

IN BRITAIN

The Cornish fishing village of St Mawes, at the mouth of the Percuil River, has epic views that stretch languidly to Falmouth Bay. They say it's named after Maudez, a Celtic saint who spent years in solitary contemplation looking out at the calming waters. Anyone who has queued in the Co-op in July might find the idea of quiet meditation laughable. St Mawes is buzzing right now, thanks to the relaunch of two hotels: The Idle Rocks and her funkier sibling The St Mawes Hotel. The owners, Aston Martin chairman David Richards and his wife Karen, are attracting a party crowd who catch the sleeper from Paddington or fly in by chopper for long weekends at this laid-back hotspot.

Back in the 1970s, the harbour was so crowded you had to step across boats to make it to shore, and those times may be returning. Olga Polizzi put St Mawes back on the map in 1998 when she opened Tresanton, turning the former sailing club into a sleek hotel that made going on a beach holiday in England smart again. Then last year, The Idle Rocks was revived. The general consensus is that competition has been good for the village, despite soaring property prices. It is now so affluent that Hasbro has launched a limited-edition St Mawes Monopoly, with St Mawes Castle and Tresanton representing Bond Street and Mayfair.

The rows of pastel and whitewashed cottages, the castle and the imposing lighthouse that stands guard on St Anthony Head all contribute to the fairytale feel. And the sailing is magical, too. 'If you go to Salcombe in Devon, all you have is the enclosed harbour or the English Channel. Here you have the sheltered bay and the Carrick Roads [a large natural harbour],' said a pro at the St Mawes Sailing Club, where weekly races and regular regattas culminate in August's Falmouth Week. It's no coincidence that the River Fal is where Sir Ben Ainslie honed his skills.

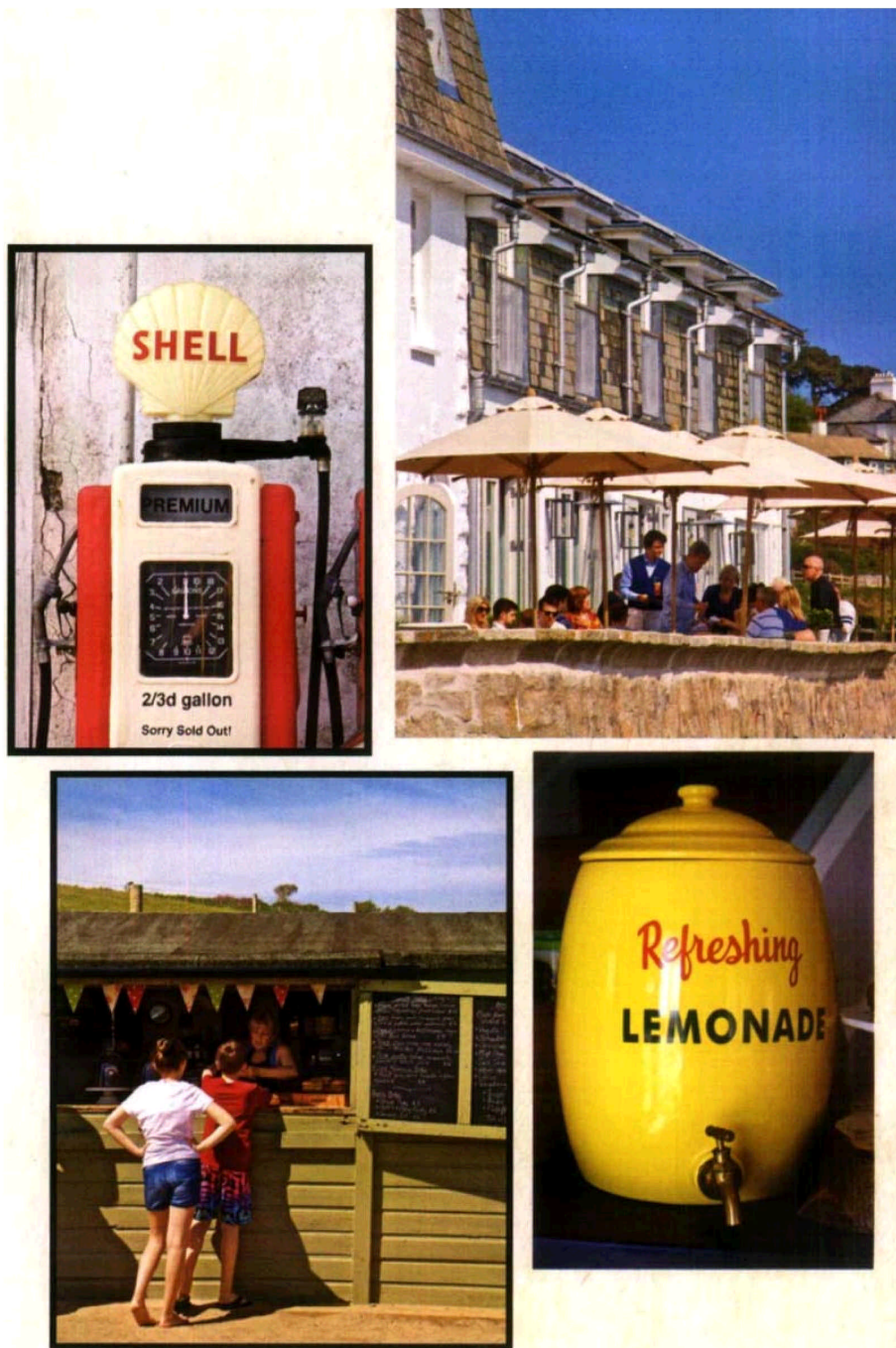
The St Mawes Ferry, which goes to and from Falmouth, shares the water with grand yachts, dinghies, shabby fishing boats and rowers in their pilot gigs. Children spend blissful hours rockpooling on the two small beaches. And there's plenty more to do: browsing the boutiques, lounging on nearby Carne beach, going for coastal walks or investigating the many fantastical gardens nearby. Or you could take a leaf out of St Maudez's book and quietly contemplate the view; but unlike him, why not do so on a hotel terrace with an invigorating cocktail or a glass of crisp Sauvignon Blanc?

