



THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

# TOR BAY

*The route:* Brixham, Scabbacombe, Fishcombe, Torquay, Babbacombe Bay

Known as the English Riviera, the coast around Tor Bay does feel like the Côte d'Azur on a warm summer day. Glitzy hotels and apartments are softened by pines in the style of Villefranche or Beaulieu-sur-Mer. The beaches at Paignton and Goodrington have bluffs of red sandstone with echoes of St Raphaël.

But on the south side of the bay, Brixham is the West Country fishing port it has always been. Close-packed houses stack up from the water's edge and you can imagine the narrow streets and tread-worn steps winding between them. Friendly Brixham Marina is just the place to start a perfect boating weekend in Tor Bay.

## SATURDAY MORNING

Mornings in Brixham shouldn't be rushed, though I like to be up quite early, watching the harbour coming to life. There'll be a few fishing boats about, though most unload at the market soon after dawn. Tripper launch crews will be scrubbing decks and getting ready for business. You can feel the promise of another glorious summer day.

When you are ready to get under way, motor out round Victoria Breakwater, turn east past Shoalstone Point and then a touch south

to skirt the dramatic sheer scars of Berry Head. You'll see the tiny dots of holidaymakers on the summit, enjoying superb views across Tor Bay, south towards Start Bay and north-east across Lyme Bay, where the Dorset coast curves out towards Portland Bill.

Cruising south past Cod Rock you may be tempted by St Mary's golden beach cordoned by swimming buoys, but it's best to follow the coast another couple of miles down to a smaller cove just north of Scabbacombe Head.

## SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Scabbacombe is a delightful spot to anchor for a swim, a leisurely lunch, lazing on deck and more swimming. Snug in westerlies, this peaceful hideaway has stunningly clear water on a still day and the beach is only accessible by boat or enthusiastic walkers. If you feel energetic, land with the dinghy and follow the tracks inland to Coleton Fishacre, a National Trust house with sub-tropical gardens developed by Lady Dorothy D'Oyly Carte in the 1920s. Otherwise take the dinghy south round Scabbacombe Head and hug the coast to the next rocky inlet. Here as a boy I used to explore the caves and crevices, once finding a handsome edible crab trapped in a pool.



Lazy Sunday afternoon: the view from the Cary Arms

## PROFILE

### THE AUTHOR

**Peter Cumberlidge** grew up in the West Country and now lives there. He has cruised widely all over Europe. Much of his motorboating is done aboard *Ytene*, a well-travelled Princess 33 usually based either in Guernsey or Brittany.



**1 SATURDAY MORNING**

Watch Brixham's working harbour come to life around you

**2 SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

Stop for a leisurely lunch at the tranquil Scabbacombe Bay

**3 SATURDAY EVENING**

Enjoy a peaceful night at anchor in Fishcombe Cove

Right: admire Paignton's picturesque harbour, on the way to Torquay

*Scabbacombe is a delightful spot to anchor for a swim, a leisurely lunch, lazing on deck and more swimming*

**4 SUNDAY MORNING**

Motor round to Babbacombe Bay for a swim in the clear blue water



Buy seafood straight from the fishing boats at Brixham quay

**5 SUNDAY AFTERNOON**



Journey's end at Brixham Marina. Back to the office tomorrow!

*Early evening light catches the town's Riviera style, playing on the villas and luxury apartments*



No 7 Fish Bistro in Torquay

**MARINA CONTACTS**

Brixham Marina  
Tel: +44 (0)1803 882929, VHF Ch 80.  
Torquay Marina  
Tel: +44 (0)1803 200210, VHF Ch 80.

**FUEL BERTHS**

Brixham: diesel alongside at marina.  
Torquay: diesel, petrol and LPG at South Pier fuel pontoon, next to inner harbour (call 'Riviera Fuel' on VHF Ch M).

**FAVOURITE PUBS AND RESTAURANTS**

**BRIXHAM**  
On a warm evening, supper on the terrace at the Prince William is just the ticket, right on the marina quay (Tel: +44 (0)1803 854468).  
Berry Head Hotel is near the marina, with its panorama over Tor Bay (Tel: +44 (0)1803 853225).  
For prime harbour views, the Brixham Yacht Club restaurant is hard to beat (Tel: +44 (0)1803 853332).



