

ST JUST HERITAGE AREA

West Cornwall's inspirational mining coast

**WALKS and WILDLIFE
HISTORY and HERITAGE
ARTS and CRAFTS
FOOD and DRINK**



Photo: © Simon Cook – Kurt Jackson, 'Kenidjack Autumn 2000' oil on canvas



This leaflet/map has been produced by the St Just Heritage Area Regeneration Project which is funded by the South of England Regional Development Agency, Government Office for the South West, Cornwall County Council, Penwith District Council, St Just Town Council, National Trust, Cornwall Wildlife Trust and others.



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Towns and villages in the area

St Just-in-Penwith – bustling former mining centre and Cornwall's most westerly town with a fine Methodist chapel (1833; one of the largest in Cornwall) and 15th century parish church (with 8th-9th century cross, 15th century wall paintings and decorated columns). The grassed Plen-an-Gwary (place of the play), at the heart of the town, is one of only two surviving outdoor medieval amphitheatres in Cornwall, allegedly the oldest working theatre in Britain. Today this scheduled monument is in regular use and the site of spectacular events like performances of the Ordinalia miracle plays and the annual July Lafrowda festival.

Within easy walking distance of the free car park are two spacious squares with a large number of inns, independent art galleries and studios, and other useful amenities. These include the library/tourist information centre, surgery, pharmacy, post office, garage, new sports centre, newsagent, supermarkets, bank and more.



Zennor

Zennor – steeped in myth and legend and nestling on the scenic B3306 coast road only 4 miles west of St Ives, surrounded by dramatic coastal scenery and ancient fields on one side and high, gaunt moorland on the other. Legend has it that the mermaid of Zennor (depicted on a bench-end in the Norman and later medieval church) was so entranced by the singing of a local chorister that she lured him to the sea, never to return. D H Lawrence wrote "Women in Love" here in the village he described as "the best place I have ever been in."

Pendeen – granite mining village with traditional inns near Cornwall's most important and spectacular section of heritage mining coast. The village and surrounding ancient granite agricultural settlements developed with the area's 19th century tin and copper mines. Pendeen church was built in 1852 on the ground-plan of Iona Abbey, using granite quarried from the Carn above the church.

Relax, recharge and discover in great walking country

With great views, pure Atlantic air and a generous choice of inns en route, the St Just heritage area is ideal walking country. Whether you opt for a short and easy stroll along surfaced roads or head inland for longer treks, walking is not only healthy, but also stress-free and environment-friendly. Arm yourself with an OS Explorer map no.102 and/or booklets available locally, and you'll find lots of footpaths to explore.



Don't drive and miss it – leave the car and walk!

Many historic and ancient sites are accessible only by foot or via narrow winding lanes. Limited parking is available in a few places, but the best way to see them is to catch a bus, or park in one of the newly-upgraded free car parks in the centre of St Just and Pendeen, and travel on foot from there.

From St Just car park it's only a short walk to stunning views at Cape Cornwall, Carn Glouce and the Kenidjack and Cot valleys. From Pendeen car park you can walk along lanes to Pendeen Lighthouse and head west along the spectacular coastal path to take in three key mining sites – Geevor, Levant and Botallack. Or start in Zennor, head towards the coast and walk through farming landscapes which have barely changed since the Iron Age farmers first laid out their granite field walls.

Go green!

Buses offer extra relaxation, better views and no parking problems! The 300 service runs a circular route from Penzance via St Ives, Zennor, St Just and Land's End back to Penzance in both directions along the B3306 coast road with its stunning views at every turn.

Other bus services include: St Just to St Ives via Penzance (17/A/B), the Penzance to Land's End route (345) and the Penzance to St Ives route (343). Present your bus ticket at Geevor, Levant or the Wayside Folk Museum in Zennor and the admission price will be reduced. Traveline 0870 608 2608 www.traveline.org.uk Cornwall public transport guide 01872 222000 www.cornwall.gov.uk

Just see the difference!

