



Studland

An all-rounder with postcard good looks.

Could this be Britain's perfect beach? Studland certainly ticks all the right sandy boxes. It's the textbook definition of a 'great escape': a desert island idyll, less than three hours from London, and a stone's throw, but worlds away, from Bournemouth's bucket-and-spade brigade. It's a natural wonder (its dunes and heathland are a veritable wild kingdom), but with a touch of culture (a posh National Trust café, no less). And it's a crowd-pleaser, but without the crowds: it lures dreamers, who come for its pure, unadulterated tranquillity, and a mix of nature lovers and naturists (the sensual beauty seems conducive to baring all), plus the odd family. Add to this postcard good looks, warm waters and a few creature comforts, and you've got a British beach to rival the cream of the Caribbean.

Studland's reputation is based on a combination of gentle beauty and its vast shoreline, but the landscape is immensely varied. The north shore, for instance, is deceptively cosy. Tucked neatly into Shell Bay, it's a safe haven: Brownsea Island and the smart hotels of Sandbanks form a pleasing periphery; sailboats cruise in and out of Poole Harbour and the ferry (the prettiest way to approach Studland) cheerfully chugs back and forth. So far, so charming.

But once you round the corner, the vista changes dramatically. Knoll Beach, the east shore of Studland, is open season: wide, sweeping and exhilarating. Backed by grassy dunes, the three miles of pristine white sand are straight out of *Desert Island Discs*. People are conspicuous by their absence; the blue water has the requisite streaks of turquoise; the sandy bottom, sprinkled with the odd cockle, oyster and razorshell, slopes softly. In fact, swimming here is a picnic: in summer, the shallow waters are positively balmy and the surf kind. The sound of rustling grasses adds to the soothing scene.