Uniters on the Riviera

Take a literary tour around the English Riviera and uncover the places and stories of the greatest writers of all time, who, for the past 200 years, have flocked to the English Riviera. Sent on doctor's orders, to relax in our warm climate, to promenade with the well-heeled, debate with the greatest minds and to be inspired by the stunning coastline. They came and they left their mark.

Now you can follow in their illustrious footsteps and find the indelible traces they've left.



'How do I love thee, let me count the ways?', the occult, Bovril, a Prime Minister, the scandal that brought LGBTQ+ to the media, the UK's answer to Stephen King, and a rollerskating nurse who would become the best-selling novelist of all time.

Use this map to uncover the places our literary heroes frequented and walk the streets, beaches and cliff top locations that most inspired their work. You can head out on foot to many of the places shown on the map. The accessible central route which is mostly on the flat (markers 1 to 4 and C and D on the map) shouldn't take you more than an hour.

Take the day to do the whole thing with plenty of stop offs along the way. Make use of local transport or drive to places further afield. See stunning architecture, unforgettable views and award-winning heritage attractions along the way.

> Listen to audio and delve further into Writers on the Riviera online at www.englishriviera.co.uk Find out more about our as well as other famous and infamous - wordsmiths Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling and Aleister Crowley.

Naturally inspiring

The English Riviera was the place to live the highlife in Victorian times, but did you know that this area is built on the very foundation of civilisation. A mind-bending 400 million years of our extraordinary world evolved right here beneath your feet. Here tropical seas frothed, scorched desert winds blew, and the very earliest man scraped out an existence. Now recognised with UNESCO Global Geopark status, we celebrate, debate and share stories and findings from the English Riviera that continue to define us today.

Did you know

Paleozoic, spanning 60 million ago, to the beginning of the Carboniferous, 358.9 million period were first studied.

"For years to aid inspiration, I've been walking local stretches of the South West Coast Path, swimming and kayaking the coves and beaches near my home in Torbay and exploring the closest estuaries and rivers. What never fails to surprise me is how the landscape, and its flora and fauna, changes so dramatically here (as does its geology). Within a few miles I can walk from the sub-tropical to the volcanic and forbidding. I've taken hundreds of pictures and studied the light and atmospherics, the coast, valleys, woods and open expanses, the skies, cliffs, caves and farms, before trying to define and recreate it all in my thrillers and horror novels. By 2019, three of my novels have been set here - 'Lost Girl'. 'Under a Watchful Eve' and 'The Reddening'. As far as inspiration goes, as I often say: the Bay provides."

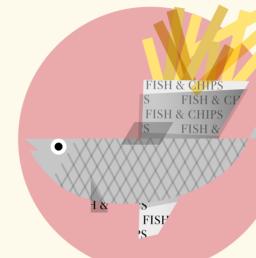
- Adam Nevill, local resident and award-winning author.



Look up or you'll miss the stunning architecture



Enjoy a Cream Tea (the Devon way with the cream before the jam!)



Stop and enjoy the views, they've been inspiring people for thousands of years



Whilst you're exploring England's Seafood Coast, tuck into locally sourced fish and chips





TORBAY CULTURE







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Davne Agatha Christie 15 Sept 1890 - 12 Jan 1976

While many writers travelled to the English Riviera for inspiration, the best-selling novelist of all time is a home-grown talent. Agatha Christie was born into a comfortably wealthy family in Torquay and spent much of her youth in the resort, where she also served in the Town Hall hospital as a nurse during the First World War. The town and its colourful characters certainly influenced her writing, with Hercule Poirot inspired by the Belgian refugees she met in Torquay and Miss Marple based on her grandmother's friends, who were far more fussy than her own relative.

Her love of South Devon saw her buy a holiday home at Greenway in later life, which also served as inspiration for some of her most famous stories. The prolific writer wrote 66 detective novels, 14 short story collections and the world's longest running play -'The Mousetrap'. Famously, she has only been outsold by the Bible and Shakespeare, having sold more than two billion copies across the globe. Amateur sleuths are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of the Bay's most famous literary daughter and discover several of the places that were influential in her life and works.



