



Duration
3 nights

When
September 2025

Why
To experience the best of Somerset's beautiful coast and countryside, from wide sandy beaches to historic cities and relaxing rural walks

ELECTRIC ADVENTURES IN SOMERSET

On a late summer visit, Joanne Davies finds inner and outer peace as she journeys to Brean and beyond in a hybrid EV campervan



1 Brean beach forms part of a seven-mile stretch of sand

2 Joanne was wowed by the Panama's level of comfort

3 Sleeping in the pop-top allows for lofty morning views



After a childhood spent at cheerful European campsites and post-university adventures to far-flung places to rough it in the name of adventure, I feel as though I've neglected the UK a bit. So when the chance came to test a brand-new hybrid electric motorhome and point it west, it felt like the start of a small escape to explore Somerset's coast and countryside rather than a simple test drive. There's a particular thrill in that first moment behind the wheel of a new 'van: unfamiliar controls, pristine upholstery, the sense that the journey itself matters just as much as the destination.

Sound of silence

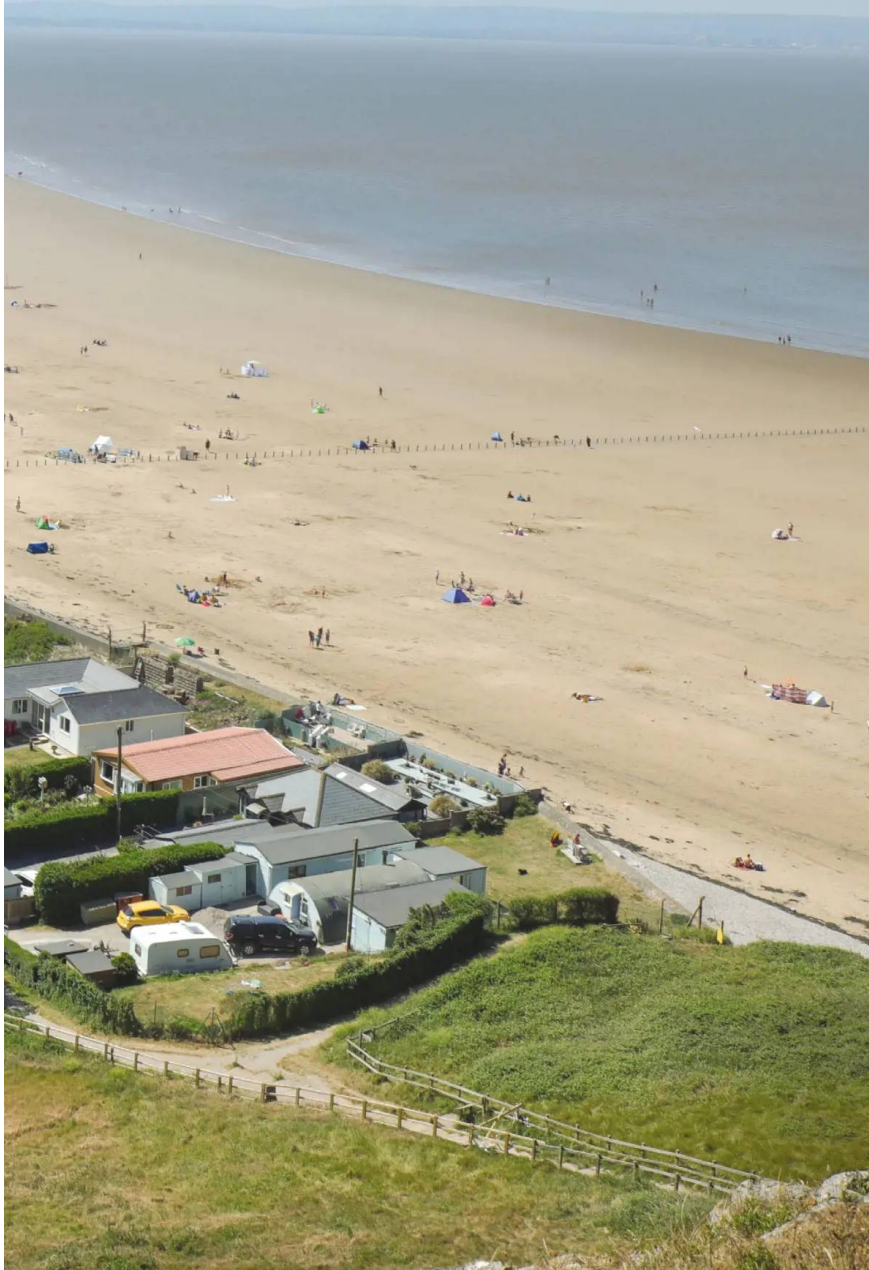
I swung by the Marquis Berkshire branch at midday on a Monday, where I was introduced to their new kid on the block, the Panama P\10E. Their ever-helpful (and thankfully very knowledgeable) staff hosted a whirlwind tour of the tech along with the swish, gas-free interior, exterior and all associated gadgets.

