

# NEWQUAY

The town of Newquay sits perched atop towering granite cliffs and encompasses nine beaches all linked together by the South West Coast Path. From the grand sweep of Watergate Bay to Crantock Beach west of the Pentire Headland, nowhere is more than 10 minutes away by car, or half an hour's trot along the coast path. The beaches in the Newquay area all slope gradually toward the sea, making the inside sections a good option for learners and freestylers. Out the back though, truly incredible wave sailing can be had amongst the lined up walls of Atlantic juice; remember there is nothing but ocean between Newquay and Newfoundland...

Typical Cornish beach scene; pristine sand, no pebbles or shingle or general crap, and shady cloisters amongst granite cliffs. Breathe it in!



The locals have been working very hard to move the image of Newquay forward, but everytime a shot like this gets in the press it sets the cause back just a little more.



**“OUT PAST LITTLE FISTRAL, THERE BREAKS A WELL KNOWN BOMBORA CALLED THE CRIBBER. UNLESS YOUR NAME IS BEN WILSON RESIST ALL URGES TO KITE THIS BREAK”**

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No wind entertainment of course comes in the way of surfing, or checking out one of the many festivals or surf comps that run throughout the year. Just exploring the hidden coves and secrets of the bays will keep most beachgoers happy, while coasteering will satisfy the more hardcore. If you're not scared of a bit of tarmac bring your skate; Newquay is built on a series of hills all sloping down to incredible surf and sea views, plus there are a couple of skateparks too. Many people who live here are into other stuff besides the kiting; there is always something going on so it doesn't make sense to sit about waiting for wind.

Kite widows will delight in the numerous surf and lifestyle shops, and just about any evening of the year a right good knees up can be had in town. Eating out is a treat with local seafood a plenty; check out the restaurants that sit on the beaches of Lusty Glaze, Tolcarne, Fistral and Watergate Bay. The town itself is a curious mix of surf punks, travellers, eastern European seasonaires, Ibiza-esque party people and wistful artisans. Although in summer it can get so crowded one can struggle to find a place to park, the vibe is invariably laid back and a feeling of mellow good humour permeates Newquay's affairs.

The kite scene itself consists of the local Newquay riders, and kitesurfers living within the 'catchment area' who visit when conditions turn on. People are friendly and ready to chat about the do's and don'ts regarding access, so don't hesitate to ask. You won't find any printed signs telling you what you can and can't do, but from day to day things change drastically: the conditions, other beach users, and tide states can all impact on whether or not you can go out. It is very much a case of the collective common sense of kites keeping access open for all. The style of riding may be a little different to what you would see at big flat water locations, local stand outs are more likely to be throwing huge rooster tails out the backs of the waves rather than high powered mobes, though there are one or two exceptions! The atmosphere is relaxed, many people drive battered old wagons and wear old wetsuits and car park posturing is kept to a minimum.

### **Fistral Beach (no kiting during lifeguarded hours)**

**Works in: NW (bang onshore) W (great waveriding)**

*The riding:* If there is west in the wind, Fistral can have a sizey wave breaking on its day. Usually the waves here are a little tighter together than Watergate Bay and don't break so far out, but pack more punch. There are two main surfing breaks; the lefts at the south end and the main peak known as North Fistral. Chances are in light winds both of these will be crowded with paddlers, so avoid. During colder months or in times of strong winds, the peak at North Fistral can throw up some steep, sucky walls for those willing to risk the rocks downwind (the W wind will push you towards the North End of the beach – beware!). The lefts at the south are rideable, but consider the wind shadow created by the looming Pentire Headland. Back up the beach to North Fistral and out past Little Fistral, there breaks a well known bombora called The Cribber. Unless your name is Ben Wilson resist all urges to kite this break. Fishing boats with a lot more buoyancy than any impact vest have been sucked down here and smashed against the horrifyingly jagged Towan Headland. If a big swell does roll in when you are in town (4m plus) walk out to the edge of the headland and watch the biggest show in the South West from there. For general freeriding Fistral can be a lot of fun, with large flat sheets of water between the lines of white water on the inside. The wind can be very smooth as it flows in from the beach and up the gently sloping golf course behind. Spectators (and kite widows) can get a great view from the parking areas at either end of the beach, as well as in the shelter of the dunes.