Thanks to The Christie Archive Trust



This beautiful hotel with awardwinning views was built to resemble a French chateau and wouldn't look out of place on the Côte d'Azur. Agatha spent her honeymoon night here with her first husband, Archie Christie, on Christmas Eve 1914. Archie, a qualified aviator with the Royal Flying Corps, came home on leave from France.

Today the hotel boasts an Agatha Christie Suite furnished in a 1930's style, with a vintage typewriter under a portrait of the author. The terrace makes an ideal spot for enjoying a cream tea while reading your favourite Christie mystery.



While Agatha was growing up, the Cary family still resided in Torre Abbey and she was known to have attended parties there. Today it is open to the public and is the home of the International Agatha Christie Festival.

The stunning interior gardens also hide a dark secret. Here you will uncover the Potent Plants Garden, an Agatha Christie-inspired display with a variety of fascinating plants that may kill or cure! Literary fans will love trying to solve the mystery of the missing story titles using the clues in the four garden beds. The house is also worth exploring, as the four floors reveal over 800 years of history and art.



Princess Pier

A favourite spot of Agatha's for roller-skating with her friends during her youth, and built in the same year she was born. Take a waterfront stroll along Torquay's palm-lined promenade to the end of the pier to watch the world pass by with fishing boats, sightseeing cruises and paddleboards.

Roller-skating was very fashionable during the author's youth and would cost twopence if you bought your own skates. £1.7 million was spent on the pier in 2018 to repair storm damage and make the structure fully accessible.



Without doubt one of the most popular spots for an evening stroll in the Bay, the gardens featured in the crime novel, 'The ABC Murders'. These stunning pleasure gardens, built on reclaimed land, were named in honour of Princess Louise, the daughter of Queen Victoria. With beautiful flowerbeds, exotic Torbay palm trees and lawns; the attractive fountain (donated by the nearby

The nearby Royal Terrace Gardens, known locally as Rock Walk, with sub-tropical Mediterranean plants and an illuminated staircase, offers an elevated and unrivalled vantage point to enjoy the entire bay.

Torbay Hotel) is a particular highlight.

The Pavilion was once a thriving art nouveau style Edwardian concert hall and theatre which attracted the most celebrated artists of the day such as Sir Edward Elgar, Rachmaninoff and Anna Pavlova. Agatha was a regular visitor and it was following a Wagner concert at The Pavilion, that Archie Christie proposed to the young Agatha Miller.



Thanks to The Christie Archive Trust



Home to the UK's only dedicated Agatha Christie Gallery, you can step inside Poirot's study and lounge, featuring furniture, books, pictures and even the fireplace used in the ITV adaptations starring David Suchet.

Other highlights include a Miss Marple outfit as worn by Joan Hickson, David Suchet's Poirot's famous walking cane and some of the author's personal effects and first edition novels. Agatha's father was a member of Torquay Natural History Society, which later became Torquay Museum.



The English Riviera boasts some of the finest sailing waters around the UK and includes in its rich maritime history the first modern day tall ships race and the 1948 Olympic watersports. In her autobiography Agatha talks about the club, of which her father Frederick was a prominent member. Her father divulged that some of the men would use opera glasses to try and spy on the women swimming from the ladies' only beach at Beacon Cove below.

In her autobiography, Agatha also reveals how she almost drowned whilst swimming here in her youth, which could have dramatically changed the face of crime fiction as we know it. Whilst the club is members only, you can get similar views from the lookout point.



9 Meadfoot Beach

Although Torre Abbey Sands and Corbyn Head Beach were the first to end gender segregation, Agatha preferred to swim at the more fashionable Meadfoot Beach, once mixed bathing was allowed here. It remains a beautiful spot to visit, with the crescent of the Osborne Hotel overlooking the curve of the coastline, with Shag Rock straight ahead and Thatcher's Rock off to the left. As a child, Agatha spent nearly every day of the summer at this beach with her sister Madge and nephew Jack.



No visit to the English Riviera should be complete without spending a few hours in Cockington, a 450-acre country park. The delightful chocolate box village with its thatched cottages, cream tea spots, pub (designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens), artisan craft studios, manor house and charming church would make an ideal setting for one of Christie's murder mysteries. As a child she loved horse riding through the country lanes, while she would also take part in many amateur theatricals organised by the Mallock family, who were friends of the Millers and whose ancestors had owned the stately home for some 300 years.

