

# FISTRAL

(Newquay)

This magnificent beach is the home of surfing in the UK. It all began in the early 1960's when longboards from California were introduced and today it is very much the centre of a huge growth sport and industry that is seen by many as one that epitomises all that is so special about the north Cornish coastline. It is a north westerly facing beach that is over 750m long flanked by Towan Head with the distinctive Headland Hotel to the north-east and East Pentire Head to the south-west. It is backed by a sand dune system that is now a golf course. It is very accessible from many directions and is neatly divided into North Fistral and South Fistral having different points of access.



Looking west from Towan Head early on a summer morning

 **TR7 1HY** - The main access to the northerly end of the beach and the National Surfing Centre is at the end of Headland Road. This can be reached very easily from Central Square and the main shopping centre by walking along Fore Street which in turn leads to Beacon Road where the beach is signposted along Headland Road a total distance of 1km. From outside Newquay follow the A392 from the south and at the boating lake continue along the Gannel Road to the roundabout at the top of the hill then follow the signs to Fistral along Tower Road. There is a car parking at the end of Headland Road (capacity 230 cars) although when there are surfing events parking is restricted. Further parking can be found on the road off Headland Road to Towan Head (capacity 120 cars). **TR7 1LR** - To access a more central part of the beach there is a public footpath that crosses the Golf Course (550m) from the two car parks off Tower Road/ Toby



Off surfing

Way; for further access and parking details see the overview for [Newquay](#). **TR7 1PZ** - To reach South Fistral from the roundabout at the top of Gannel Road (A392) turn into Pentire Road which leads to Esplanade Road where there is roadside parking (capacity 140+). There is further car parking at the beginning of Pentire Road (capacity 200+ cars) which involves a walk of about 500m.



Access on to the beach from car parking off Headland Road by the Surfing Centre is straight forward down gentle short slopes that are possible for pushchairs but not wheel chairs. At the Pentire end there are steps down to the beach right next to the Coast Path where it leaves Esplanade Road. They are not really suitable for pushchairs. There are numerous paths through the dunes from the Coast Path that runs through the sand dunes next to the Golf Course. The path across the Golf Course has raised embankments either side (for safety reasons) but is flat with an easy access on to the beach.



The beach when viewed from either Towan Head or East Pentire headland can be quite stunning. There is always a sizeable strip of fine golden sand above high water mark which is usually larger in summer. At low water the tide goes out over 350m leaving a wide expanse of beach that stretches from Nun Cove and Little Fistral at the Towan Head end to Great Toddy and Little Toddy Coves at the Pentire end. The nature of the beach makes it popular with families as well as surfers. There are rocky areas



Little Toddy Cove



Little Fistral to the right



Facilities at South Fistral



Access at South Fistral

interspersed with sand at either end of the beach which gives it variety and provides attractive secluded and more sheltered spaces which can be welcome as the beach can be very crowded at the height of summer and when there are surfing competitions. The central part of the beach can be quite exposed at times from winds in all directions.



There are safety equipment points at either end of the beach. RNLI Lifeguards are on duty from Easter until the end of September at North Fistral and also during weekends in October and the Half Term week at the end of October. South Fistral has Lifeguards on duty from the beginning of July until the first week in September. It is not really a swimming beach because of the usual Atlantic swell and surf. Very occasionally in calm conditions swimming is possible but it should only take place in the Lifeguard patrolled designated areas as the beach has strong rip currents and undertow even in what seems benign conditions.



It is very easy to get taken in by all the hype around surfing at Fistral but the truth is that it is an excellent beach with the most consistent of waves



North Fistral facilities and the National Surfing Centre

and renowned as one of the best beach breaks in Cornwall. It produces powerful hollow waves and holds a good sized swell. It benefits from facing north west when the prevailing wind is from the south west so enabling cleaner conditions. Little Fistral has the best waves and with the rocky outcrops is for the more experienced. South Fistral is often more sheltered and less crowded. Just north of Little Fistral the reef off Towan Head produces the legendary but rare wave known as 'The Cribber' which produces a wave over 7 metres high! It is a popular place to kite surf out of season or early in the morning.



It is not a snorkelling beach but there are a few rock pools at either end of the beach.



Temporary competition structures View from Pentire East



Dogs are allowed all year. There are toilets above the facilities at North Fistral with disabled facilities. The toilets at South Fistral are next to the Coast Path off Esplanade Road above the beach. There is a range of shops, cafes, a bar and restaurant at North Fistral and a cafe and restaurant at south Fistral all immediately above the beach.



Location – Part of OS Explorer Map 106



Water quality is excellent. The beach is owned by Cornwall Council who clean it regularly. Fistral is the home of the British Surfing Association, the Newquay Surf Life Saving Club and Boardrider Club. It hosts prestigious surfing competitions and has a surf museum. All in all it is a special beach.