

# getaway



Making the most of your time off

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## Riding on a watersports victory wave

**T**HE surfing never stops at Boscombe. Not now, not with the grand opening of the first artificial surf reef in Europe.

It was late October and I was told the sea was at its warmest – “had all summer to heat up”.

Sure didn't feel like it after my first turtle roll, just to prove I can look after myself out in the deep blue. This is where you lie on the board and make a swift spin move under water and back up – it also wakes you up after a night out in Bournemouth.

Calling the shots was instructor Cowboy, as he is known on the waves, and who operates from the shore out of the Sorted Surf Shop.

It is a swanky new store below the Hemingway-designed beach pods that will set you back (from) £65,000 for a sea view and somewhere trendy to change. I had a sneak inside and they were pretty damn cool, with vintage seaside postcard feature wall, comfy deckchairs and Breville sandwich toaster all included. But how many surfers even have £65 to play with?

Sorted is also right next to the brand new techno-reef which is designed to enhance the waves for competent surfers and which officially opened this month.

In brief, it is made up of 55 giant sandbags the size of a football pitch and serves as a ramp to existing waves, pushing them upwards, generating power and enhancing their shape.

It means more surf days.

Back to my lesson on the waves, which was thankfully limping tamely towards the golden sand. My mate Big Jon, who is ultra competitive and only happy when he is winning, and I were starting from scratch so were kept well away from the new reef.

Cowboy promised to get us standing by the end of the two hour lesson. One of us made it, for a few seconds, and it wasn't Big Jon. I can't tell you how happy I was...

Another jewel in the Boscombe £11 million regeneration, funded mainly by the sale of a council-owned car park to property developers, is the seaside restaurant. Not the giant Harvester next to the pier.

Boscombe's artificial surf reef was officially opened earlier this month. **STUART WHITE** headed south to catch some waves on an action-packed watersports weekend with his most competitive friend

Urban Reef is funky and surfy, and the food spot on. Big portions, you build up a real hunger falling off a surfboard, and plenty of fresh choice.

Another top place to eat is the Hotel du Vin brasserie in Poole, although slightly over-romantic for what we were looking for. The

Sandbanks Hotel is also posh, while in Bournemouth I liked the award-winning fish restaurant WestBeach. This is more relaxed and contemporary, and good for all occasions.

A day before my surfing triumph the wind had been howling. It was so windy our jetski session at Sandbanks was in jeopardy, and the

windsurfing lesson was playing ever so slightly on my beginner's mind.

Of course, the millions of experts in this exclusive stretch of water live for the wind and so when we arrived the sea was littered with beaming extreme sporters.

Zipped up and ready in my wetsuit and bright vest-top, in case I started drifting off towards Harry Redknapp's house or France, our Watersports Academy instructor knew he had his work cut out. Especially when I almost got wiped out (twice) by the sail simply walking down towards the water.

Now windsurfing did not agree with me, I admit. I could get up on the board and stand, but the next stage wouldn't click. It's about keeping the centre line, always, but that is not always easy when you feel like you are being pecked by flying kite surfers.

In truth they kept well away from me but I couldn't relax – is that a good enough excuse – and I ended the session telling the dude how I was quite good at football. He made me feel better by saying he was useless, so in some ways we were even. And Big Jon, despite his superhero-costume tight XL wetsuit,

**Cowboy promised to get us standing up by the end of the lesson**



**SURF'S UP:** Experienced surfers will love the bigger waves at Boscombe after the opening of the reef. Right, riding with Jetski Safari and, below, the Hemingways at their retro beach pod

levelled the scores in our watersports challenge.

Jetskis in the afternoon decided it. Now this was more like it. Cruising on the open seas, sat solid on a padded seat with an accelerator. And these machines sure do fly.

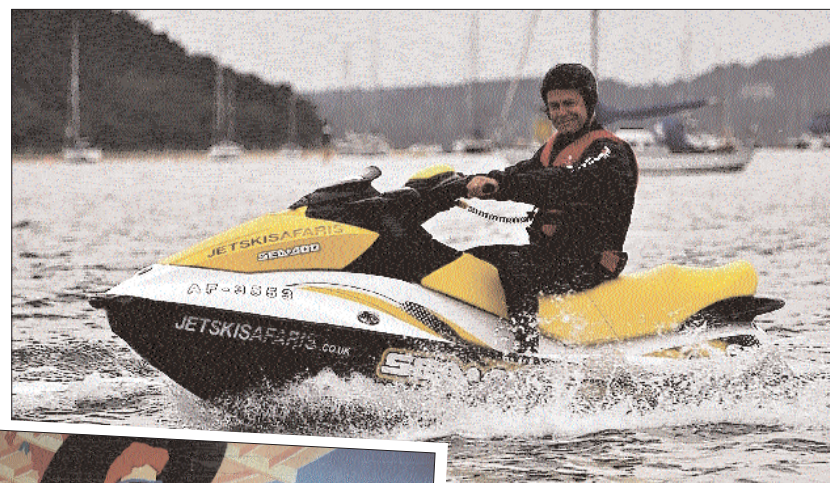
At one stage I clocked 50mph – slightly faster than the runner-up – as my ride skimmed across the top of the waves, some of which gave pretty good air.

This is real adrenaline-seeker-style, opening the throttle and holding tight. Very tight. The format at Jetski Safari is you follow instructor Ross, although he gives you plenty of freedom and got us performing 180 turns by the time we docked under million pound one bedroom flats. Sandbanks is silly money.

We had been based all weekend at Norfolk Royale Hotel in Bournemouth, a big pink listed building you can't miss. Being a student town, the nightlife is big news and there were loads of options to keep me and Jon the Sultan of Bling happy.

We took to the streets and worked our way around – you will agree that after two days drinking salt water we had earned a few beers.

Especially me.



### FACTFILE

- Stuart stayed at Norfolk Royale Hotel, Bournemouth, 01202 551521, [www.norfolk-royale.co.uk](http://www.norfolk-royale.co.uk)
- For windsurfing or kitesurfing contact Watersports Academy, Sandbanks, 01202 708283, [thewatersportsacademy.com](http://thewatersportsacademy.com)
- Jetski Safaris operate out of Salterns Marina, Poole, 07803 620650, [www.jetskisafaris.co.uk](http://www.jetskisafaris.co.uk)
- Surf lessons at Boscombe with Sorted Surf Shop, The Overstrand, 01202 399099, [www.sortedsurfshop.co.uk](http://www.sortedsurfshop.co.uk)
- For more information on the Boscombe Surf Reef and regeneration project visit [www.bournemouth.co.uk](http://www.bournemouth.co.uk)