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I Greenvay House

This extraordinary estate was the beloved holiday home of Agatha Christie and her family. Now owned by the National Trust, the house has been carefully preserved and contains beautiful collections of books, botanical china and archaeology, all accumulated by the family over the years. The house also boasts stunning features, including romantic gardens spilling down to the River Dart. The house features in three of her books, dubbed the Greenway Collection - 'Five Little Pigs', 'Ordeal By Innocence' and 'Dead Man's Folly'. The latter was the very last Poirot episode to be made starring David Suchet and was filmed on location at the house.

"One day we saw that a house was up for sale that I had known when I was young. **Greenway House, on the Dart,** a house that my mother had always said, and I had thought also, was the most perfect of the various properties on the Dart...So we went over to **Greenway, and very beautiful** the house and grounds were. A white Georgian house of about 1780 or 90, with woods sweeping down to the Dart below, and a lot of fine shrubs and trees - the ideal house, a dream house."

- Agatha Christie An Autobiography



Mary Shelley 30 Aug 1797 - 1 Feb 1851 Torquay Marina

Mary was a novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, biographer and travel writer, most famous for her novel Frankenstein. She married poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1816. In 1817 the Shelleys holidayed in Torquay. Almost 200 years later 'Maurice' a children's story, set near the town, was discovered in a palazzo in the Tuscany hills. The Torquay that Mary saw was in rapid transition from a small fishing port to a fashionable resort.

The Torquay you see today began with the formation of the Inner Harbour, replacing the dilapidated old harbour (completed in 1807). During this period the first town plan was drawn up, using Italian architectural ideas. This area is where the majority of the town's earliest buildings are to

Mary was the daughter of writer and advocate of women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft and the radical philosopher William Godwin who described her as 'singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind'.



Painting of Torquay in 1811 before its expansion. (Source: Torre Abbey Museum, Torquay)



Beacon Terrace 1839

Beatrix Potter was an English writer, illustrator, natural scientist, and conservationist best known for 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'. The children's writer visited Kents Cavern in 1893 and many say it was the inspiration for her drawing of the entrance to Mrs Tiggy-Winkle's house. She wrote after visiting the cave:

"... I was pretty much exhausted when we found it, but by dint of eating cinnamon and the excitement of going into a cave, recovered.

"The dilapidated wooden door was flush into the bank. Outside an artificial plateau or spoil-bank of slate, overgrown."

Kents Cavern is an award-winning attraction and a Stone Age home to early modern humans. There are daily tours where you'll unearth the secrets of the Devonian and Quarternary periods and find out about the Great Victorian Excavation (Agatha Christie's father had a hand in that too!). Refresh and relax in the restaurant and shop.



George Bernard Shaw 26 Jul 1856 - 2 Nov 1950

The Irish playwright is the only person

to have been awarded both a Nobel

Prize for Literature (1925) and an

Oscar (1938) for 'Pygmalion'. The

1897 play 'You Never Can Tell' was

set in Torquay. Bernard Shaw regularly

visited the Hydropathic Hotel above

Meadfoot Beach, now the Headland

residence of the Romanov family,

"No housekeeping, plenty

of bathing, taxicabs to get

around in, shops galore, and

every sort of urban amenity."

He also visited Vane Tower, a Grade II

19th century, supposedly for the first

American Ambassador to Britain. You

behind the black nets of Living Coasts,

can see the building's red tiled roof

to the right of the harbour.

listed Italianate villa, constructed in the

the ruling Russian elite until 1917.

He appreciated

Hotel & Spa but originally the Torquay

Torquay Marina

6 Mar 1806 - 29 Jun 1861 Beacon Hill

A poet and short story writer with a career spanning 4 decades. Elizabeth wrote about industrialisation, slavery, political leadership, religious controversy and the problems faced by women in society. Of weak health, she stayed here for three years - in Beacon Terrace - sent to the resort on her doctor's advice. Her visit turned to tragedy when her brother drowned in Babbacombe Bay just two miles away. She is remembered for such poems as

"How Do I Love Thee?"

(Sonnet 43, 1845) and Aurora Leigh (1856). Look out for the Blue Plaque.



