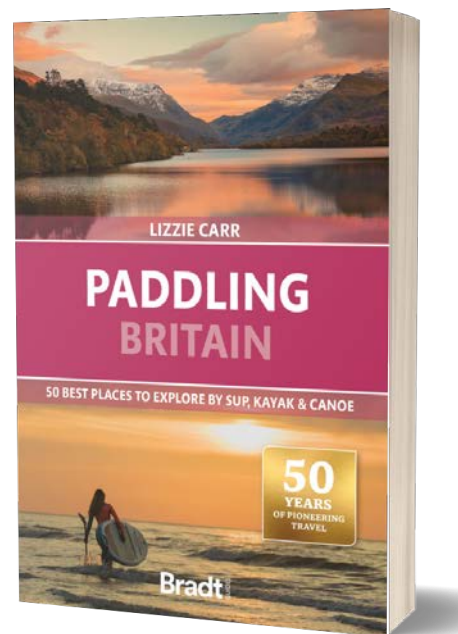
Fully updated second edition of the runaway bestselling guide to exploring Britain's coast and waterways

This thoroughly updated second edition of Bradt's *Paddling Britain* remains the definitive guide to stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and canoeing along British coastlines and inland waterways. Written by Lizzie Carr (aka Lizzie Outside, Britain's best known paddleboarder) and updated by experienced travel writer Pat Kinsella, it showcases Britain's 50 best places to enjoy recreational paddling, from Cornwall to the Cairngorms.

Alongside detailed routes for each location, plus tips on wildlife and secret spots, *Paddling Britain* advises on where to stay and eat, getting there, and when to go. It also provides the low-down on everything you need to know for successful and enjoyable stand-up paddleboarding, from safety tips to kit, weather watching to paddling responsibly.

KEY SALES POINTS

- Bradt's best-selling book since 2018, from Britain's best-known paddleboarder
- Full colour, inspirational and practical guide
- Stand-up paddling is an increasingly popular hobby, with paddlers tending to explore new sites rather than frequent the same location, pointing to a sustained market for the book
- The original paddleboarding guide: a unique, personal selection of routes



“A good-value and highly useful guide that should appeal to paddlers of all persuasions.”

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9781804691069
£19.99
MARCH 2024

9781784778927
£18.99
JULY 2023

OCTOBER 2024 • 2ND EDITON • 9781804692295 • £16.99 • 240pp • 216mm X 135mm
123 COLOUR PHOTOS • 51 MAPS • PREVIOUS EDITION ISBN 9781784776039

DISTRIBUTED BY
GRANTHAM BOOK SERVICES (GBS)
AVAILABLE THROUGH PUB EASY


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SAMPLE PAGES

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2 SIMPLY BEACHY

TAKE TO THE WATER FOR A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY TO SCILLY'S REMOTE EASTERN ISLES

WHERE Isles of Scilly, Cornwall
STATS 4+8km (3½ miles) one-way or 9km (5½ miles) round trip including the Eastern Isles
START/FINISH Old Grimby Quay, Trecoo SV584156

In the Isles of Scilly, nature is key. Cars are largely unseen on some islands—often replaced with golf buggies. Instead, there are miles of unspoilt beaches, usually with a striking and enticing curve of pale sand that shelves into the sea with glimmering hues of blue and green. Paddling adventures in these parts are serene events, where breathtaking scenery and tranquillity are assured.

St Martin's is one of the smaller inhabited islands in the Scilly archipelago, with a population numbering around 140. It also lays claim to not only the area's best beaches but some of the finest in Britain. The coastline of St Martin's can boast white sand, azure waters and a real sense of isolation. Have a bathe, share a picnic and indulge in its magnificence before heading to Scilly's Eastern Isles... In my opinion, this makes for one of Britain's most stunning coastal paddles.


The Eastern Isles are a group of 12 small islands that form a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The islands are uninhabited but that's not to say they are bereft of life. Many wild animals flourish here, making for a particularly rewarding paddle. You should anticipate finding rabbits knishes on shore while you paddle around the islands), Atlantic grey seal and several species of seabird with nationally important populations. Try your hand at differentiating comorant from shag (a tip: look for the former's white cheek patch and the latter's curly creel). Puffin and Manx shearwater are not likely to cause identification mishaps, but both are wonderful species that have chosen the Scilly Isles as an ideal location to establish rare breeding colonies. Just don't expect to see any people.

PADDLE THIS WAY

While one side of Trecoo runs parallel with Bryher (the two islands are connected by a route presented on page XXX), the other (eastern) flank faces the island of St Martin's and a small, uninhabited isle called Team. The latter consists of a sprinkling of sandy bays that, at low tide, connect by land to offshore rocks and cairns.

