



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | SCRUMPTIOUS SCILLY ISLES



instant escapes

Scrumptious Scilly Isles

Have a taste of the UK's tropical paradise — you'll want second helpings

These ravishing islands, set in turquoise-tinted seas just off the Cornish coast, mix wild headlands with white-sand coves and tranquil lanes. And they're gourmet heaven: foraged finds give flavour to gins and chocolate; crabs and lobsters travel from sea to plate; and tidal sandbars make for fab foodie pop-ups. Go on, treat yourself... **By Norman Miller**



SEE & DO

● St Mary's is the largest of the islands and it's here you'll arrive — celebrate with a mouthwatering alfresco lunch in Britain's most southerly vineyard. Holy Vale's lobster lunch (star-castle.co.uk/vineyard; £27, including wine) is a perfect union of Scillonian land and sea: local **crustacea fresh from azure depths, and potatoes and rocket plucked from the gardens of a 16th-century castle.** Then there are the tapas-complemented wine-tastings (£19)...

● Take a morning boat to Tresco isle, famous for its Abbey Garden (entry £15). Dubbed 'Kew with the roof off', **it's a sub-tropical paradise ablaze with rainbow flora and majestic trees from far-flung lands,** including Brazil and New Zealand. Don't miss its serene kitchen garden, an edible Eden where cape gooseberries, perpetual spinach and tasty nasturtiums flourish amid the soft buzz of lovingly tended hives.

● The white-sand arc of Tresco's Appletree Bay is a lovely lunchtime picnic spot, but it's not alone. **Beaches on the other isles are equally blissful, each with their own USP.** Periglis, on St Agnes, is a shell-collector's dream, while Bryher's Green Bay has views across to Tresco's two ruined castles. There's Old Town Bay, a sandy curve just a stroll from St Mary's main town, or plonk your hamper at Great Bay on St Martin's silky white strand — rare birds fluttering above heathery paths will be your only companions.

TIME FOR A TIPPLE

It makes its own small-batch gin, using botanicals from the site such as aromatic Coleonema ('Confetti Bush'). Try it on its G&T evening Garden Tours (May 13-29; £28pp, including two G&Ts and snacks; tresco.co.uk)

Scilly season: Pentle Bay, Tresco; below, lobster lunch at Holy Vale on St Mary's; Abbey Gardens, Tresco

● Honesty stalls and delis abound throughout the islands, offering picnic essentials alongside markets such as Tresco's New Grimsby Quay (Apr-Oct, Tues, 3.30pm-5.30pm). **Crabs and lobsters are piled high, as are rare-breed pork and local duck.** And look out for the locally produced Troytown Farm ice cream — it's sold all over (try the clotted cream or geranium).

● Scilly's distinctive gins make perfect juniper-infused sundowners. Tarquin's Hell Bay gin deploys local dulse and kombu as umami-rich botanicals, complemented by the small-batch wonders (just 28 bottles each run) of varied gins from St Agnes's Westward Farm (westwardfarm.co.uk). **Contrast the creamy coconut notes of Wingletang** (the nickname for wild gorse) **with the fragrant Rose & Geranium** made from local flowers.

● Time a visit to experience Scilly's unique Low Tide Event (tresco.co.uk/enjoying/events/low-tide-event), made possible by powerful lunar forces exposing the seabed between Tresco and Bryher. **Lively calorific pop-up food kiosks take over sands where the sea has receded.** Glug Scilly gins, try Tresco salt-beef baps and pile into paella from Bryher's acclaimed Island Fish (see Shop overleaf). And watch the fisher folk as they 'sprat' for whitebait.

● **Inter-island boats weave together Britain's most brilliant pub crawl.** Follow in Jamie Oliver's footsteps for Friday fish supper or crab sarnies (about £11) and a pint at Bryher's Fraggie Rock; gaze seaward from the Turk's Head above St Agnes's quay; or grab a pew in the beer garden at St Martin's Seven Stones Inn to discover how Sharp's Atlantic ale plus potted crab plus sea views equals pub nirvana.

● Discover the Scilly Isles' amazing foraging larder with a DIY shrimping outing (Jun-Sept) or by digging for razor clams. Sound good? Invest in a copy of Rachel Lambert's *Wild Food Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* (£6.95) and **while away some time nosing for wild sorrel, gorse flowers and carrots from tranquil hills,** and rock samphire and sea spinach from tidal pools. >



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EAT

● **Fine art & fine food**

THE FLYING BOAT (Mains about £15)

Because: It's a glass-fronted seaside space with a superb art collection. Expect the likes of seared grey mullet with crab rasam and pak choi. **Travel's tip:** Try to attend one of its Supper Nights, when it creates island-inspired specials. *Tresco; 01720 424068, tresco.co.uk/eating-on-tresco/flying-boat.*

