

On the road: THE NORTH CORNWALL COAST

Come to this glorious South West county for Padstow and pasties – but stay for Cornish beef brisket tacos, crab som tam, rose harissa fish stew and saffron buns

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There are only a handful of restaurants I've been to where I've wanted to book a return visit upon first bite. Chef Paul Ainsworth's pin-sharp **No 6**, located in a tiny Georgian townhouse in Padstow, is one of them (number6inpadstow.co.uk). The morsel that did it? A plump, deep-fried Porthilly oyster served with charcoal mayonnaise and chunks of soul-satisfying sourdough.

Despite the hype around it, No 6 avoids being stuffy. Ainsworth, who trained under Gordon Ramsay and won TV fame through *Great British Menu*, has the playfulness and boyish energy of a Labrador puppy. The décor is just as lively, with outrageously bright Cole & Son Miami wallpaper (bring your shades), and windows on to the kitchen's theatricality.

The food is equally free of fussiness, stripped of cheffy canapés and tasting menus in favour of à la carte dishes such as a Jacob's ladder ragu with spaghetti; raw sea bream served on a slaw of sand shrimp with tuna-rich katsuobushi mayonnaise; and tournedos Rossini made with chicken instead of the usual steak. The latter – a stuffed chicken breast topped with morels and a cold parfait of livers from duck, goose and chicken – is laced with a rich madeira sauce, its stock derived from an entire chicken.

Ainsworth has stiff competition, of course. Few stretches of British coast harbour more culinary talent than the Atlantic-bashed area between Padstow, where Ainsworth and Rick Stein reside, and Port Isaac, two bays along, where Nathan Outlaw runs his eponymous restaurant. Ainsworth happily gives credit to Stein, who established **The Seafood Restaurant** more than 40 years ago (rickstein.com), for putting Cornwall's north coast on the food map. And he's equally content to largely leave fish to Stein and Outlaw: "I celebrate Cornwall's farms and their wonderful produce, from lamb to Grampound duck," he says, explaining that they put only one fish main on the menu each day. »

LEFT: BUDE'S GRANITE CLIFFS



Those three restaurants apart, North Cornwall's food is pretty relaxed. A few cobbled streets from No 6, **Prawn on the Lawn** offers tapas-style fish plates (crab som tam, whole mackerel with 'nduja and fennel, Porthilly mussels with clams and manzanilla) in white-tiled, bistro-style surroundings (prawnonthelawn.com). And, above the town, **Craftworks** produces pop-up nacho and taco suppers (think Cornish beef brisket with shredded Little Gem, taco slaw, salsa, soured cream and red onion pickles) from its food truck at Trerethern Farm (craftworkskitchen.com). You sit on straw bales to eat while gazing over the fields of **Padstow Kitchen Garden** (where much of your supper comes from) and the cornfields that flank the Camel Estuary (padstowkitchengarden.co.uk).

Narrow country lanes tunneling through beech trees lead me to **Trevibban Mill** (trevibbanmill.com), a vineyard and apple orchard that produces ciders and wines, and houses a wood-and-glass restaurant run by Andy Appleton, previously head chef at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Cornwall (appletonsathevineyard.com).

As at Fifteen, Appleton offers a creative interpretation of Italian cooking, including Middle Eastern ingredients such as harissa that he freely admits would have Italians spluttering over their spaghetti. But it works. Lunch kicks off with deep-fried sage leaves wrapped around anchovy fillets, followed by wild garlic agnolotti filled with fermented leeks and ricotta. The rose harissa fish stew (Trevibban's must-eat main) and homemade squid ink linguine with Cornish scallops and 'nduja pangrattato are equally delicious. And of course it all begs to be accompanied by wines produced just a cork's pop away (try the sparkling pink brut).

The villages inland are often neglected in favour of the honeypots of Padstow and Port Isaac. But, for foodies, there's plenty to draw you

up-country. Near Wadebridge, **Strong Adolfos** serves burgers, soups and cakes to surfer dudes, families and grannies alike (strongadolfos.com). That the name is a twist on the circus strongman from *Pippi Longstocking* (the classic children's book series) makes sense when you learn that co-owner Mathilda Friström Eldridge is Swedish. As does the menu of Swedish chocolate balls and carrot and parsnip cake Mathilda serves alongside locally roasted **Origin Coffee** (origincoffee.co.uk).

The market town of Wadebridge, sedately straddling the River Camel, may not have flashy restaurants, but it does have its own coffee roastery, Rising Ground, based inside **Relish** deli and café (relishcornwall.co.uk). Pick up a bag of Ethiopian sidamo, with its earl grey undertones, then head along to nearby **Baker Tom's** to stock up on sourdoughs and sunny saffron buns to go with it (bakertom.co.uk).

