

10 OF THE BEST TIDAL POOLS

There's nothing like a saltwater dip to invigorate the senses, and the sea pools around our coastline are the perfect place to do so.

Dive in for our pick of the best...

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From the breath-stopping moment of submersion to the skin-tingling high of drying off and getting cosy again, seawater swimming provides a powerful sensory feast. However, rough seas and unfavourable tides mean that it's not always possible or safe to enter the open water to revitalise body and mind. Over the years, coastal communities have addressed this problem by creating enclosed swimming spaces that are refreshed at high tide, warmed by the sun and offer protection from the vicissitudes of the ocean. Some are roughly hewn from natural rockpools while others have the regular lines and angles of a more traditional swimming pool, but all offer memorable bathing experiences amid the beauty of the British coastline.

1 LEAP INTO LIFE BLUE LAGOON, PEMBROKESHIRE

The vertiginous cliffs that tower above the Blue Lagoon in Aberiddi make it easy to see why Red Bull chose this location for its Cliff Diving World Series on three occasions, creating scenes of athletic feats against its rugged backdrop. The lagoon is a former slate quarry, which was flooded and abandoned in 1910, and the pool left behind – attached by a channel to the sea – has become a hub for watersports enthusiasts. Its depth and currents mean that entering the water is best done as part of an organised group, but this unique lagoon and its dramatic location are well worth a visit even if you're not planning on leaping in. Find out more at nationaltrust.org.uk/abereiddi-to-abermawr/features/the-blue-lagoon-abereiddi.



2 SO SPACIOUS
WALPOLE BAY TIDAL POOL, KENT

Covering an area of around four acres, this is the country's largest tidal pool and, as such, is a fantastic expanse for serious swimmers to practise open-water training, while its shallows offer ample opportunity for paddling and splashing about. Margate's Grade-II listed pool was designed in 1937 to allow larger numbers of holidaymakers to enjoy sea bathing even at low tides when the water can recede several hundred yards from the promenade. Today it attracts water-lovers of all ages who are drawn to the freedom of saltwater swimming under wide open skies. Find out more at visitmargate.co.uk/venue/walpole-bay-tidal-pool.



3 SAFE HAVEN
BUDE SEA POOL, CORNWALL

During hot days on Summerleaze beach in Bude, there's no better way to cool down than a dip in the sea pool. Nestling amid the rocks beneath the cliffs this semi-natural tidal pool offers free, safe seawater swimming with spectacular views thrown in. Since public funding for the pool was withdrawn in 2010 its upkeep has been in the hands of Friends of Bude Sea Pool, a local charity committed to preserving and improving this icon of the local coastline, which has provided so much joy for locals and holidaymakers over the years since its creation in the 1930s. Find out more at budeseapool.org.



MARGATE PHOTOGRAPH: THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL
BUDE PHOTOGRAPH: VISIT CORNWALL/MATT JESSOP
ST MONANS PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MURRAY

4 LOOKING NORTH
ST MONANS SEA POOL, FIFE

After years of neglect and disuse, a recent community effort in the fishing village of St Monans helped to restore this unassuming tidal pool, and since the clear-up it has seen a resurgence of popularity from local people enjoying the delights of its invigorating waters. Negotiate the stony shallows with care, and once you reach the greater depths you can plunge in for a thrilling but safe introduction to sea swimming. The pool at St Monans is presided over by an 18th-century windmill, a remnant of the area's salt-mining past, and a suitably picturesque feature of the view from the water. →→→



5 HORIZON VIEWS

CLEVEDON MARINE LAKE, NORTH SOMERSET
 This large, picturesque pool is filled with seawater from the Bristol Channel every spring tide and is a popular place for swimming all year round. Gaze across the surface of its calm, salty water and it becomes an infinity pool as its edges blur against the backdrop of the wider waterscape with Clevedon Pier in the distance. Although free to use, donations for its upkeep are appreciated, and whether you're joining one of the pool's regular classes or taking an independent dip, the Marine Lake offers a chance to enjoy the pleasures of the sea without the need to pick your way over Clevedon's stony beach. Find out more at clevedonmarinelake.co.uk.