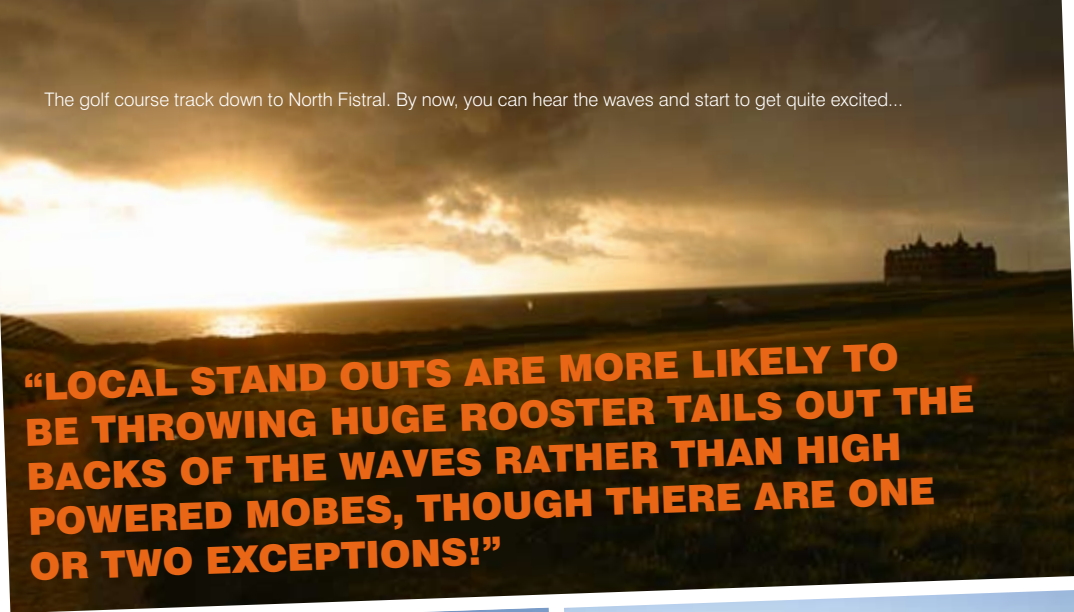
*Beachlife:* In the water, a mix of some of the areas best surfers, learners, surf schools and general bathers. On the sand, groups of attractive sun worshipers and unlicensed sandwich vendors. Not that popular with families. In winter, dog walkers and die hard surfers. Friendly laid back beach fare can be had at the Windswept Cafe at South Fistral, and Fistral Blu caters to those with deep pockets at the North End, they both serve great food which should take away the bitter taste of the filthy grabbing wheel clampers that lurk there all year round.





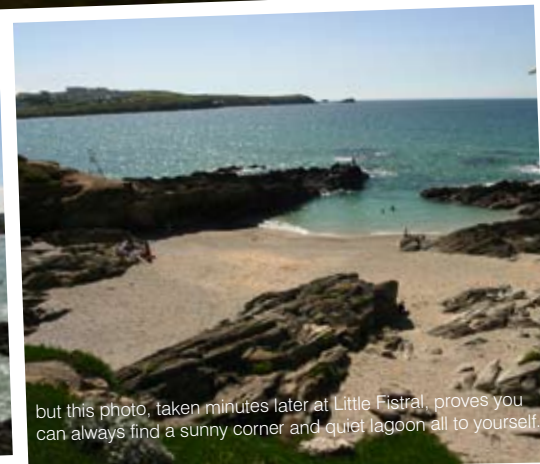
Ali Barret at last years BKSA Watergate event

The golf course track down to North Fistral. By now, you can hear the waves and start to get quite excited...



**“LOCAL STAND OUTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE THROWING HUGE ROOSTER TAILS OUT THE BACKS OF THE WAVES RATHER THAN HIGH POWERED MOBES, THOUGH THERE ARE ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS!”**

The mid summer throng at Fistral; not enough space to lay down a towel never mind your lines (goes without saying!)



but this photo, taken minutes later at Little Fistral, proves you can always find a sunny corner and quiet lagoon all to yourself.

**Achtung!:** The middle section of Fistral is backed by sand dunes and behind that a golf course. Either end has the sharpest most horrible rocks with deep chasms in between, watch out. There is a car park and huge surf complex at the North End, so despite what it may look like, this is NOT a good spot to push the spring high tide session at. The conditions here can be very hectic, if it's on, usually a couple of local kites or windy rigs will be out. A big rip runs out from North Fistral towards you guessed it, Cribber country: if it's empty and you are in doubt, don't go out! Like all beaches within Newquay, kiting access is more a privilege than a right. Exercise your best judgement at all times to ensure you can come back to it the next year.

