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COVER STORY

Every county has its icon: Norfolk has the Broads, Derbyshire the Peaks and Somerset is synonymous with cider. But what of Cornwall? Surely it's more than just cream teas?

Today's Cornwall is no longer "just" a holiday hotspot or a retirement haven, descriptions which have defined it for decades. It now attracts different tribes, from gourmets to start-up entrepreneurs to artists; as a result, its housing market is more vibrant than ever before.

House prices have risen 13 per cent since 2014 according to Zoopla, which is more than Devon, hitherto seen as better connected than its neighbour across the Tamar. But homes are only part of Cornwall's attraction: there's the lifestyle, opportunity and a sense of liberation.

"People used to leave London or Birmingham for the Home Counties or the Cotswolds for a semi-rural life," says Claire Coode of buying agency [Stacks Property Search](#). "Now those who want to be more free spirited go further, and that's where Cornwall scores."

Around 50 per cent of Coode's clients are over 50 and moving down to retire or preparing for it. This is down from five years ago, when that figure was 80 per cent. The demographics are changing fast and Cornwall's incomers are getting younger.

"Not long ago anyone career-minded wouldn't come for work or salary - they didn't exist. But there are now 20-somethings wanting the lifestyle; young families able to make good jobs work because of faster internet; and older families who once stayed in the Home Counties, but with a business they can manage from home with occasional visits to London," she says.

So where are they moving? It depends which tribe they belong to.

The Helford river has a *Swallows and Amazons* feel with its creeks and inlets



ARTISTS

“There’s nothing like this in London. My art is influenced by being outside, walking on beaches, seasonal flowers – all things I see in Cornwall and wouldn’t see in London,” says artist Lucy Innes Williams, 34. She moved from Teddington in south-west London to Falmouth a year ago with her husband James, 37, and two young daughters Tilda, two, and eight-month-old Daisy.

Cornwall has three vibrant arty communities – St Ives, Penzance and Falmouth; Innes Williams chose the latter because of its infrastructure of art suppliers, photographers, picture framers and the like. “It’s a small commu-

nity, but incredibly welcoming, and the university produces so many creatives who stay and set up art businesses and agencies,” she adds.

She and James, a sales director, kept their London home and rented in Cornwall for a year, but are now selling in the capital and buying in Falmouth, where average house prices are just above £360,000, which is well under half the typical property price in Teddington.

A typical St Ives home is £354,500 (less than many outsiders think), while Penzance, which now has six art galleries and a growing cultural reputation, is a snip at £264,000.



CREATIVE WHITE SPACE

A house in St Ives, above, £1.45m with Jackson-Stops



FOODIES

Padstow steals the headlines of Cornwall's foodie renaissance, with Rick Stein's fishy empire, Paul Ainsworth's Michelin-starred Number 6 and the newbie Prawn On The Lawn, while Port Isaac has two Nathan Outlaw restaurants. But there's a wider Cornish cuisine culture growing beyond the old favourites.

With it comes entrepreneurs and culinary creatives such as James Rylance, 30, who last year moved from north London and has now bought a home in historic Lostwithiel with partner Nia Moore, 29. It's 10 minutes from his work as head brewer at Harbour



Brewing, a craft beer company.

"Nia and I wanted kids and to buy a home, so we left London," says Rylance. "I had job opportunities on the east coast of Scotland and the Peak District, but Cornwall seemed freer. Our home's gorgeous and it's infinitely bigger and better than we could have got in London."

One of the reasons for Cornwall's amazing food scene is due to its climate.

"It never really gets cold so the crop diversity is brilliant," he says. "Things grow here that don't grow elsewhere."

But gently rising soufflés mean steeply rising house prices: Padstow's average house price is £534,000, while Port Isaac's is £400,500 (although you'll pay much more for clear views of the Atlantic). Lostwithiel, by contrast, is closer to a reasonable £243,200.



SAILORS

Although the county has popular sailing facilities on both coasts, it's the south that is favoured by serious boaties. This hobby has helped to drive the housing market into high gear in many of the most expensive locations.

The Helford river is arguably the most beautiful sailing spot with slipways galore, and it has a *Swallows and Amazons* feel, with its creeks and inlets. Nearby Falmouth has deep water moorings and a marina, while Mylor and St Mawes are relatively sheltered.

This whole patch, known as the Roseland Peninsula, is laden with sailing regattas and competitions every spring and summer.

H Tiddy, an estate agency in tiny St Mawes says average prices there have now hit £1.2million. Here, and at even smaller waterside communities close by like Portscatho and Portloe, homes with a sea view attract a premium of at least 45 per



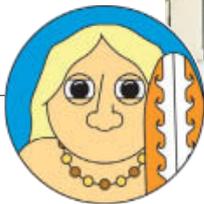
LAND AHOY!

A four-bedroom house in Falmouth, above and left, £700,000 with Savills

cent. At St Mawes, in particular, homes sold by H Tiddy in 2018 averaged £546 per sq ft if they had a good uninterrupted water view, or £365 per sq ft if they sat just a street or two inland. According to H Tiddy, with only a small number of properties, the market in this scenic corner of Cornwall is "recession-proof".

THE BOARD ROOM

A four-bedroom house in Polzeath, right, £1.395m with John Bray and Partners



SURFERS

Cornwall's top surfing spots are created by a combination of Atlantic swells and long, wide sandy beaches. These are predominantly on the spectacular north coast, such as Fistral Beach and Watergate Bay around Newquay, Gwithian Beach near Hayle and Polzeath close to Padstow and super-expensive Rock.

Many of these locations were always popular with beach bums, but surfing has given new life to Newquay town in particular, where scores of surfers have set up businesses, taking advantage of four flights a day to Heathrow.

Newquay is one of the county's best places to live for value for money: the average price is just £270,500 for all properties and only £378,300 for a detached house.



TECHIES

Cornwall is Britain's newest (and most unlikely) tech centre, with techies drawn to the county for its quality of life. There are around 680 tech firms in the county, almost all paying above-average salaries and recruiting rapidly. Over the summer, Screen Cornwall started to promote the county to digital media, video games and immersive technology



WEST TECH

A house in Truro, above and below, £650,000 with Savills

firms. This follows other tech relocations and expansions: medical software firm Bluefruit is based near Redruth; tech marketing firm Radix is in Penryn and works worldwide for Microsoft, Oracle, O2 and Sage; and Spaceport at Newquay airport will, from 2025, be a satellite launch base operating with Virgin Orbit.

"The big property pay-off will be in the letting sector," says Steve Fuller, who recently

moved from London and is setting up as a buying agency for newcomers. "Until now, Cornwall has not had many well-paid professional tenants, but as tech industries grow, so will demand for higher quality places to rent.

Truro and Newquay will be the biggest winners." Truro's average house price is £307,000 and local estate agents say the city has a growing buy-to-let sector despite recent tax changes affecting landlords.



Property newsletter

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A six-bedroom property in Port Isaac, above left and below, £895,000 with John Bray and Partners



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LIFE'S A BEACH

On the cover, clockwise from top left: Golant, Watergate Bay in Newquay, Falmouth and St Mawes; main, Lucy and James Innes Williams with daughters Tilda and Daisy



CHRISTOPHER JONES; STEVE EARL-DAVIES