I had a mortifying moment of being a hybrid EV novice when it took me a while to realise that the reason I couldn't turn the engine on was that it was already running. The quietness wasn't something I ever got used to, to be honest!

My first stint of travel was to pick up my touring companion in Bristol, so I got to experience the M4 in tranquil, temperature-controlled peace instead of rattling down it in my perennially hot 2010 Renault Clio as usual. I sang the P\10E's praises in my Big Test (PM issue 307), but am still going to take the opportunity to reiterate how luxurious it was to drive.

I didn't feel any added anxiety driving the 'van through the narrow suburban streets of north Bristol. At just over 5 metres long and 2.2 metres wide, it felt surprisingly agile and easy to handle. The automatic speed-limit warning was particularly useful in a city setting, especially when my attention was split between navigating unfamiliar roads and keeping an eye on other drivers.

A half-hour drive south of Bristol brought us to Leaning Pines, a two-pitch site tucked away down an unassuming country road. We pitched up in the dark underneath a strikingly starry sky and enjoyed a peaceful night's sleep. ➔





4 Yeo Valley Café provided a much-needed caffeine hit!

5 Brean Down offers spectacular wraparound views

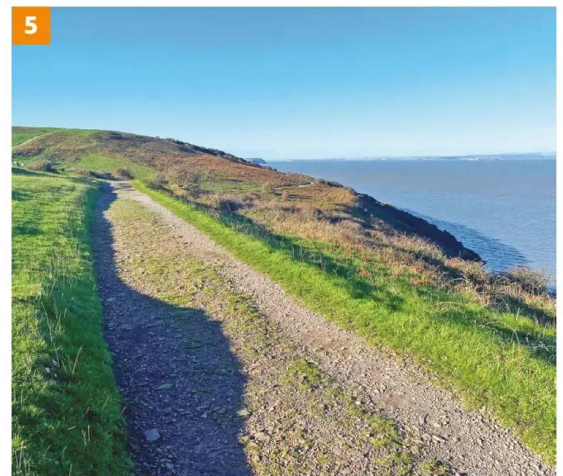
Breakfast in Brean

In the morning, we were greeted by panoramic green from the pop-top and a drop-in from the site's friendly owner, Laurence. Disaster struck when we realised our cooking equipment wasn't induction-compatible, including our coffee maker. Before anyone got too snappy from caffeine withdrawal, we decided to head to a breakfast spot, settling on the Yeo Valley Café a 10-minute drive away.

Following a slightly hair-raising steep drive up some beautiful but narrow lanes, we were rewarded with a stunning view that unfolds behind the modern-rustic café, overlooking the valley and Mendips beyond. After a fortifying flat white, bacon sandwich and a free sample bottle of kefir on the terrace, we set off for the coast – Brean, to be exact.

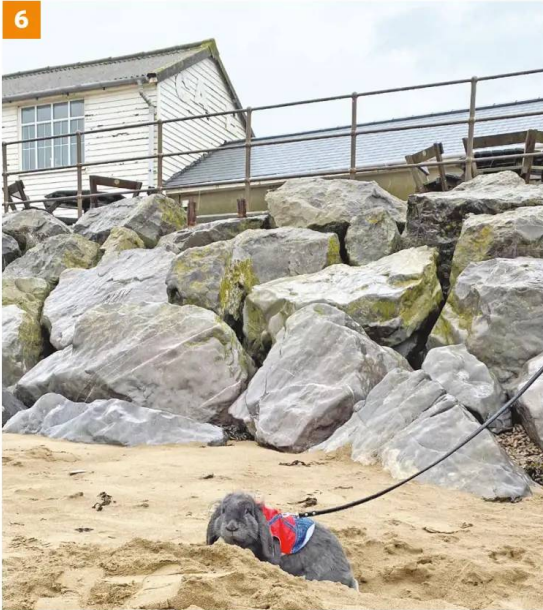
This coastal village, tucked between Weston-super-Mare and Burnham-on-Sea, is a stalwart of the vintage British holiday. We arrived at Warren Farm Holiday Centre, our home for the next three days. Since it was late in the season, we'd assumed the park would be all but empty, but it was busier than expected with Brean's annual Country and Western Festival gearing up. Billed to appear were the country's finest tribute acts, from Shania Twain to Elvis – which explained the American flags fluttering on approach to the site, and the group of women in cowboy hats and skirt hitches queuing behind us in Morrisons.