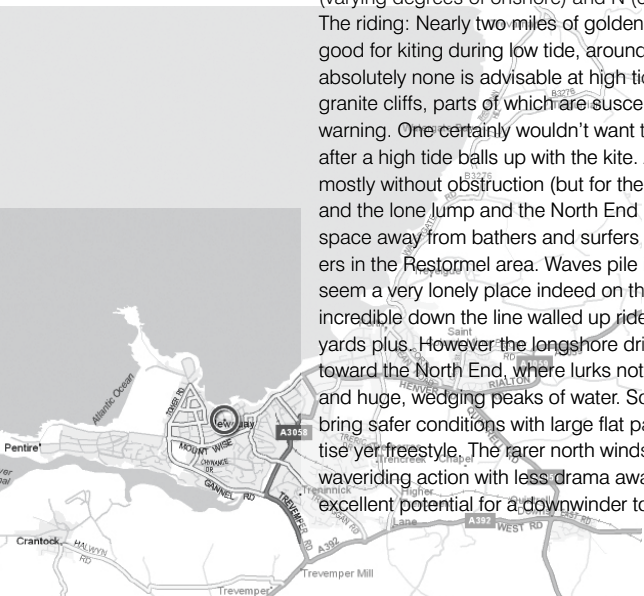
**Watergate Bay:**

**Works in:** S (primo waveriding, gusty) SW (cross on, awesome!) W and NW (varying degrees of onshore) and N (cross cross on, rare but very nice!)  
**The riding:** Nearly two miles of golden sand, around two thirds of which is good for kiting during low tide, around half of which is OK mid tide, and absolutely none is advisable at high tide! Watergate is backed by looming granite cliffs, parts of which are susceptible to breaking away without warning. One certainly wouldn't want to find oneself having to scale them after a high tide balls up with the kite. At low tide, smooth golden sand, mostly without obstruction (but for the visible rock belt in front of the hotel and the lone jump and the North End known as The Whore) and a lot of space away from bathers and surfers make The 'Gate a staple for most kites in the Restormel area. Waves pile in during big swells and out back can seem a very lonely place indeed on the wrong day. South winds can see incredible down the line walled up rides that rattle off for a couple hundred yards plus. However the longshore drift and wind will drag downed kites toward the North End, where lurks nothing much but nasty rocks, big rips, and huge, wedging peaks of water. South west round to north west winds bring safer conditions with large flat patches between the kickers to practise yer freestyle. The rarer north winds herald sunshine and small, easy waveriding action with less drama awaiting downwind if it goes awry, and excellent potential for a downwinder to Towan Beach.

**Beachlife:** The Watergate Bay and Extreme Academy complex sit in the valley entrance to the beach, selling everything from luxurious honeymoon ocean view suites to plastic spades and custom longboards. The kite school operates 365 days a year, and there is always someone to talk to during the working hours to get the heads up on the days conditions. Due to its expansive size and favourable wind window (by Newquay standards) you won't struggle for a fellow kiter to launch you or ride with at The 'Gate. Good spot to bring the family, nice atmosphere at the Phoenix pub too.  
**Achtung!:** Car park thieves! Not so much an issue for us kites as we can leave our keys with our gear on the beach, but just know car thieves operate here. Longshore drift, flowing tides and rips catch the unwary and unlucky too often. The safest spot is usually out front of the main complex at low tide. DO NOT KITE HERE two hours either side of high tide, there is no room and the cliffs cause hellish updrafts.

**Towan Beach:**

**Works in:** N (onshore) and NE (onshore with a bit of cross). Really a wintertime spot; this is the busiest beach in Newquay with no surfing, never mind kiting allowed during lifeguard hours.  
**The riding:** Low tide only!! Towan Beach is sometimes called Town Beach, but it gets its name from the Cornish word for sand – Towan. There aren't many places in Cornwall where you find yourself kiting in the middle of a town. Kites at Towan Beach will be treated to an interesting look back at Newquay and the buildings huddled on the cliffs, as well as stunning views up the North coast all the way to Trevoze Headland. Towan Beach links up with Great Western, Tolcarne, Lusty Glaze and Porth (on very low tides) so you can find yourself with a lot of space here on the right day. Typically the water here will be quite choppy with messed up waves, what with it only working in on / cross on winds, but as usual there are still a few flat spots on the inside and water starting in the shallows is easy enough. At low tide, the only obstacles are the many rocks and huge cliffs that you see on the shore, and maybe the odd lobster pot buoy depending on how far out you go. A good vantage point for photos is the north quay of the fishing harbour, so station the kite widow(er) up there.



## UK SPOT GUIDE

**Beachlife:** Since you will most likely be here in the depths of winter or on a very bleak day, you'll be sharing space with dog walkers, walkers in general and a handful of learning surfers, though on any given day of the year if the sun breaks through, the place can be teeming with people. A myriad of pubs and bars are within a 2 minute walk, from the unparalleled Harbour Hotel (amazing food) to the newly opened lapdancing club. Most places overlook the beach and it's quite nice to relax with a drink in the evening and look out to where you were once ripping. Achtung! The tide, people, and rocks are three very significant dangers at Towan Beach. Again, access is a privilege and not a right; only kite here during a good low tide and get there as it is dropping. The public will most likely enjoy watching the spectacle of a kitesurfer so put on a good show for them but leave plenty of space.