Gloriously wild, rugged and beautiful, the coastal landscape from Sennen to St Ives on the westerly tip of Cornwall is a rare fragment of "real" Cornwall, enjoying an unparalleled concentration of quality scenery, wildlife, history and arts. Only an hour from Newquay airport, this area is markedly different from the rest of Cornwall, with a tangible sense of space and timelessness.



Living heritage

Ancient stone circles and unique prehistoric field systems mingle with the awesome remains of a once thriving tin and copper industry and this small stretch of land, where cliff mining first reached out beneath the Atlantic seas, contains the most important and visually imposing mining monuments in the UK. Clean air and clear light, glistening granite and dramatic weather – all have etched themselves on the character of the landscape, making it a haven for walkers, artists, writers and historians.

Close to nature

A growing number of acclaimed artists, studios and galleries have helped inject the St Just heritage area with a new lease of creative life, and many traditional inns offer local and home-made produce. Come in spring and autumn for migrant birds and amazing colour – swathes of pink sea thrift, white campion and bluebells in May and rich tapestries of purple heathers and golden gorse from September – and at the tail end of the year for exhilarating storms, atmospheric mists and stunning sunsets. The pick of Cornwall's arts, hospitality and ancient and industrial heritage are available all year round, but visit out of season to escape the crowds.

Cape Cornwall in autumn © Photo – Lucia Crothall



The artist's tale

West Cornwall is famous for the Tate at St Ives, Newlyn and Penlee Art Galleries, and the area has long been an inspiration for artists and writers, but over the last few years the St Just heritage area has also become home to a growing number of acclaimed artists, including major names like David Kemp, Rose Hilton, Jason Wason, Anthony Frost, and leading British landscape artist Kurt Jackson, whose work is based on a social and personal commitment to the local environment and closely reflects its distinctiveness.

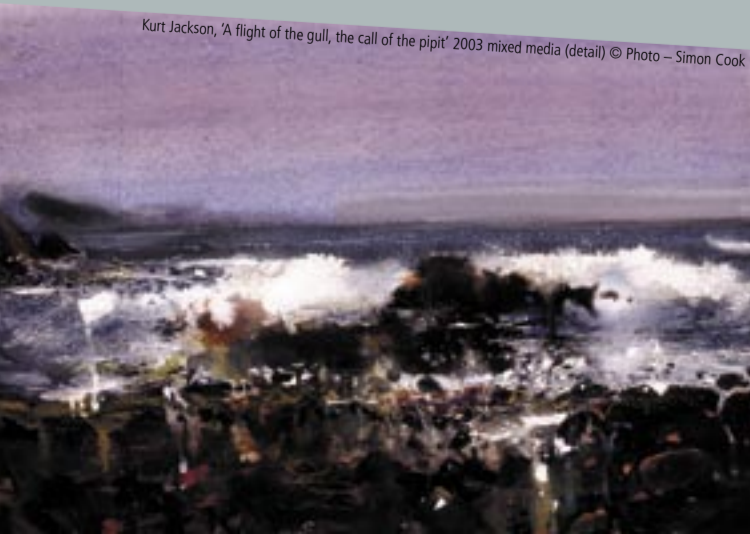
Kurt has lived on the outskirts of St Just for over 20 years and produced an amazing quantity of distinctive works directly inspired by the locality he respects so much. These range from small and immaculate items based on bird, mammal and insect life (he studied Zoology at Oxford) to huge mixed media semi-abstract canvases, all of which explore and celebrate their subject matter.

Kurt Jackson's paintings are exhibited in top galleries world-wide but it is what's on his doorstep that is most important to him. He presents the natural world that's still intact around him, including sensory aspects such as sound and smell, and how this environment has been and is being shaped by people. Following in the tradition of artists from the Newlyn and St Ives Schools, Kurt enjoys painting outdoors and the greater the challenge, the better he seems to like it. Weather, atmosphere, colour and movement are often deeply significant in his paintings, and their inscriptions and titles too.

