

TRAVEL
special!

PENZANCE on a plate

The last stop on the old Great Western Line is becoming a hot new destination for food lovers

There are several towns in Cornwall known for their excellent food, but tucked away in its very far western corner lies a relatively undiscovered gem that is quickly gaining reputation as the county's newest gastronomic hotspot.

On a visit to sample some of the town's tastiest spots, I stayed at Chapel House; an eight-bedroom townhouse hotel perched above Penzance's working harbour, moments away from the iconic Art Deco lido. Here amongst a beautiful blend of Georgian style and modern comfort, owner Susan whips up all manner of feasts, from bountiful breakfasts to informal weekend suppers using the very best local produce.

Nearby, Chapel Street is buzzing with an array of independent businesses, one of which is 45 Queen Street – a cool, laid-back café, bar and event space housed in an old warehouse, filled with tropical plants and big rattan lampshades. The locally roasted coffee is very good, as are the cakes, cocktails and delicious food (see @45queenstreet for more).

On the same street, boutique hotel Artist Residence is another great stop for a cocktail or two, and directly opposite is atmospheric pub, The Admiral Benbow, which has been 'serving pirates, smugglers and rum' since 1695. Here, you can enjoy proper Cornish hospitality and a pint of local ale surrounded by a collection of wreckage and maritime artefacts.

For supper, book well in advance and you might just get a table at The Shore, chef Bruce Rennie's intimate 14-seater restaurant, with a small fish and vegetable-based menu that features dishes such as 'sardines, melon, smoked fish custard, trout roe, kohlrabi'.



Gurnard's Head



Left Mackerel Sky Seafood Bar; below, the beautiful Chapel House and lunch at Tolcarne Inn



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A walk along the seafront brings you to Newlyn Harbour and cosy historic maritime pub The Tolcarne Inn, where chef Ben Tunnicliffe's chalkboard menu offers a choice of daily changing dishes, such as butterflied sardines with a chorizo, caper, and raisin salad.

Nearby, new arrival Argoe is another must for seafood lovers; this stylish new build with minimalist interiors, natural wines and terrace overlooking the harbour has been lovingly set up

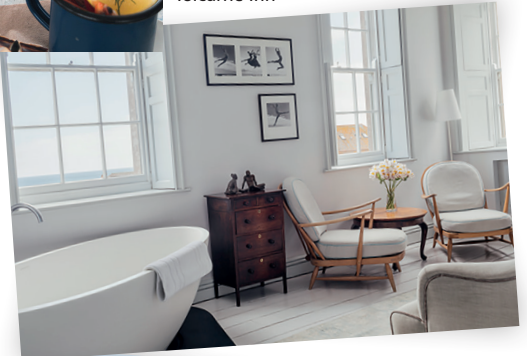
by Penzance local Rich Adams, whose sharing plates feature lesser-known species such as whole megrim sole cooked simply with oregano and olive oil.

For a long, lazy lunch, head to Mackerel Sky Seafood Bar for delicious crab nachos, smoked mackerel mac 'n cheese, and more.

The picture-perfect fishing village of Mousehole is nearby (a good walk or a 10 min drive), and its seaside hotel, The Old Coastguard, serves excellent food with magnificent views. Head north, in the direction of St Ives, and you'll find plenty of atmosphere at the iconic Gurnard's Head; a remote gorse-coloured pub-with-rooms that overlooks dramatic rugged coastline, and is home to some of the best food I've ever eaten. Time seems to stop at this traditional cosy inn, and hearty dishes such as hake with Jerusalem artichoke, brown shrimp and kale make it very hard to leave...

Back in Penzance, try the award-winning fish and chips at Fraser's on the Promenade or tuck into a traditional Cornish pasty at The Cornish Hen, a well-stocked deli filled with all manner of artisanal treats.

Whatever you do, don't miss Jelbert's – one of the oldest ice cream makers in the county (and the family business of Olympic gold medal winning rower, Helen Glover). At its small, no-frills shop in Newlyn, traditional Cornish ice cream is made fresh daily and there is only one flavour – a truly delicious vanilla, made to a top-secret recipe. Have it with a flake and lashings of clotted cream. You are in Cornwall, after all...



Whilst you're there

Burn off some kcals by exploring Penzance's excellent art galleries and the stunning Tremeneheer Sculpture Garden, or do a few laps of the Art Deco wonder that is Jubilee Pool, the UK's largest seawater lido.

Electric bike rental company EBike Cornwall provides another great way to earn a few ice creams, as well as being a fun and easy way to explore the area.

Finally, no trip to Penzance would be complete without a visit to St Michael's Mount; a tiny fairy-tale island just off the coast, crowned by a medieval church and castle. Take the short boat ride or walk across the rocky causeway at low tide. Did I mention that there's a very nice bar/restaurant, The Godolphin, directly opposite?



Photo: Adam Gibbard