● **Summer pop-up**

THE CRAB SHACK (Sharing platters about £18)

Because: An atmospheric spot in the grounds of Hell Bay Hotel (see Stay), this is the place to indulge in local crab, mussels and scallops on convivial communal tables. **Travel's tip:** Book well ahead or stay in the hotel — seats are held for guests. *Bryher; 01720 422947, hellbay.co.uk/dining-with-us; Tues-Thurs eves only, May-Sept.*

● **Room with a view**

HIGH TIDE (Two courses about £29)

Because: NZ chef Mark Eberlein brings antipodean flair to local produce such as Scilly John Dory with scallops and lobster bisque sauce. **Travel's tip:** For the best views towards Bishop Rock Lighthouse, book a table in the conservatory. *Old Lane, St Agnes; 01720 423869, hightideseafoodrestaurant.co.uk; dinner only, various midweek evenings, Apr-Sept.*

● **Distinctive dining**

THE TANGLEWOOD KITCHEN

(Two courses about £30)

Because: Brilliantly located in the back room of a post office, it serves tasty meals for up to eight people. **Travel's tip:** It's a deli during the day — buy crab cakes and wine from the island vineyard. *The Post Office, Hugh St, St Mary's; 01720 422454, tanglewoodkitchen.co.uk.*

● **Historic fine dining**

THE RESTAURANTS AT STAR CASTLE

(Two courses about £37)

Because: This 16th-century castle is the Isles' most elegant dining option. Choose between the formal Dining Room in the castle and the glass Conservatory built around an old vine. **Travel's tip:** Prepare to eat early: the last sitting is at 8.30pm. *St Mary's; 01720 422317, star-castle.co.uk.*

DRINK & SHOP

● **Tresco local**

DRIFTWOOD BAR AT THE NEW INN

Because: This foodie pub is a popular hangout, with art capturing Scillonian locals and the local passion for gig-racing. With 16 rooms and a pool, it's also a great place to stay. **Travel's tip:** Join locals for fine roasts on a Sunday. *Tresco; 01720 423006, tresco.co.uk/staying-on-tresco/the-new-inn.*

● **St Mary's hideaway**

OLD TOWN INN

Because: Tucked down a lane near Old Town Bay, it has the most interesting beers in town and three B&B rooms. The nautical theme is fun, too. **Travel's tip:** There's regular live music — look out for the monthly Isles of Scilly Folk Club gig. *Old Town Lane, St Mary's; 01720 422301, oldtowninn.co.uk.*

● **Seafood beacon**

ISLAND FISH

Because: It sells some of the islands' best seafood. You can also buy sarnies, salads and quiches. **Travel's tip:** It's open some nights, dishing up paella (Thurs, £8) or lobster (Sun, £10). *Bryher; 01720 423880, islandfish.co.uk.*

TAKE THE TOUR

If you liked the Scilly beer, book a tour of the Ales of Scilly brewery on the edge of Hugh Town (£5pp; book via beer@alesofscilly.co.uk)

CATCH YOUR DINNER!

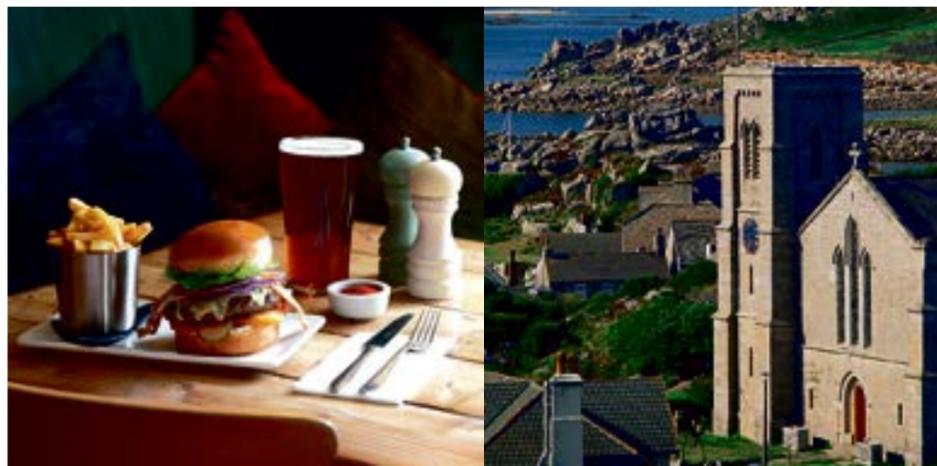
If you fancy catching your own, Island Fish has locally made shrimp nets to hire or buy — with advice thrown in for free!



