

# CREAM OF THE CORNISH COAST

## HOTEL REVIEW

### MOONRAKERS

St Mawes, Cornwall

#### SEBASTIAN SHAKESPEARE

**M**OOONRAKERS is a holiday home which invites superlatives. Once you cross the threshold you don't want to leave. Olga Polizzi's Hotel Tresanton has already put the Cornish fishing town of St Mawes on the map but it faces formidable competition from this luxury bolthole up the hill. The vast white house commands superior views over the sea and the Roseland Peninsula.

I spent most of the first morning on the lounge on the first-floor wrap-around terrace, bewitched by the picture of serenity before my eyes. A quaint harbour with a small fishing fleet, a still, becalmed sea – unlike during the recent storms – with yachts gliding across the surface, and beyond the mouth of the Percuil River unfolds a glorious rural idyll.

The house sleeps 12 and has all the creature comforts you could want. A garden of earthly delights (or rather children's delights, including a giant trampoline and outdoor table tennis) and a full concierge service comprising a chef, housekeeping service and masseur. There is even an indoor table tennis table, pool table, Wii and a wardrobe with fancy dress outfits for toddlers, and Angie the cleaner makes exquisite towel sculptures. There are two living rooms for children and adults with separate televisions so I didn't have to squabble with my two-year-old over whether to watch Cinderella or Breaking Bad.

We arrived to stay for a week with our two children and my parents-in-law, so we were stress-testing it for all ages. It passed with flying colours and would make the ideal venue for a birthday celebration or anniversary. Owner Amanda Selby bought Moonrakers as a holiday home and has given it a major refurb.

She has since acquired three smaller houses in the village: Stargazers (sleeping 10), Dreamcatchers (sleeping eight), and Shellseekers (sleeping four). Selby's background is in hospitality (she used to work at the Duke of Marlborough's Orangery and Royal Ascot) so she knows the boxes to tick. "Nothing is impossible in my world" is her philosophy – and it works. When a professor of music stayed, she moved in a grand piano.

The attention to detail is unsurpassed. If you sit in the master suite's free-standing bath at one end, you stare out to open sea. If you sit in the bath the other end, you look at the cosy harbour. You can pick your view depending on your mood. Genius. The bath and double bed vie for the best view. The rooms are all decked out in bold-coloured curtains from Designers Guild and ultra comfortable Hypnos beds, beloved of the Queen. Shampoos and soaps are sourced from Cath Collins (Devon's answer to Jo Malone).

The concierge service is what sets Moonrakers apart from other self-catering homes. We did a big shop online before we set out from London, which had already been delivered and unpacked by the housekeeper before our arrival. On our third night, chef William Marsden (former chef at The Walnut Tree in Abergavenny and cousin of travel writer Philip) prepared dinner

for us in our kitchen. He told us he is more used to cooking for 100 rather than just the two of us that night, so we felt very indulged. He prepared a fresh tuna salad, red mullet and honey-roasted carrots (with honey provided by his own bees) and made for a charming fellow guest. He left us with a delicious fish pie, which kept us going for a couple of days.

The next day, Sarah Greenhalgh, from Pressures of Life, came and gave us an excellent massage in our own bedroom. Oh, what decadence. You will want for nothing here.

St Mawes is a mecca for the boating and yachting fraternity but there is much more to do and see. There are fabulous beaches and an endless array of pubs (special mention to the Roseland, serving the plumpest mussels I have tasted for years). No matter how inviting it is to stay at home and do nothing, you will be tempted out because everything is so close. The Hotel Tresanton dining room is a five-minute walk away; ditto the Lamorran Gardens. It's a two-mile coastal walk from St Mawes Castle to St Just in Roseland Church, described by John Betjeman as being "to many people the most beautiful churchyard on earth".

I have stayed in a number of self-catering homes but none offers such spectacular views, unrivalled comfort or proximity to such great beaches. This is the real deal, a Cornish cornucopia. While the headline figure in high season is £4,950 per week, this works out at £59 a night per person, which doesn't seem so outlandish. I am already planning a return trip. Yes, it's that good.

■ *St Mawes Retreats' Moonrakers, St Mawes, Cornwall, has three nights from £885 for up to six and £1,260 for up to 12, [stmawesretreats.co.uk](http://stmawesretreats.co.uk)*







**Coastal cornucopia:** Moonrakers is a glamorous holiday home with hotel comforts (main) and views over the Roseland Peninsula (top right). The house sleeps 12 in five ensuite bedrooms with sea views (bottom)