The Prince William in Brixham

**TORQUAY**

No 7 Fish Bistro is above the marina (Tel: +44 (0)1803 295055). For superb ales and pub grub try the Hole in the Wall, nearby in Park Lane (Tel: +44 (0)1803 200755).  
The Cary Arms on Babbacombe Beach is a cool de Savary inn overlooking the bay (Tel: +44 (0)1803 327110).

**NAVIGATION NOTES**

Tor Bay is straightforward with mostly weak tidal streams. When cruising close inshore, watch out for the following:

- Between Brixham and Berry Head, stay well off Shoalstone Point.
- South of Berry Head, don't pass between Cod Rock and the nearby Mew Stone, because Bastard Rocks lurk in the gap.
- Approaching or leaving Scabbacombe, avoid Druids Mare, a drying rock two cables SSE of Crabrock Point. A shallow wreck lies ¼M NE of Druids Mare.
- Along the inner side of Tor Bay, keep at least four cables offshore between Brixham and Torquay.
- Between Torquay and Hope's Nose, avoid Morris Rogue (0.8m), 1½ cables ESE of East Shag rock, and the Sunker (awash), close SW of the Ore Stone.

**4 SUNDAY MORNING**



Book in for lunch overlooking your boat at the Cary Arms Hotel

**SATURDAY EVENING**

As the sun leaves the beach, up with the anchor and back to Tor Bay for your evening berth. Another night in Brixham is one possibility, or with offshore winds you can anchor in Fishcombe Cove, just west of Brixham entrance. If the tides are neapy and the waterskiers have gone home, Elberry is an attractive overnight anchorage, not far west of Fishcombe.

But on a calm summer evening why not follow the coast inshore all the way round to Torquay's pleasant marina? On the way you'll see Paignton's small drying harbour on the north side of Roundham Head, and this short but memorable run reveals the scale of the spectacular bay that has been a shipping anchorage since the days of sail.

Torquay Harbour isn't always easy to spot, but yachts heading home will show the way. Early evening light catches the town's Riviera style, playing on the villas and luxury apartments rising in tiers behind the Pavilion. The marina is motor boat friendly and the manager, Mike Smith, looks after you well. There are pubs and bistros a short stroll from your pontoon.

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Few folk rise early in Torquay and there's usually much coffee drinking along the pontoons. When you do get going, plans for lunch may be a priority, so if the weather serves make for the Cary Arms in Babbacombe Bay, five miles away on the east side of Torquay. For this short run round Hope's Nose, curve well out past Thatcher Rock and the Ore Stone to savour the atmosphere of the scene.

Tor Bay was made for lazy Sundays. As the morning progresses, motor boats will be whizzing in all directions and this grand expanse is soon a mass of sails. Pleasure boats shuttle between Torquay and Brixham and the heady mix of light and colour is as exhilarating as the Gulf of St Tropez.

Babbacombe is a mile north-east of Hope's Nose and in quiet weather you can anchor off the stone jetty. The Cary Arms is a boutique hotel with a relaxed restaurant, pub bar and terraces overlooking the sea. This de Savary creation has a kind of Nikki Beach mood, ideal for summer Sunday lunches. You can gaze down on your boat in idyllic blue water, with the beach curving away past Babbacombe's famous cliff railway.

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON**

The last part of Sunday is reserved for another spin along this fine coast, either north towards Teignmouth and Dawlish, or back into Tor Bay. Off Teignmouth you often pass anchored ships and may see a coaster slipping in or out of the tricky entrance. Strangely weathered sandstone cliffs are a feature of this stretch and beyond Teignmouth the main West Country railway runs next to the sea. Back around Hope's Nose, it's four easy miles across to Brixham again, a glorious run with the magnificent sweep of Tor Bay still looking like a slice of that other Riviera. **MBY**

**Do you have a perfect weekend?**

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