ASK THE LOCAL

Emma Lainchbury oversees the kitchen garden at Tresco's Abbey Gardens

“In summer I like to eat at Tresco's Ruin Beach Cafe; in winter, I swap to the New Inn (see Drink & Shop, above) — we locals pile in for Sunday roast. May is a glorious time: terraces and pathways become a riot of colour as hundreds of species flower. The Isles are great for shell-hunting and you get different shells on different beaches. My prize finds include wentletraps — like a unicorn horn and really rare! You can also kayak (see tresco.co.uk) or take a tourist boat (scillyboating.co.uk) to the uninhabited island of Samson, just off the southern tip of Tresco and Bryher. It has ruins of old granite cottages and little secluded beaches.”



STAY

● **St Agnes seclusion**

TROY TOWN FARM (Doubles from £60, self-catering; three-night min stay)

Because: This is perfect for big horizons and stargazing at the tip of the Scilly Isles' most southwesterly inhabited island. Make sure to work your way through the farm's range of more than 30 ice creams. **Travel's tip:** Underfloor heating helps make this a great winter option — watch storms or hunker down with a book and enjoy the edge-of-the-world vibe. *St Agnes; troytown.co.uk.*

● **Cute cottages**

TOP COTTAGE AND UP-IDAS

(From £104, sleeping five, self-catering; min three-night stay)

Because: These 200-year-old traditional granite cottages have stunning views over St Martin's Higher Town and Par Beach across to the uninhabited Eastern Isles. **Travel's tip:** Be sure to take one of the torches supplied — there are no street lights on St. Martin's! *Higher Town, St Martin's; carronfarm.co.uk.*

PHOTOGRAPHS: 4CORNERS; ROBERT HARDING MAP: MAIDENHEAD CARTOGRAPHIC

● **St Mary's newcomer**

PENINNIS FARM LODGES (From £115, self-catering, sleeping five; four-night min stay)

Because: Situated on a headland near Hugh Town, these Nordic-inspired wooden lodges come with sweeping sea views. You'll get to meet the Isles' famed Ruby Red cattle, plus rare-breed pigs. **Travel's tip:** Ask and you'll be allowed to collect your own freshly laid eggs. *King Edward's Rd, St Mary's; peninnisfarmlodges.co.uk.*

● **Historic high style**

STAR CASTLE HOTEL (Doubles from £149, B&B)

Because: It's the Scillies' grandest hotel, fashioned from a 16th-century star-shaped fortress on a headland overlooking Hugh Town. There are a few small rooms in the castle, but most stay in modern accommodation in the garden, with harbour or ocean views. **Travel's tip:** Ask the hotel's boatman about island-hopping — he pops round for a chat at breakfast. *Off Garrison Hill, St Mary's; star-castle.co.uk.*



All hands on deck: clockwise from top left, Star Castle Hotel; sweet things at the Tanglewood Kitchen; preparing seafood specials at the Crab Shack; St Mary's Church; Hugh Town; New Inn gastro pub

DATE FOR THE DIARY

Grab some atmospheric alfresco theatre, Tresco-style, when Treasure Islands is performed at Sea Garden Cottage lawns on July 30 (tresco.co.uk)

● **Arty stay**

HELL BAY HOTEL (Doubles from £190, B&B)

Because: Hell Bay's laid-back luxury comes with a great bayside location plus a renowned art collection, including works by Barbara Hepworth. **Travel's tip:** Book one of the five first-floor Studio Suites for the best view over beach and bay — plus glorious evening sun. *Bryher; hellbay.co.uk.*

● **Luxury self-catering**

SEA GARDEN COTTAGES (Apartment for two from £200, self-catering)

Because: Upscale seaside style (smart contemporary furnishings and well-equipped kitchens) meets garden setting by a quiet cove. Options range from spacious one-bed rooms with seaview balconies to accommodation sleeping up to 10. **Travel's tip:** Bag the two crab-shaped carved wooden seats on the green beside the Ruin Beach Cafe for a perfect sundowner spot looking over the bay. *Old Grimby Bay, Tresco; tresco.co.uk/staying/sea-garden-cottages.*

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

Great Western Railway (gwr.com) runs from London to Newquay, Penzance and Exeter from £93 return. **Skybus** (islesofscilly-travel.co.uk/skybus) flies to St Mary's from Newquay (30min), Exeter (60min) and Land's End (20min) from £125 return. A new helicopter transfer (15min) to St Mary's and Tresco from Penzance costs from £122 one way; see penzancehelicopters.co.uk. The **Scillonian** sails from Penzance to St Mary's (Mar-Nov) from £48 return.

GO PACKAGED

The Isles of Scilly Explorer (one week) starts at £899pp, B&B, through **Premier Holidays** (premierholidays.co.uk), including St Mary's, St Martin's and Tresco, with three- and four-star accommodation, sailing from Penzance. **Isles of Scilly Travel** (islesofscilly-travel.co.uk) can tailor make individual packages.

FURTHER INFORMATION

See visitislesofscilly.com.