

back page BLACK BOOK

A wedding and event florist and mother of two young girls, **Caroline Hodges** shares her love of walking, the seaside and cake with MANOR.



It is only since becoming a parent that I'm able to appreciate how lucky I was to grow up by the sea. My mum and dad owned the sailing school in Newton Ferrers, South Devon, so boating was a given and I spent my early summers messing about on the River Yealm.

After travelling and living abroad during most of my twenties, I was more than ready to move back to the South Hams with my husband, Toby, when I was pregnant with our eldest daughter, Lola. That was four years ago and we have no plans to move anywhere again. With so much to do right here, we now rarely even leave the West Country!

Toby, Lola (4), Agnes (1) and I live in the small village of Thurlestone. Our ideal Sunday afternoon is on our doorstep: Bantham beach/surf time, a float from the river mouth up the Avon on the tide, followed by a drink in **The Sloop**.

We love to walk across the fields near our house, and onto the cliff path. Our favourite route skirts the golf course: hang a left at the cliff and keep on going to either the **Beach House** at South Milton (great coffee, pastries, moules frites or surf'n'turf, depending on the time of day), or **The Cove** at Hope Cove.

For an inland alternative, a lovely walk is along the disused railway at **Loddiswell** – perfect for spotting wild flowers, collecting all sorts of woodland 'treasure', and the little waterfalls seem to captivate the kids. And, of course, after a stroll there you can justify a cuppa and slice of cake at the **Avon Mill** café.

Other favourite cafés include **Sailor V** in Salcombe (incredible pancakes, delicious coffee and feel-good smoothies, all in a quirky, relaxed setting) and **Stokeley Farm Shop** (generous scones and yummy cakes). And you

can pretty much get your week's groceries in the well-stocked store!

Since becoming a mum, my cake-eating has become a serious pastime – hence good cake vendors feature regularly in my little black book. It helps if a venue also has a great space for kids, too – **East Soar Farm** fits this bill perfectly. The short walk from the National Trust car park is ideal for scooters/bikes/trikes and the rustic

playground provides ample fun for the duration of cake indulgence! Another favourite is **Staverton Bridge Nursery & Café**. The pear and chocolate tart is delicious, there's a great little Wendy house for kids and I love mooching around the stunning plants.

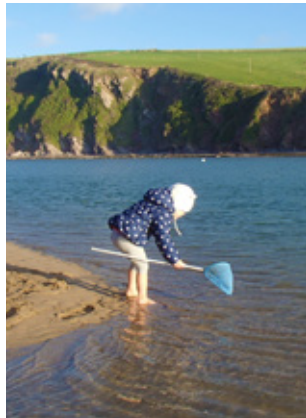
But it's the beach and sea that we are always drawn back to as a family – endless and largely cost-free entertainment. **Bantham beach** is just down the road and is our year-round hang out. A favourite low-tide walk is along the foreshore from **Cockleridge to Burgh Island**, stopping for a cheeky pint at the 13th-century **Pilchard Inn**.

We have a little dinghy we use to get afloat and escape the crowds in the summer. It's perfect for finding a deserted lime kiln for a picnic or a secluded cove when the beaches are rammed.

We had a fantastic afternoon/evening recently at the **National Trust's Big Night Out** at South Milton Sands. All the kids had a blast making lanterns and kites, rock pooling and treasure hunting, swimming and trying out paddle-boards while the adults enjoyed barbecues, picnics and a beautiful sunset.

It was one of the highlights of another incredible summer enjoying the simple pleasures of the seaside through our daughters' eyes. Here's to many more... **M**

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Fishing at Bantham



Walking on Thurlestone Sands



Looking towards Bigbury with Burgh Island in the distance