



Bodyboarding with Newquay Activity Centre

A WEEKEND IN...

# Newquay

**You really can surf in winter, Sarah Pitt finds out, as she heads to Newquay for a weekend's break among the waves**

The gigantic wave came crashing over my head, catapulting me off my comfy beginner's surfboard. One moment, I was serenely surfing towards the smooth sands of Fistral beach. The next, I was upside down. Spluttering, I emerged from the waves, bumping up onto the beach. Around me, people were falling off their boards left, right and centre. Another beginner grinned at me conspiratorially as she whizzed towards the beach. It was, I realised, as I expelled a mouthful of seawater, all part of the fun.

Newquay Activity Centre instructor Johnny Fryer – who won the title of British Surfing Champion on this very beach in 2010 – said the steady swell rolling in from the Atlantic was

“as good as it gets”. On a day like this he would normally be out among the pros, bobbing among the waves like seals, waiting to leap on the perfect wave. Instead, he was giving me and my boyfriend Carlo a taste of the sport which Newquay's all about, [www.newquayactivitycentre.co.uk](http://www.newquayactivitycentre.co.uk).

We had, up until this point, been admiring the breakers from a safe distance, from the vantage point of our comfy, warm room at The Carnmarth Hotel, overlooking Fistral beach. I was not wholly enthusiastic about leaping into the Atlantic in winter, given that I typically need coaxing into the sea even in July. But it turned out not to be half as achingly cold as I expected, thanks to the activity centre's wetsuit, hat and boots. You

do need to keep moving, though. Carlo, in fairness, proved to be much more of a natural than me, and time and again he managed to get up on his feet. By the end of our session, Johnny assured him he was very nearly there. As for me, well, more practice is probably needed!

When you've been surfing (or falling off) you need to refuel. And open all day on the beach is Rick Stein Fistral, [www.rickstein.com](http://www.rickstein.com), which serves fish, chips and curries to eat in or takeaway. Prices are reasonable, the atmosphere informal and you eat out of cardboard cartons at long wooden tables. For starters, we both had the Amritsari fish, fresh white fish in a crispy chickpea batter with a hint of chilli. For mains, my Goan chicken curry was fragrant and Carlo pro-

nounced his spicy beef rendang to be very tasty.

I was on the wagon, post-Christmas, so opted for Luscombe cool ginger beer, which had a delicate spiciness which went well with the curries. Carlo tried two local beers, Clouded Yellow from St Austell Brewery, which was lightly spiced, and Chalky's Bite, named after Rick Stein's late lamented terrier Chalky, from Sharp's Brewery in Rock just down the coast. Pronounced deliciously smooth, this was his favourite.

The Carnmarth, a friendly family-run hotel, proved to be the ideal base for our weekend in Newquay, with its beach views at a little distance from the town but still close enough to stroll around of an evening. Carnmarth Hotel combines the glory of a classic British cliff-top hotel with the best of modern facilities and furnishings to create breaks with an intimate, relaxed feel.

Flanked by the golden majesty of Fistral Beach, Cornwall's, and indeed the UK's, premier



Tom Thumb Bar



Curries at Rick Stein Fistral

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The Carnmarth Hotel

surf beach, and the craggy sweep of Newquay The Carnmarth Hotel has incredible sea views on three sides, and with Newquay Golf Links rolling away from the hotel front, this is a setting that's

very easy on the eye. It's the perfect base for a surfing weekend and they have a terrific winter offer of £99 per person for two nights of dinner, bed and breakfast [www.carnmarth.com](http://www.carnmarth.com) until April 1.

Newquay is keen to shake off its image as a party town for carousing youths and emphasise its family-friendly credentials. Our Saturday night out in Newquay saw us dipping into a couple of venues which offered much more than raucous stag and hen dos. First up we checked out very cool Tom Thumb bar [www.tom-thumb.co.uk](http://www.tom-thumb.co.uk) on East Street, offering cocktails with great names like The Captain is Legless. Carlo sampled

the Tom Collins, a mixture of gin, lemon juice and gomme syrup with lemon bitters, which was cocktail of the week.

Later, taking a little side street down to the town harbour, we happened upon the rowing club, displaying a sign saying visitors were welcome. We walked in just as a band was tuning up. Cool As Funk helped everyone rock the night away in this friendly clubhouse which felt like a bit of real Cornwall. We were really made to feel welcome among the regulars. What a great night.

Sunday saw us meandering along Fistral beach again to blow away the cobwebs before heading back to The Carnmarth for their legendary Sunday roast. I have never seen a bigger plate of roast beef, with majestic Yorkshire puddings, terrific value at £11.95.

Leaving Newquay on Sunday afternoon, as the sun was setting, for an hour's drive east back home we felt we'd been on holiday for a lot longer than just a weekend. We will be back.