After a warm welcome from the very friendly reception staff, we took a lap around the site before deciding on a pitch in a quiet corner. Immaculately kept and surrounded by lovely



views of the surrounding countryside, Warren Farm offers grass, hardstanding and en-suite Super Pitches – all with EHU and around 9m x 9m. I was so impressed by the facilities, which were beautifully presented and spacious with an art deco twist and delightfully effective central heating for early morning showers.

We settled into our spacious pitch, separated from the neighbouring spots behind by a privacy hedge and from the sides by grass and went to blow away the cobwebs with a trip to the beach, just across the road from the site. The seven-mile beach is a seemingly endless stretch of sand that traces the coastline from Burnham-on-Sea to the impressive outline of Brean Down. We were tempted to have a dip, but the conditions are only safe at high tide and the sea was far out, so we settled on a walk up to the peninsula.



Wonderful views

The natural pier of Brean Down is an easy place to spend most of a day in itself. At the foot of the down, the beach is open and flat, perfect for dogs and kids to explore, with a café fortuitously positioned. We stopped at the Cove Café for a lovely cheese scone and a cup of tea and met a rather unlikely fellow tourist on the beach (see above)! There's also a spacious National Trust car park next to the café if you want to start the walk from there.

The climb was worth it for the walk alone: a 1.5-mile stretch of limestone promontory. Brean Down stands 97m high, and has views that make you pause to look across the Bristol Channel towards South Wales, and back over the wide, flat calm of the Somerset Levels.

History is threaded quietly through the landscape, from prehistoric worship to Second World War weapon testing. The remnants of a Roman temple appear almost unexpectedly, and the Palmerston Fort sits solid and weathered – more reminders of how long people have been drawn to this headland.

After spending a while watching holidaymakers on Weston-super-Mare's beach and boats bobbing in Cardiff's docks, we made our way back down to the site for an evening in the 'van and an early night - after a dinner of local cheese from the nearby Westcroft Farm Shop, of course.



Wonderful Wells

Brean made for a good balance between coast and country, so we were able to easily visit all the gems that Somerset has to offer. After a quick beach stroll and coffee from a café, we started down the road to Wells, only to be distracted by another farm shop. After an obligatory treat from the milkshake vending machine stocked with fresh farm milk, we carried on to England's smallest city.

We parked up in a central car park with EV chargers for the 'van, and it didn't take long to get swept up in the winding, romantic streets of Wells. The cobbled roads are lined with charming independent shops, tempting bakeries and charity shops that could be boutiques, with picturesque architecture studded throughout. We were lucky enough to go on a market day, so we spent a while mooching around artisan food and secondhand books stalls, with the elegant facade of the cathedral gates watching over the historic town square.

You're spoilt for choice when it comes to lunch spots in Wells, but we settled on a quick bite at Bishop's Eye café near the gate of the cathedral.

Walking through the archway, you're met with the serene grounds of the Bishop's Palace, encircled by medieval walls and accompanied by 14 acres of RHS-partnered gardens. Although we didn't go inside the palace, there was plenty to see in the grounds and we wandered around the moat, pointing out where we'd hide if we were medieval soldiers storming the castle. If there had been more time, we would have loved to pick up the East Mendip Way, which runs just behind the palace and into Tor Hill Woods and rolling countryside beyond.

Instead, we meandered through to Wells Cathedral, which sits in the town centre – imposing but tranquil. The vast Gothic edifice rises up quietly in front of you, and the immaculate frontage gives you a real sense of the care that goes into maintaining it (or perhaps that was more strongly punctuated for us by the scaffolding being used by the restoration project). We also decided against going inside the building, but read our books on the lawns in front of the cathedral. To wind down, we weaved back through the tiny city to the City Arms, one of its many great pubs, for a swift pint before heading back to Brean to meet my parents, who were on their way to join us. At the site, they'd found a ➔



6 Brean's beach bunny was a startling sight!

7 Brent House fresh milkshakes were truly irresistible

8 Wells market is a trove for food and bric-a-brac

9 Bishop's Palace is encircled by gardens and a moat