No trip to Cornwall would be complete without a pasty, but the best in the area involve some serious tracking down – nip behind the petrol station at St Kew Highway and look for the signpost to **Aunt Avice's Pasty Shop**. Eighteen years ago, having been made redundant, Peter Gill and his wife, Avice, started making pasties to Peter's mother-in-law's recipe. This stipulates potato, onion and beef skirt, but – unusually – no swede. It's the pastry, though, that makes their pasties famous, says Avice as she deftly crimps a line of them in her 50s-style kitchen next door. "Never hold a pasty by its crimp," she instructs. "Hold it by one end and eat it like an ice-cream cornet." I do as I'm told, and bite into its rich, doughy pastry and fall-apart filling. They'd keep any Cornish miner going for a while.

Sit-down eating inland is a tale of two saints. Ancient **St Kew Inn**, with its high-backed wooden settles and flagstone floors, is as convivial as pubs come, and its honest food clearly gets a thumbs-up from local resident »



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: ROSE HARISSA FISH STEW WITH FREGOLA AT TREVIBBAN MILL; ST KEW INN. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BAKER TOM'S SOURDOUGH; AUNT AVICE'S PASTY SHOP; A COMBE VALLEY COTTAGE, NORTH OF BUDE; HAYWOOD FARM CIDER; STRONG ADOLFOS' CARROT AND PARSNIP CAKE; TEMPLE, BUDE; NATHAN OUTLAW'S FISH KITCHEN, PORT ISAAC; BREAKFAST AT ST TUDY INN, INCLUDING HOME-CURED BACON AND HOMEMADE SAUSAGE; CHICKEN TOURNEDOS ROSSINI WITH MOREL MUSHROOMS AT NO 6 IN PADSTOW



Gordon Ramsay, who is often spotted supping here (stkeuinn.co.uk). **St Tudy Inn**, in contrast, is a gastropub-with-rooms that prides itself on creative cocktails and scrupulously sourced seasonal ingredients that shine in uncomplicated dishes such as Porthilly mussels with fennel, cider and dill, or summer risotto with broad beans, courgettes and lovage butter (studyinn.com). Enjoying a new lease of life since the energetic Emily Scott took it over in 2015, the inn not only makes its own sausages but also boasts homemade St Tudy ale (brewed by Padstow Brewery) and its own wine (produced in Bordeaux). Bedrooms, in a converted barn opposite, are small but stylish.

Both villages have their own shops, too – in the case of St Kew a stylish new farm shop with café ([@stkeufarmshop](http://stkeufarmshop)), and in St Tudy a thriving community shop (studyshop.co.uk) that stocks village jams and Wadebridge-made Tarquin’s gins. The lane opposite St Kew Farm Shop leads to more booze: **Haywood Farm** cider made from apples grown on Tom Bray’s family farm (haywoodfarmcider.co.uk). The day to visit is Sunday, when there’s live music and cheese tasting in the ancient barn where Tom presses the apples.

Back on the coast, I amble among the slate-hung whitewashed cottages that cascade down a gap in the cliffs at Port Isaac. Life here revolves around the tides and the fortunes of the town’s five remaining fishing vessels, which mainly land crab and lobster (you can buy them at **Fresh from the Sea**, a shop in the village). In pole position to grab the best catch is the town’s wonkiest and oldest building, once two fishermen’s cottages but now housing **Nathan Outlaw’s Fish Kitchen** (outlaws.co.uk). Although it’s Michelin starred, this tiny restaurant is so tightly packed that everyone relaxes.

Workaday Bude, horseshoed around the vast sands of Summerleaze Beach, is a lot more low key than manicured Padstow and Port Isaac. But it still does (relatively) posh at **The Beach at Bude**, a boutique hotel teetering on the cliffs (thebeachatbude.co.uk). Don’t be put off by its slightly bling feel, because the food (produced by Bath Priory-trained Joe Simmonds) is excellent – try the elegantly gutsy herb-crust lamb striploin with cassoulet.

For simpler, more modern dining there’s **Temple**, offering “edibles and threadables” in a pavilion-style building (templecornwall.com). The ethos is planet-friendly, homemade and healthy, which applies both to the clothes and skincare products it sells, and to the food and drink (including a water-based kefir) it serves in its café. At night, the place morphs into a laid-back restaurant, making the most of impeccably sourced ingredients (organic, unhomogenised milk, for instance, is bought direct from a nearby farm). It’s no surprise that flavours are reminiscent of Ottolenghi – head chef Craig Tregonning previously worked at the branch in Islington. The breakfast menu’s zesty mushrooms with dukkah are well worth getting out of bed for, but the dish I’ll be ordering again on my way back to Paul Ainsworth’s No 6 is the toasted sourdough sandwich filled with home-fermented kimchi and mature cheddar. It slings all other toasties into the shade.

HOW TO DO IT

Doubles at Trewornan Manor, a boutique b&b near Wadebridge, cost from £130, b&b, including a cream tea (trewornanmanor.co.uk). For more info on North Cornwall see visitcornwall.com. Follow Clare on Twitter/Instagram [@larderloutUK](https://twitter.com/larderloutUK).

ABOVE, FROM LEFT: ZESTY MUSHROOMS WITH DUKKAH AT TEMPLE; THE HARBOUR AT PORT ISAAC