Take your pick for a starting point on Trecoo—either Old Grimby Quay or one of the wide, sandy beaches that flank it (Raven Point to the north or Green Porth to the south). Then, paddle towards the smaller island of St Martin's, looping northeast through a small cluster of islands. Just west of St Martin's, you reach Team. Stop off on the inviting shores of East Porth (the easternmost beach on the island's southern shore) and explore.

Although its neighbours (Round Island and St Helen's) are susceptible to big rolling swells, Team is largely protected from the North Atlantic winds. It is also flanked by the smaller—and odd-sounding—Isles of Old Man, Cramp Island and Peddewoe. While St Helen's can boast the remains of an early Christian chapel, Team has its own distinct appeal. It is designated as an SSSI, and carefully controlled grazing has allowed tiny, rare plants to thrive, such as orange bird's foot and dwarf pansy; within Britain, both grow only on Scilly, so they are quite special.



◆ The beach at Old Grimby on Trecoo, where you launch for the paddle. (Credit: Lynette)

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GETTING THERE

Town to the Isles of Scilly (© visitscilly.com) by sea from Penzance (6.2½ hours) or by air from Exeter, Bristol, Penzance or Newcastle (© islesofscilly-travel.co.uk). If you are taking your own equipment, beware of weight restrictions. All routes from the mainland arrive on the island of St Mary's, from where boats depart for other islands (© scillyboating.co.uk).

HIRE & LESSONS

Hill 62 (© hill62.co.uk) on Bryher, part of the Bennett-Boydard family business, offers kayak and board hire and can drop gear off to other islands if booked in advance.

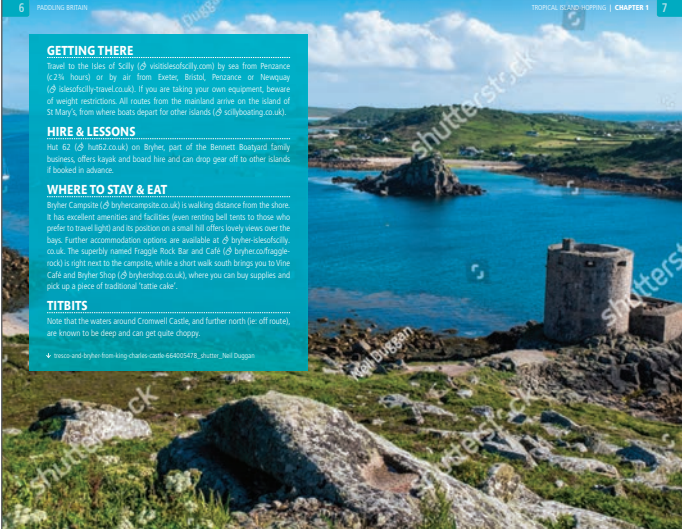
WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Bryher Campsite (© bryhercampsite.co.uk) is walking distance from the shore. It has excellent amenities and facilities (even renting bell tents to those who prefer to travel light) and its position on a small hill offers lovely views over the bays. Further accommodation options are available at © bryher-islesofscilly.co.uk. The superbly named Fraggie Rock Bar and Café (© bryher.co.uk/fraggie-rock) is right next to the campsite, while a short walk south brings you to King Café and Bryher Shop (© bryherinfo.co.uk), where you can buy supplies and pick up a piece of traditional 'tattie cake'.

TITBITS

Note that the waters around Cornwall Castle, and further north (ie off routes), are known to be deep and can get quite choppy.

◆ Trecoo and Bryher from King Charles (credit: 66505478_Peter_Thei Duggan)



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3 SEA SAFARI

A CORNISH COASTAL ROUTE THAT DEMANDS MASK & SNORKEL AS WELL AS PADDLE

WHERE Penzance, Cornwall
STATS 4+8km (6½ miles) round trip
START/FINISH Marazion Quay SW956312

It's fair to say that a safari, in its traditional sense, isn't something we can expect from Britain. But think slightly differently in terms of wildlife-rich adventures, and you'll discover that this country has much to offer. Nowhere is this truer than the abundance of 'sea safari' opportunities along the southwest coast of England. So it's time to start wotting up on how to tell your shags from your comorants, and differentiate your blennies from your gobies.

