

# Take it easy on the Scilly Isles



**TRANQUIL:** One of the Scilly Isles' many golden beaches and, inset, Tregarthen's, on St Mary's

**I**DON'T often arrive at my holiday destinations by helicopter but having tried it I admit I've got a bit of a taste for it.

Hopping on board at Penzance heliport was the start of a memorable trip to the Scilly Isles.

Thanks to a clear day and a window seat I watched as Land's End passed below us and the archipelago off the Cornish coast came into view.

But to appreciate everything that Scilly has to offer you must take to the water.

It's in the seal and porpoise spotting, wildflower smelling and swimming in sandy bays that Scilly gets under your skin.

There are five inhabited islands. Each has its own character, quirks and reasons for visiting.

They are as follows:

**St Mary's:** The largest Scilly isle serves as its hub. You can catch a boat to most other islands, and the mainland, from here. The coastal walk around the island is breathtaking and in the height of summer could be conquered in a day. It will take you past sites of shipwrecks, giant Atlantic waves, a lighthouse, ancient burial chambers, empty beaches with turquoise water and white sand and smuggling coves.

**Tresco:** A privately owned island with two castles, sand dunes and an off-shore islet called 'Hangman's Rock' complete with gallows constructed by the locals. The fabulous Tresco Abbey Gardens are here and their world renown is well-deserved. Flowers, trees

**Mary Murtagh** enjoys a good old-fashioned holiday

and shrubs from the four corners of the world thrive here creating a garden like no other.

**Bryher:** The Atlantic storms really batter this island in winter earning its most westerly stretch of coast the moniker 'Hell Bay'. There is a circular walk which takes you along cliffs and gorse-covered open land where you can see the rest of Scilly stretched out on the horizon.

**St Agnes:** This island has one of the oldest, and most fairytale-like, lighthouses at its centre. It's picture perfect and children will love it. Around the island's edges are 'Droppy Nose Point', 'Crow Island' and 'The Horse' promontories to look out for. Pop in to the cosy Turk's Head pub for a (highly recommended) hot chocolate with St Agnes brandy. It is the most westerly pub in the UK and has a beer garden which looks out across the bay and on to the island of Gugh, which is joined to St Agnes, at low tides, by a narrow spit of land.

**St Martin's:** Sandy beaches, clear water in which you can swim and great walking are some of the attractions.

We stayed at Tregarthen's which is a traditional hotel with old-fashioned values. Guests are called 'sir' and 'madam', most holidaymakers are on a dinner, bed and breakfast tariff and staff strike up a rapport with guests during their stay.

## TRAVEL FACTS

◆ **Get yourself to Scilly in style with British International Helicopters. Prices start at £170 for an adult return. For more information visit [www.islesofscillyhelicopter.com](http://www.islesofscillyhelicopter.com) or call 01736 350435.**

◆ **The daily rate for dinner, bed and breakfast at Tregarthen's starts at £104. Log on to [www.tregarthens-hotel.co.uk](http://www.tregarthens-hotel.co.uk) or call 01720 422540.**

The food is superb. Expect to be served local, fresh and in-season produce such as megrim (a plaice-like flat fish), asparagus and mussels. Desserts are home made and vary every night and breakfasts options include melt in the mouth smoked haddock and kippers.

Tregarthen's has been hosting visitors since 1848 (including poet **Alfred Lord Tennyson**) and it's the service that keeps its regulars coming back. Special requests are obliged, birthdays celebrated with candles and nothing is too much trouble.

It caters for an older clientele who admit that they return year-after-year because it reminds them of yesteryear Britain before hoodies and the credit crunch.

Indeed the whole of Scilly is a reminder of a slower, kinder and more genteel England.

Strangers nod a silent greeting to one another in the street, bicycles are left unlocked outside

shops and there's no road rage when two cars meet on a narrow country lane – one just obligingly reverses.

Scilly is a haven for nature lovers. Thanks to its temperate climate, flora and fauna prosper here. Spring flowers are a major island export and you will pass field upon field of daffodils and irises if you visit in spring. But whatever season you arrive there will be some beautiful wildflower or plant to admire. Giant cabbage-like succulents grow uncared for in guttering, in people's front walls and randomly on the beach. Multi-coloured flowers carpet meadows and on any walk you will come across beautiful grey-green lichen leaving its mark on stony outcrops, trees and pebbly beaches. There are impromptu plant stalls outside cottages where you can buy specimens to take home to see if they can weather the cooler Merseyside climate. Just pop your money in the honesty box and help yourself.

The abundant sparrows, thrushes and gulls are friendly and fearless and if you are eating a crumb-creating sandwich outside then you will soon have a new feathered friend as a dining companion.

It's worth remembering that getting to and from Scilly is entirely weather-dependent. Even in the height of summer high winds or fog can keep the ferry in the harbour and the plane/helicopter on the runway.

Embrace the delay as we did and steal another day's holiday by people-watching and beach combing.



## Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

Departs 11 July  
from £129.95pp for 2 days

- Price includes:
- Admission to the Flower Show
  - Overnight stay at a 4 star outer London hotel with dinner & full English breakfast
  - Free time in London
  - Return coach travel from Liverpool, Southport and Birkenhead



## Edinburgh Tattoo

Departs 7 & 28 August  
from £129.95pp for 2 days

A thousand performers from the four corners of the globe will come together for Scotland's sensational international showcase of music, entertainment and dance in the amazing and romantic setting of Edinburgh Castle

- Price includes:
- A ticket (face value £28) for the Edinburgh Military Tattoo
  - Overnight stay at a 3 star outer Glasgow area hotel with full Scottish breakfast
  - Free time in Edinburgh
  - Coach travel during the break
  - Return coach travel from Liverpool, Southport and Birkenhead



## Italian Grand Prix

Departs 11 September  
from £599.95pp for 4 days

The Italian Grand Prix is one of the world's top annual sporting events and has taken place in Monza for more than 50 years. The track is renowned for its high-speed oval curves and is one of the fastest of the annual Grand Prix programme. Your hotel will be of a 3 star standard and located about 50-80kms from Monza.

- Prices include:
- A return flight inclusive of all taxes from Liverpool
  - Airport transfers to the hotel and return
  - Three nights hotel stay with cold buffet breakfasts
  - A 2 day General Admission ticket to the Grand Prix
  - Coach transfers on each race day from the hotel to the F1 circuit and return

Single room supplements apply. Subject to availability.

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