Wilfred Owen 18 Mar 1893 - 4 Nov 1918

War Memorial

Take a moment at the War Memorial, a fitting place to mark Wilfred Owen, widely regarded as one of Britain's greatest war poets. Writing from the perspective of his intense personal experience of the front line, his poems, including 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Dulce et Decorum Est', bring to life the physical and mental trauma of combat. In 1911 he holidayed in Torquay with his uncle and aunt, John and Annie Taylor, where he spent his time browsing in John's bookshop, acquiring Colvin's biography of Keats and making his pilgrimage to the house in Teignmouth where Keats had lodged in 1818. Look out for



Edward was a successful poet, playwright and novelist with an impressive political career, serving twice in Parliament and going on to the House of Lords as Baron Lytton. Edward's novels are the

source of phrases including 'the great unwashed'; 'pursuit of the almighty dollar'; 'the pen is mightier than the sword'.

Unfortunately, his name lives on in The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest for the worst beginning to a nove, inspired by Edward's 'Paul Clifford' (1830): 'It was a dark and stormy night'.

Edward had an in-depth knowledge of the occult. One of his most popular excursions into the occult was 'Vril, the Power of the Coming Race' (1871) which contributed to the birth of the science fiction genre The word 'Vril' came to be associated with 'life-giving elixirs'. In 1886 John L Johnston was looking for a name for his 'liquid life' beef extract drink. He chose a blend of the words Bovine and Vril, and named the new beefy beverage 'Bovril'.

Edward died at his Torquay home Argyll Hall on Warren Road, having lived there since 1867. Built in 1849, Argyll Hall became the Roseland Hotel and is now an apartment block called Marine Palms. The house occupies a prominent position here on Rock Walk and can be seen as you head towards the harbourside from the Paignton direction.



Oscar Wilde



Oscar Wilde 1882 by Napoleon Sarony (The British Library)



the Blue Plaque

6 Oct 1854 - 30 Nov 1900 Babbacombe Downs

Oscar Wilde was one of the most well-known personalities of his day, regarded for his biting wit, flamboyant dress and sparkling conversation. It was at Babbacombe Cliff - there's a Blue Plaque to mark the spot where Oscar completed his plays 'A Woman of No Importance' and 'Lady Windermere's Fan'. Here, Oscar was joined by his lover Lord Alfred (Bosie) Douglas. Bosie was, according to Oscar, a "gay, gilt and gracious" lad... He lies like a hyacinth on the sofa, and I worship him." Later, Bosie's father, the Marquis of Queensberry, made allegations of homosexuality against Oscar. Wilde sued for libel, but lost. After details of his private life were revealed during the trial, he was arrested, tried for gross indecency and sentenced to two years of hard labour. Homosexuality was classified as a crime at that time in England.

"The love that dare not speak its name" - Oscar Wilde in Babbacombe.



Sean O'Casey 3 Mar 1880 - 18 Sep 1964 St Marychurch Seán O'Casey was an Irish dramatist

and memoirist, living through turbulent times including the 1913 Dublin Lock-out and Strike (starving with fellow workers), the 1916 Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War. A committed socialist, he was the first Irish playwright of note to write about the Dublin working classes. Seán lived here in St Marychurch for many years, long exiled from his native Ireland. The New York Times suggested that he wrote his own epitaph in the last volume of his autobiographical work, 'Mirror in my House': "Here with whitened hair, desires failing, strength ebbing out of him, with the sun gone down, and with only the serenity and calm warning of the evening star left to him, he drank to Life, to all it had been, to what it was, to what it would be. Hurrah!" There's a Blue Plaque marking Seán's home, but we suggest you raise a pint to him

in a local pub.

popular British poets. Alfred excelled at writing short lyrics, as in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. His phrases still pepper our language, such as "Tis better to have loved and lost, Than never to

6 Aug 1809 - 6 Oct 1892

Torre Abbey

Alfred was the Poet Laureate

during much of Queen Victoria's

reign and remains one of the most

have loved at all' and "Theirs not to reason why. Theirs but to do and die". In 1838 Tennyson was in Torquay, a place he called "the loveliest sea village in England". He apparently "had no money for touring, nor did he wish for change". During this visit he wrote the poem 'Audley Court',

partly inspired by Torre Abbey.