This excursion involves looking both up (at the sky) and peering down (into the sea). The dramatic scullies of the Cornish cliffs are home to thousands of breeding seabirds, and around these colonies you might spot a mighty peregrine bombing. Arguably, though, the most excitement comes from donning a mask and sticking your head underneath beneath your board or boat. In the more sheltered spots, where the water is glassy, a keen eye may discern a spiny starfish (with three rows of spines on each of its five 'arms'). In summer or early autumn, you may even encounter a jellyfish 'bloom'. Compass jellyfish are a common species, but barrel jellyfish (which can be the size of dustbin lids) have also been seen here, if you want to get even closer to the action, bring your snorkel and slip under the swell—just don't get stung! It's worth keeping an eye out for seals bobbing in the waves like enormous cork. Too. The UK is home to 40% of the world's estimated population of 600,000 Atlantic grey seals. Even better, they are an almost common sight off the Cornish coast. Further offshore, there's a decent chance of spotting dolphins—usually short-beaked common but occasionally Risso's—and from early summer until the autumn, enormous but docile basking sharks are known to show their dorsal and tail fins (if not their faces) here.

Mour's Bay, shaped like a half-moon, is vast and sweeping, spanning from the Lizard (page 101) west to Governor's Head, which lies close to Land's End. Mour's Bay is heralded for cetaceans and is the best place in Britain to see harbour porpoise in decent numbers, with day



◆ The island of St Michael's Mount dominates the view at Mour's Bay. Here can you want to paddle beyond (55)

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counts sometimes reaching three figures. You might also hope to see minke and humpback whales, which both make sporadic appearances along the Cornish coastline. In 2016, there was even a remarkable sighting of a bowhead whale (a very rare Arctic species). In the north of the bay, near Marazion, the island of St Michael's Mount is an obvious landmark. During winter gales, in particular, it can be dangerous—so if you paddle that way, take care. The waters are peppered with more than 150 shipwrecks. On the plus side, the 2016 designation of a Marine Conservation Zone around the area does well for wildlife conservation.

PADDLE THIS WAY

Launch anywhere along the long, wide blanket of golden sand that makes up the rather peaceful shoreline of Mour's Bay. Then head east towards St Michael's Mount, the small island sitting a short distance from the shore. As you approach, skirting the Hogos rocks, watch the Mount's castle grow larger and more imposing. Notice too the Cornish flag flying high—a white cross on a black background. The standard derives from that of St Piran, who—legend tells—was smelting tin when the molten white metal formed the shape of a cross on his black hearthstone.

From St Michael's Mount, paddle in an arc around the southern fringe of the island, past the popular tourist spot of Marazion, looking out for the varied sea creatures that live below, around and above the surface. Once you clear the east side of the island, continue to explore and enjoy more marine life spotting before making your way back to base via roughly the same route.

GETTING THERE


Penzance sits at the southwestern tip of the A30, around 80km (50 miles) beyond Bodmin. Leave the A30 east of town, at the roundabout, following signs for Marazion. Head south and use the beach car park (© SW952312) at the east end of Long Rock Beach. Penzance is served by trains from London and South Wales (including an overnight service from London Paddington, the Night Riviera Sleeper).

HIRE & LESSONS

Based in Penzance, JB Adventures (© jbadventures.co.uk) offers lessons.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Near the car park, the Mexico Inn (© themexicoinn.com) offers excellent food and ales. Situated at Penzance Harbour, The Boat Shed (© boatshedpc.co.uk) is renowned for locally caught seafood. Accommodation options are collated at © penzance.co.uk/accommodation/index.htm.



◆ Keep an eye out for the fins of basking sharks breaking the surface of Cornish waters in summer (55)

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The river meanders peacefully for 12m (1½ miles) through flat countryside with open fields separated by lines of trees, before gliding into the bustling seaside town of Christchurch, as signalled by the B3059 roadbridge. Fortunately, most of the town is set back from the Stour, so you won't be faced with too much brick. That doesn't mean no people, however. Downstream from here, the Stour becomes a very busy stretch of water that is popular with boaters and paddlers, plus walkers along the towpaths and nearby Stour Valley Way (a major footpath). Many through here because of the town's relaxed coastal vibe but also to take advantage of the sheltered waters. This calm stretch is perfect for novice paddlers to gain skills and build confidence before taking on more challenging routes.

Pass Wick Ferry, a rather grandly named passenger service crossing the river and departing from the front of the Captain's Club Hotel and Spa. Weave through numerous anchored boats, pass a park called The Quay on your left (north) and a large open area to your right (south) to reach Christchurch Quay at Christchurch Sailing Club. There are usually herds of mute swans round here, all looking to chaperone you past their territories or jostle you for food. I recommend avoiding eye contact and paddling past quickly to avoid aggravating them. (It's their waterway, after all.)