### Crantock:

**Works in:** W-NW (great waveriding, lots of flat sections)

**The riding:** Crantock turns on with similar conditions to Watergate and Fistral but offers safer riding at high tide, even on springs. The beach is backed primarily by dunes, and a small river, The Gannel, runs along the north headland creating a mini rivermouth break at high water. Try to get here during slack water, or when the tide is ebbing as the funnel shaped beach can be frustrating to kite at when water is surging into it. Low to mid tide sees powerful board snapping slabs breaking across the bay with defined peaks nearer to both headlands - it gets heavy. Nearer towards high tide, large sheets of shallow flat water over spongy sand appear which can be great for a bit of freestyle. A little further out, whackable reforms abound just waiting to be shredded. At high water the rivermouth creates a small lagoon with super fun little lines peeling through that hold shape no matter what the wind is doing. On huge days Crantock can be a good place to WATCH from the Pentire Headland that it shares with Fistral as there are all sorts of mysto waves that turn on...look out for Zorba's!

**Beachlife:** Crantock is the most low key kiteable beach in the Newquay area, used by local surfers to get away from the ever present crowds. Ideally you won't be sharing the water with paddlers if the wind is honking onshore at 25knots, but keep an eye out for lone resin heads suddenly emerging yards in front of your board. This is a National Trust beach and thus very beautiful with no development. The Bowgie Inn on the south headland is a great place to take the spouse or family.

**Achtung!:** The river: it is small, but will carry boards a long way in our out, depending on the tide. The wind here is usually stronger due to the venturi effect of the valley, and can be quite gusty if it shifts a little. The huge rocky headlands on either side need to be avoided of course. Crantock can be a very lonely place if you cop an injury so don't kite here alone: the volume of water moving around can make self rescue a mission at the best of times.

### A very rough guide to tide predictions in Newquay:

Spring tides are a kiter's friend in Newquay as that is when there is most space to play, and handily the low occurs around the midday mark, so you can guarantee light. Neap lows are unkiteable in the winter as it is dark. It takes six hours for the tide to flow from high to low or vice versa, and slack water occurs an hour either side of low or high. The water really races in during the third and fourth hour between low and high, and for most beaches this heralds the end of the session. Tides here reach up to 7m on a spring, and over 5m on a neap - do not underestimate the effect of the tide!

### Put these numbers in yer mobile:

**Local kiteshop:** Airjam, 01637 850888.

**Local kiteschool:** Atlantic Riders, 07791 937207

**Another local kiteschool:** Extreme Academy, 01637 860840

### When to rock 'n' roll:

**December to March:** Can be very clement, the beaches are usually quietest and the wind can pump at 30knots for days on end. The swell can be very large at this time. Accommodation is plentiful, and it is possible to have a good night out any day of the week.

**April to June:** No need for booties or hoods, you'll be sharing beach and water space with others. It is light enough to kite on the evening neap low tides. Town is livelier, every day is a holiday.

**July to August:** You'll really be choosing your kiting days during this time of year. Watergate is the most consistent option, but the winds can be maddeningly fickle. Sea breezes can kick in around 3pm and augment the W or N winds. The pubs and clubs are heaving, campsites are full. September to November: The golden months! The swell is pounding, the water warm(ish) and the wind can rack through. Hurricane tail swells light up all sorts of mysto spots. The vibe in town relaxes and you can park again, hurrah!

### In the morning, you know you won't remember a thing...

But if you're sensible, you can enjoy a nice drink at one of the following places:

*The Vic Bars - Newquay's most straight down the line blue collar pub.*

*The Chy Bar - Monday nights is 'locals' night; riotous.*

*Belushi's - Service is slow, but nice views.*

*Cullen's - In town, very comfortable, great service, makes you feel very welcome.*

*Pippa's Place - Edge of town, good atmosphere and super friendly.*

Don't worry about dress codes, so long as you are wearing enough cloth to cover your nether regions you'll be welcomed at most establishments with open arms. Newquay doorstaff have a refreshingly open mind when it comes to an individuals right to express themselves through beach wear.

On a Watergate summers evening, the sun sets right over the ocean. Wintertime, it sets over the Towan Headland. That's our planet's oscillation for you.



And here's the view from sea level. Local grom, Cam.



Looking up along the Atlantic Coast from the town beaches.



The view to the north from Towan Beach: Porth Headland in the background