6 LOCALS' FAVOURITE
THE TRINKIE, CAITHNESS

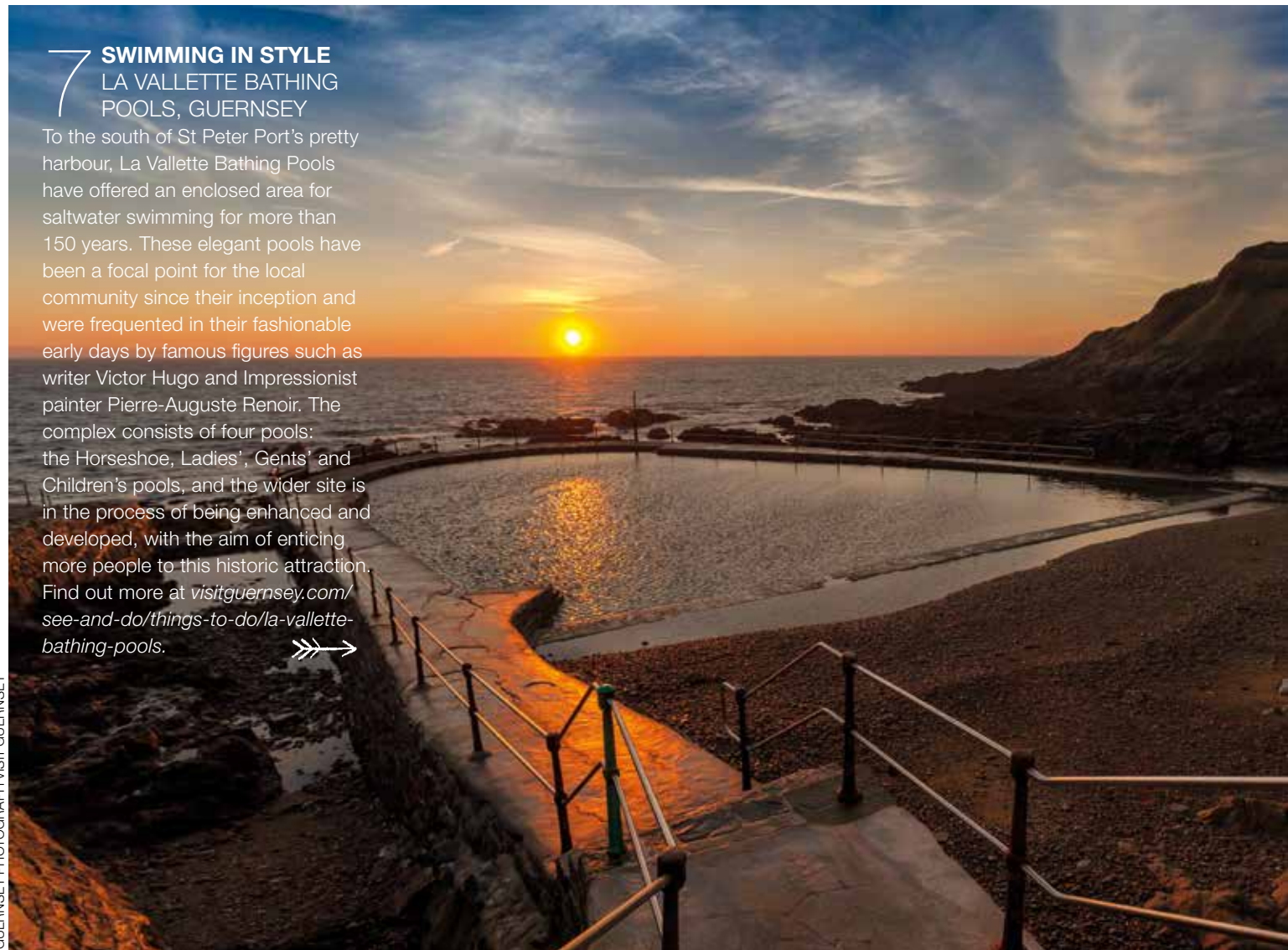
Sitting in the rock shelves that jut into the ocean off the coast of Wick lies the Trinkie (a Scottish word for 'trench'). This naturally occurring tidal pool has long been a place for social gatherings, and the surrounding expanse of rocks lends itself perfectly to picnicking between dips in the bracing pool waters. The original wall was installed in the 1920s, and over the years much of the pool's care has been a labour of love for local volunteers, determined to preserve this unique spot. The Trinkie Heritage Preservation Group is currently in the process of securing repairs for the storm-damaged wall to return the pool to its former glory. Find out more at venture-north.co.uk/heritage/sites/the-trinkie-outdoor-swimming-pool.