Just beyond Christchurch Quay the river forks, presenting you with two options. You could continue to Christchurch Harbour (perhaps to enjoy an afternoon picnic on the shore) before paddling up to the town itself to explore and people-watch, or edge left towards the entrance to the River Avon. If you take the latter route, look left quickly, past Rowley's Quay on your right to reach the striking remains of the Norman House below the ruins of Christchurch Castle, both dating back to early AD1100, which drops straight into the water (via a mast). If you choose the former option, continue 2km downstream (past the shorebird-filled Stump Marsh nature reserve on your left, to the north) to enter Christchurch Harbour. Then head east for just over 1km (¾ mile), making a beeline for the spit directly ahead, which separates the harbour from the sea.

The closer you get, the sweeter the sight of Madoxford Sandbank becomes. Rows of impeccable wooden-pannelled beach huts, painted in an assortment of pastel shades, come into focus. It is not for nothing that Christchurch is renowned for its seaside charm. On the sandy spit, snuggled amid the huts, sits a small, glass-fronted café called Beach House. From within a blue-and-white interior, fantastic views are complemented by delicious seafood. So why not moor up and enjoy a glass of something cold to boot?

For the return journey you can jump on a boat (© boarnermouthboating.co.uk) running from Madoxford Sandbank to Christchurch Quay then paddle the short distance upstream to Flood Bridge. Alternatively, if you prefer a more demanding day out, paddle the entire route back.



GETTING THERE

Flood Bridge, on Old Bridge Road, lies on the northern outskirts of Christchurch, just northeast of the A3060/A35 roundabout. There is limited roadside parking in Flood Bridge. I recommend arriving early to nab a space. The nearest train station is Christchurch, from where you can take bus 1a to Flood Bridge.

HIRE & LESSONS

South Coast Canoes (© south-coast-canoes.co.uk) offers guided tours and canoe equipment hire. Shore Sports, based in Christchurch Harbour (© shoresports.co.uk), offers hire, tours and lessons on kayaks and SUPs.

◆ Sedge Wobble, Peter (credit: Louise)

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

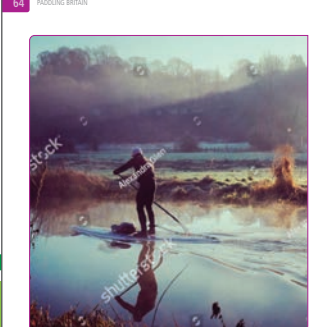
The Beach House (© beachhousecafe.co.uk) sits on the spit at Madoxford Sandbank and affords magnificent views across Christchurch Harbour and south to Hengistbury Head. If you want something a little more luxurious, try Captain's Club Hotel and Spa (© captainclubhotel.com) or Christchurch Harbour Hotel and Spa (© christchurch-harbour-hotel.co.uk), a waterfront venue that offers a bar, restaurant, overnight accommodation and pampering. Both are perfect for unwinding after a paddle.

TITBITS

Be aware that the narrow entrance in and out of the harbour (ie: at the east, by Madoxford Sandbank) can create a very strong tidal flow.

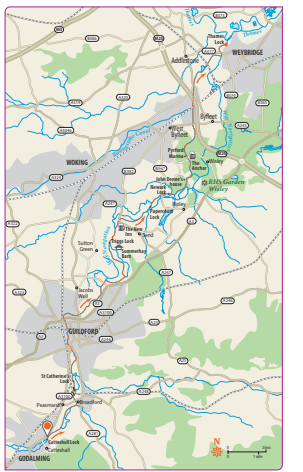
◆ Christchurch, Adrian Baker, shutterstock_110654798

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New Inn. Continue for another 2km (1¼ miles), past Papercourt Lock, until you reach another fork. Bear right here (under the B367) and continue to a weir. Keep left, passing under a small footbridge. Here the river becomes bordered by tall trees, for shade and welcome the seclusion. Left (west) of the towpath, look for a small summerhouse: this provided haven for the illustrious poet John Donne from 1602 to 1604.

Once under the A25, you are on the final stretch of the paddle—a leg of 4.5km (2½ miles), past the historic Wy Bridge at Town Lock, where you bear left to reach Thames Lock, where the Wy meets the Thames on the latter's journey east to London. Much of this route remains flanked by trees, as if embryonic existing London's immensity. On the very final stretch, trees are replaced by manicured lawns of the 'millionaire mansions' for which this area is renowned. Pull up when you reach Thames Lock and haul out, mission complete.



◆ New Wy-qualified England Shuttles, 1154817574_Alan Mardell