The last lines described the scene from the hill overlooking the Bay, presumably Waldon Hill which is just on the hill behind Rock Walk. He said he observed "a star of phosphorescence made by the buoy appearing and disappearing in the dark sea." Torre Abbey was founded in 1196 as a monastery for Premonstratensian canons, now the best-preserved medieval monastery in Devon and Cornwall. Enjoy a moment in the peaceful gardens find the potent plant garden inspired by Agatha Christie's crime fiction visit the museum, art gallery, gift shop and cafe.

? Charles Kingsley

views, if you care to join her.

12 Jun 1819 - 23 Jan 1875 Institute Beach

Lesley lives in Torquay. She was

told as a child that she had too

now been put to good use with

25 novels under her belt! When

through a number of jobs from

good. Clearly this imagination has

she grew up, she worked her way

nanny to dressmaker before, at the

age of forty-eight, settling upon a

blossom: she became a published

novelist. Lesley loves life in Torquay,

especially long walks on the beach.

She is known to frequent The Grand

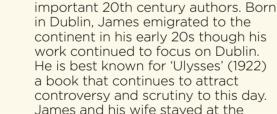
Hotel, and in particular recommends

cocktails in the bar with panoramic

career that would allow her gifts to

much imagination for her own

Charles was a priest, a university professor, social reformer, historian and novelist, best known for 'The Water Babies', 'The Heroes' and 'Westward Ho!' He is particularly associated with Christian Socialism. Charles came to Torquay in 1854 while his wife recovered from an illness which was put down to living in their damp rectory home at Eversley. Here Charles looked for specimens of marine life. Though he saw the natural world as the work of God, he was enthusiastic about Charles Darwin's new theory of evolution (unusual for clergymen of the time).



continent in his early 20s though his work continued to focus on Dublin. He is best known for 'Ulysses' (1922) a book that continues to attract controversy and scrutiny to this day. James and his wife stayed at the Imperial Hotel in 1929 at the invitation of Stuart Gilbert (1883 - 1969) an English literary scholar and translator. Stuart was keen to assist with a new translation of 'Ulysses' after noting some errors in the French translation.

The Imperial Hotel has fantastic

panoramic views of the Bay!

James is regarded as one of the most

E E E III INT

Imperial Hotel 1928. © The Francis Frith Collection

"No wonder that such a spot as Torquay, with its delicious Italian climate, and endless variety of rich woodland, flowery lawn, fantastic rock-cavern, and broad bright tide-sand, sheltered from every wind of heaven except the soft south-east, should have become a favourite haunt, not only for invalids, but for naturalists. Indeed, it may well claim the honour of being the original home of marine zoology and botany in England...

- Charles Kingsley's 'Glaucus, or, the Wonders of the Shore' 1855



10 Charles Darwin

12 Feb 1809 - 19 Apr 1882 Hesketh Crescent

Charles Robert Darwin was a naturalist of evolution, the process of natural selection, and as the author of 'On the Origin of Species'. He lived at No. 2 Meadfoot House in Hesketh Crescent. This elegant Grade II Regency crescent was built in 1846. The Crescent is now made up of The Osborne Club, furnished holiday apartments and The Osborne Hotel.

Darwin, whose epic work shook Victorian orthodox society to its roots, arrived in the resort in July 1861. A sufferer of nervous ailments, he also chose the town for health reasons. He stayed with his family for eight weeks at Hesketh Crescent, but he stayed away from the resort's rock pools. He spent his time revising his great book and preparing a paper on the fertilisation of orchids for a scientific journal. The Osborne Hotel has a restaurant, bar and terrace with great views and a leisure club (it's best to make a reservation).



1969 - present day South West Coast Path

This is the man The Guardian called award-winning author, renowned for the tensest, scariest writing you're ever likely to read. 'Lost Girl' set here in 2053, is an utterly disturbing tale of child abduction and runaway climate change. His novel 'The Ritual' was made into a film in 2016, a supernatural horror which will have you hiding behind your sofa in pure fear. Adam lives in the Bay and is inspired by the South West Coast Path. He loves to walk the cliff paths, kayak and swim in the sea; all

