

THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

# SALCOMBE

*The route:* Salcombe, Kingsbridge, South Pool & Start Bay

There are few more boaty towns than Salcombe. Coming in from the sea for the first time, between the bulwarks of Prawle Point and Bolt Head and over the Bar, inspires the mariner with a sense of achievement few other harbours can offer.

This is a place with salt water running in its veins: there are pubs that do RIB training, the fishmonger has boats for hire, the lifeboat gleams imperiously from its berth, and stone-built taverns echo with laughter and tall tales of the sea as they have done for centuries. Salcombe is a yachting haven these days, but it hasn't sold its soul. There is no marina. Every time you head ashore for a newspaper or a pint of milk you're making another landfall.

**SATURDAY MORNING**

You don't get a better start to a weekend than swinging off a buoy in the main harbour. Green hillsides tumble down to water's edge and the picturesque town of Salcombe, with its clusters of eggshell blue holiday homes and white quay-front buildings, bustle in to life. There's always some salty activity to keep you rubbernecking from the cockpit but when breakfast calls you can pick up supplies at Coleman's in Fore Street or take our favourite alternative, and hop on the ferry to the Venus Cafe in East Portlemouth. They do great breakfast paninis as well as excellent coffee and juices and the cafe

overlooks a sandy swimming beach. After breakfast take the tender to explore the other inlets. Small's Bay, Mill Bay and Sunny Cove are wonderful beaches and just a few minutes further down the estuary.

**SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

Time to plan a trip to Kingsbridge. Leave the boat at her comfy berth and take the tender, setting off about three hours before HW. Observe the speed limit, watch your wash, and it'll take you about 45 minutes from The Bag. The journey is pretty, past unspoilt Blanksmill and Collapit Creeks on the left, and the long, winding river up to Frogmore, marked by the outcrop of Salt Stone. Bring binoculars too as there are ospreys and little egrets, and you might even see an otter.

As you enter the shallow upper reaches, the channel is marked with red and white beacons which lead you on a winding approach, past new flats which were once old shipyards. Tie up on the right at the Crabshell Inn. It's the perfect lunch stop, overlooking the water, with a menu emphasising local produce and seafood. On spring tides you've got plenty of time for a leisurely lunch and a walk into town afterwards. Kingsbridge visitors' pontoon is a quarter of a mile further up, on the left. If time or tide are pressing, another lunch option is the vegetarian cafe at nearby Harbour House, with its oasis-

A boating Mecca: Salcombe offers picturesque landscapes, miles of waterways to explore and centuries of boating tradition



**PROFILE**

**THE AUTHOR**  
**Alan Harper**  
 Alan can usually be found reclining on a superyacht, working on his next article for MBY's Custom Yachting pages. Closer to home, he and his family have been boating around the West Country for years and he maintains the glitz of Cannes has nothing on his home coastline. Current boat - Fidget, Orkney Pilothouse 20




*This is dinghy country; enjoy golden sandy beaches and then potter upstream to one of the delectable foodie pubs for a memorable waterfront lunch*



**3 SATURDAY EVENING**



**Parking Salcombe-style: all boaters dinghy to shore**

like garden. Pasties from Lidstones are widely loved by locals too. Check out the Cookworthy Museum located in the 17th Century schoolhouse – complete with ancient graffiti in the panelling.

**SATURDAY EVENING**

Back to Salcombe on the tide, and relax on board for an hour or two watching the sailing dinghies, ferry boats, harbour launches and yacht tenders zigzag through the moorings.

Feverish activity on the water is reflected, come evening, on shore. The town has a real beating heart and the atmosphere in high season can be infectiously celebratory in fine summer weather, with locals, boaters and day trippers, mingling happily. Salcombe's waterfront is popular but rather small so it's best to go ashore early, or book in advance. Pubs and restaurants abound and can satisfy most palates, from pizzas and chips to pan-seared local turbot at £19.95 a pop.

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Sunday brings more opportunities to do some dinghy discovering and both trips fortunately end in great spots for a Sunday lunch too. The Millbrook Inn is at the head of the harbour's south-eastern arm, a couple of miles from town. After a winding, wooded passage past some very desirable houses you come to the pontoon at South Pool. From there walk into the incredibly pretty hamlet, to the pub at the bottom of the hill. The publicans at the Millbrook are very serious about food, and if you're lucky enough to have a spring tide and the time to enjoy it, you are promised a memorable lunch. Further up the harbour, at the far end of Frogmore Creek, you'll find the highly-rated Globe Inn (+44 (0)1548 531351), about three-and-a-half miles from Salcombe, which prides itself on its real ales and home cooking. Moor at the pontoon and cross the road bridge. Both channels get extremely shallow up at the top. Spring tides are best but if you accidentally-on-purpose get stranded, the Globe has ensuite rooms!

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON**

With the wind in the west, Starehole Bay is a popular spot for a sunbathe and a swim. If your plans take you back towards Dartmouth or Torquay, the long and gently curving shoreline of Start Bay offers plenty of scope for extending the weekend too. The ruined village of Hallsands is fascinating and clearly visible from the water, while The Cricket Inn at Beesands (+44 (0)1548 580 215) and the Start Bay Inn at Torcross (+44 (0)580 553) are both renowned for their food. The fine shingle beaches shelve surprisingly – with the wind offshore you can anchor much closer in than seems proper.

With the sun setting behind the hills and Start Point picked out in hazy silhouette, it's sadly time to haul up the hook. But you'll be back. **MBY Next Month:** West coast of Scotland.

**DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND?**

If you'd like to show fellow *MBY* readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters please email a few sample words and digital photographs to hugo\_andreae@ipcmedia.com



**From sailing to surfing, the area is buzzing with salty activities**

*The atmosphere in high season can be infectiously celebratory and pubs and restaurants abound*

**4 SUNDAY MORNING**



**The Millbrook in South Pool**

**5 SUNDAY AFTERNOON**



**Start Bay is not to be missed**

**HARBOUR CONTACTS**

The harbour office is on the quay at the Whitestrand dinghy pontoon. Call Salcombe Harbour on VHF Ch14 as you enter to request a berth, and if it's not too busy one of their dories will show you where to go – either a buoy off the town, or alongside the visitor's pontoon in The Bag.

The fuel barge (end June to mid-Sept) is on VHF Ch 6 or 07801 798862. Water taxis can be hailed on VHF Ch 12 or 07807 643879.

**NAVIGATION NOTES**

Start Point is something of a local Cape Horn, with strong tidal streams and associated overfalls that stretch up to two miles to the east and south-south east. Time your passage to avoid wind-against tide conditions, or give it a wide berth. With settled weather and a favourable tide you can cut in close, but take care to avoid Cherrick Rocks, a cable south of Black Stone.

The Bar across the entrance to Salcombe has a deservedly fearsome reputation, but as the harbourmaster points out, it's really only at its worst in weather that keeps most of us in port. Don't try to cross it during ebb tides with a southerly wind or swell.

**EATING AND DRINKING**

In Kingsbridge try the Crabshell Inn (+44 (0)1548 852345). The Millbrook Inn in South Pool is also great for lunch (+44 (0)1548 531581). For Salcombe town eateries, the Fortescue (+44 (0)1548 842868) is a proper local with decent food, Captain Flint's (+44 (0)1548 842357) is a child-friendly pizza place, while for more upmarket fare and a great view try Dick and Wills (+44 (0)1548 843408). Catch (+44 (0)1548 842646) is a well-regarded Italian. A very busy pub that also does food, the Ferry Inn (+44 (0)1548 842061) has an excellent outlook.



**Salcombe has a great family vibe**