"In all my paintings the aim is to convey my feelings and sense of awareness in that particular environment," says Kurt. "Living and working in West Cornwall you are continually aware of the richness of the natural environment and the vibrancy of the Cornish community that is both stimulating and inspiring. Through my paintings I have tried and continue to explore this Cornishness."

Visit www.kurtjackson.co.uk to find out where and when you can see work by Kurt Jackson.

Photo © Caroline Jackson



Kurt Jackson, 'A flight of the gull, the call of the pipit' 2003 mixed media (detail) © Photo – Simon Cook

The farmer's tale

It can be hard to sustain a livelihood from the land these days, but West Penwith's farmers are as rugged and resilient as the landscape they have protected for generations, traditionally producing milk and green vegetables.

Thanks to a mild climate, it is also always the first in the UK to sell new potatoes, retailed under the banner 'Penwith Potatoes', and Jeff and Pat Thomas, the present generation to farm at Bollowal Farm on the outskirts of St Just-in-Penwith, usually start harvesting this much-relished delicacy around 7th May.

But now the most rewarding feature of their enterprise is a herd of pedigree Ruby Red Devon cattle, developed since 1992 when they switched from milking cows to rearing prime beef cattle. Pat employs a local butcher and abattoir to prepare top quality meat that is cut and packed to individual specifications and sold direct to the customer, and the family has been extremely successful in breeding and showing these magnificent animals.

"Devon Cattle are experiencing a renaissance," explains Jeff. "They are amazing foragers, superb mothers, withstand extremes of temperature and produce meat of outstanding quality, naturally, with a minimum of inputs."

Jeff is one of a number of West Cornwall farmers to focus on quality produce and pedigree herds of cattle whilst managing to retain the patchwork of small fields that typify the area. "It is less economic to farm in small fields, so efficiency is extremely important," he says. "Bollowal is farmed traditionally, and the crop rotations I use are the same as those used by my grandfather 60 years ago." But expanding the farm to its present 300 acres has allowed him to farm more extensively, while limited use of sprays and pesticides helps to retain a more natural environment and ensure a sustainable future.

Despite global pressures, developments such as these should enable future generations to enjoy the agriculture which has preserved this area's exceptional landscape.

Jeff Thomas and his Ruby Reds © Photo – Elaine Drury



The miner's tale

St Just-born Ian Davey worked as a tin miner at Geevor mine for 14 years, mostly in dark and dangerous tunnels to depths of 2,100 feet under the Atlantic ocean. Eight people died during his time at Geevor and he's the first to admit that "mining put bodies in holes in the ground as well as bread on tables." Yet Ian was highly motivated by the challenge of this work – "I don't miss it, but I'm proud to have done it."

A man of true metal, Ian is still visibly moved when recalling a tragic accident when two miners went missing 1,400 feet below the surface. "Your life was in the hands of the machine men at the face but you couldn't think of the danger while you were doing the work," he says. Life down under could also be lonely, cramped, noisy and hot, and once at work with a deafening 120 decibel drill, men couldn't even communicate with each other. A combination of dripping water and sweat meant constantly wet work, and the pressure was relentless – as contract workers miners were penalized if they blasted at the wrong time, gave up "maching" for an easier job or were just a few minutes late for a shift.

When Geevor was at its peak in the 1970s, some 400 men worked on a range of jobs at different levels. Underground pumps extracted up to 1.5 million gallons of water 24 hours a day and 130 men produced the ore each day. Ian sometimes worked double shifts and could earn over £120 a day. But with drastic reductions in the price of tin in the 1980s, many miners were laid off and some were forced to emigrate. Next came pay cuts and, in 1986, 370 men were made redundant. The pumps were finally turned off in 1990 when centuries of continuous mining in St Just came to an abrupt end.

Ian still works at Geevor, but now, as head guide, he spends most of his time above ground, sharing his experiences with thousands of visitors. "A Geevor Miner's Tale" – on sale at the mine shop – provides a detailed account of his story.

Photo © Peter Savage



An old stope at Geevor © Photo – Peter Savage