7 SWIMMING IN STYLE
LA VALLETTE BATHING POOLS, GUERNSEY

To the south of St Peter Port's pretty harbour, La Vallette Bathing Pools have offered an enclosed area for saltwater swimming for more than 150 years. These elegant pools have been a focal point for the local community since their inception and were frequented in their fashionable early days by famous figures such as writer Victor Hugo and Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir. The complex consists of four pools: the Horseshoe, Ladies', Gents' and Children's pools, and the wider site is in the process of being enhanced and developed, with the aim of enticing more people to this historic attraction. Find out more at visitguernsey.com/see-and-do/things-to-do/la-vallette-bathing-pools.



CLEVEDON PHOTOGRAPH LAURA NESBITT
 WICK PHOTOGRAPH CATHERINE PATTERSON
 GUERNSEY PHOTOGRAPH VISIT GUERNSEY



8 PETITE PERFECTION
CHAPEL ROCK TIDAL POOL, CORNWALL

With the St Piran flag flying at its summit Chapel Rock is a distinctive landmark of Perranporth Beach, and at low tide this bulky stone island rises invitingly from the expanse of golden sand that surrounds it. Tucked away at its base is a small tidal pool – an idyllic swimming spot, especially on hot summer days when it is gently warmed by the sun. It's not only a great location for all ages to swim, it also acts as a giant rockpool, which is alive with all the usual suspects, from small fish to anemones and crabs. Find out more at visitcornwall.com.



10 FAMILY FRIENDLY
BELMULLET TIDAL POOL, COUNTY MAYO

For a side order of sunset with your swim, Belmullet's neatly rectangular tidal pool is the place to go. This west-facing facility offers glorious vistas from the water at all times, but in the rosy pink glow as the sun goes down it becomes even more special. The water tends to be chilly but that doesn't deter the crowds from descending, especially in the summer months when the sun is out and lifeguards are on duty. Sitting next to the main pool there's a smaller, shallower toddler pool so the whole family can enjoy the Belmullet pool experience. Find out more at visitbelmullet.ie.



9 GRAND DAY OUT
SHOALSTONE SEAWATER POOL, DEVON

Head east from Brixham's bustling harbour and you'll find this elegant seawater swimming pool. Originally built into a natural rockpool, in 1896 two walls were constructed to retain the tidal water that swept in, and it took on its current design in 1926. The pool is open from May to September and is free to use, though a voluntary donation of £2 per swim or £5 per family helps towards its running costs. There's plenty of space for relaxing by the pool too, making it a perfect day out for everyone – whether you're joining the fun in the water or prefer to stay dry and enjoy the expansive views across Torbay. Find out more at shoalstonepool.com.



BELMULLET PHOTOGRAPH MONIKA REGEGIOVA/TOURISM IRELAND
 CHAPEL ROCK PHOTOGRAPH VISIT CORNWALL/ADAM GIBBARD
 BRIXHAM PHOTOGRAPH ENGLISH RIVIERA BID

SAFE SEA SWIMMING

While tidal pools are safer than the open ocean, it's always best to swim with other people and be aware of risks such as bad weather conditions, cold water and slippery rocks. In more northerly climes many people swim in wetsuits and bobble hats to help keep warm. Don't stay in the water too long and always take a towel, plus a cosy robe to warm up in afterwards, and some refreshments including a flask of hot tea or coffee. For more advice on staying safe at the beach, such as preventing and/or dealing with cold water shock, go to rnli.org.