

A RIDGE TOO FAR

TEXT & IMAGES: NICHOLAS CARROLL

Falmouth in Cornwall is the destination for our 2020 travel feature. In summer, this ancient town in South West England shares a similar sub tropical climate and flora with Umhlanga Ridge. Signature palm trees wave from the top of the coastal forest canopy and the feeling of reveira is everywhere. A ridge above and ocean below is bestowed upon them just like us.



All roads lead to the sea, the harbour and docks where ships are built and repaired. The World - the largest privately owned residential yacht, was leaning against the dock wall at the time of writing. Residents from about 45 countries live on board the 196m vessel as she traverses the oceans at a maximum speed of 18.5 knots or 34.3 km/h.

THE TOWN'S NARROW COBBLESTONE ALLEYWAYS AND WARM, SINCERE SHOPS WILL KEEP YOU ON YOUR FEET LONG AFTER SUNSET.

No trip to Cornwall would be complete without an introduction to the novels of local writer Daphne Du Maurier. You'll find them under 'classics', but they don't belong there. Her best stuff was written in the 1930's and you'll be

emotionally hijacked until she says you can go. Treacherous behaviour, howling gales across the moors and character descriptions that no amount of scrubbing can erase from your mind are the hallmarks of her captivating stories.

Cornwall has a history of smuggling and it is claimed that over 10 000 locals were involved in this coastline industry at any one time during the 1800's. Alcohol, tobacco and lace were all dutiable goods that landed clandestinely onto these shores. Jamaica Inn is the setting for and name of one of Du Maurier's best selling books with smuggling as the central theme. The inn, still standing today, played a major role in this illicit industry. Pity we weren't listening to our mumbling guide as he walked us through the premises, giving away excerpts from her book. We purchased a copy of Jamaica Inn a few days later.



01

DRIVING IN CORNWALL can be intimidating if you are not used to narrow roads. The speed limit of 80km p/h on these tight roads can seem daunting at first. The Cornish are excellent and civil drivers.



02

THE ENTRANCE TO FALMOUTH HARBOUR

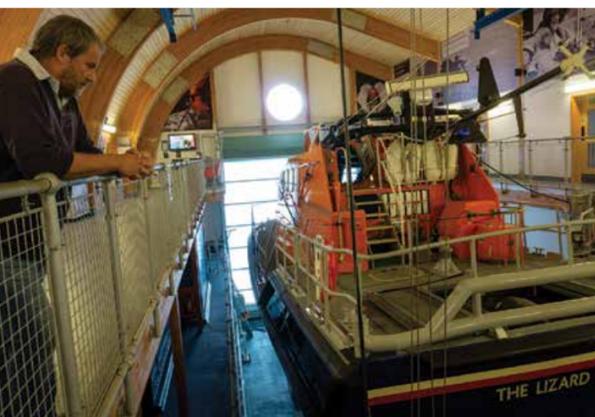




YOU DON'T SLAP A LAYER OF PLASTER OVER ANCIENT BRICKS WHEN THEY DEGRADE - YOU RESTORE THEM LOVINGLY TO THEIR ORIGINAL APPEARANCE.

03

CORNWALL was incorporated over 350 years ago. Renovation and restoration is done carefully under strict regulations.



04

Our guide Greg admires the Lizard Peninsula's lifeboat. Greg is a sea fearing man and works in the boat building a repair industry in Falmouth his depth of knowledge of the area was bottomless.



stairs to a modern structure built into the rock face. We had entered the home of the Lizard Peninsula's lifeboat. The vessel is an ultra modern life saving craft that launches directly from the shed into the sea below. Our guide informed us that all the rescue boats in Cornwall are manned by seasoned and retired fishermen. Rescues in these waters are carried out by the bravest of the brave.

About 48 000km of hedges are etched into the Cornish landscape. Driving along the narrow country lanes, there are limited views of the brilliant green landscape because these hedges are so high. They serve multiple purposes including shelter from the wind chill factor and demarcating land and crops. Our usually muffled guide awarded us with "the hedges were also used to thwart ancient invading armies from seeing the 'lie of the land". Sunbathers, cattle and farm workers also benefit from the reduction in the wind chill factor.

Cider is a popular drink in Cornwall and there are stories about one particular brand that slides a dead rat into the barrel to reactivate the proteins for additional fermentation. Most likely the rat fell into the barrel while trying to drink from it and the story stuck. Still.

Real accounts of extreme bravery and loss of life at sea are woven into the dramatic story of Cornwall. We were led by our guide (Greg) to many key locations allowing us to piece this part of the story together. One had to be on constant alert as Greg never announced the beginning of a new piece of information. As in "did you know?" for example. It coincided with the movement of his mouth.

One gloomy afternoon we trudged our way along a muddy path to the cliff edge where we then descended a steep flight of

CAVENDISH COFFEE HOUSE

A trail of sculptured brass fish embedded into the pavement of Falmouth's high street leads the way to the best fish and chips in Cornwall. "Best you get there early" says you know who, "the later you go, the longer the queues get". We should have listened - however, every morsel of the perfectly cooked chips and succulent battered fish was worth it.

We thought Greg's driving was reckless until we realised that the Cornish are expert drivers. The roads are so narrow and at a limit of 80km/h, how can you possibly anticipate what is coming in the opposite direction on blind corners? They do anticipate each other, cars are in excellent condition and politeness and civility have no limits. They should spend a day with us in Durban to discover the true meaning of 'every man for himself'.

And so, with absolutely no idea why we were going, we allowed ourselves to be driven across the bay from Falmouth to a 10th century church. Upon an upright, flat marble slab, we found the name Philip De Cornubia. Turns out that Philip was one of the church ministers in 1297. We were not surprised to also discover that Cornubia was one of the ancient names for Cornwall. Our neighbours in Cornubia, just over the road from Umhlanga Ridge are most likely unaware of their rich and ancient heritage, albeit estranged.



05

These tiny brass fish lead the way to one of Cornwall's best fish and chip shops down Falmouth's high street.

We challenge you therefore to provide us with the origin of the name Cornubia (in Greater Umhlanga). Send your answer to: www.chroniclewebsite.co.za. The most interesting reply (reference your source please) will win a selection of Daphe Du Maurier novels in paperback.



Happy reading and thank you for coming on this journey with us. Possibly the last one on foreign soil for some to come.