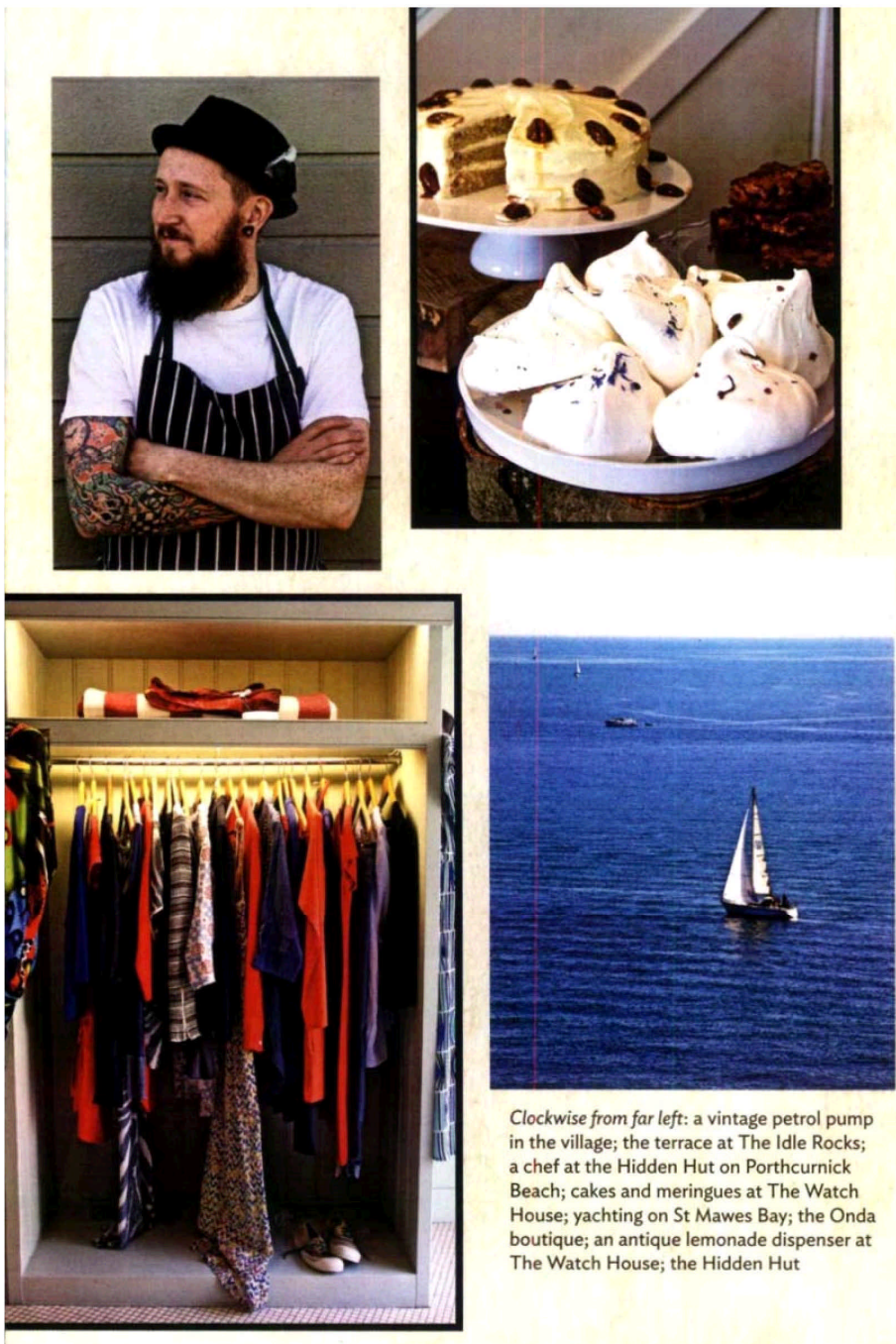
WHERE TO STAY

YOUNG GUNS

The vibe at **The Idle Rocks** is cool but friendly. The ground floor is one large, open space, and the terrace is the place to be in the summer (but not last February, when the whole floor got taken out by the storms). The hotel has risen from the ashes and been carefully refurbished once again – luckily, the fire brigade saved the extensive modern-art collection. The 20 bedrooms are vibrant and contemporary. It's worth paying for a grand sea-view room: number 15 is so close to the water you can indulge private-yacht fantasies while you lie in the

free-standing bath. Little details count: sailor's hats in the kids' playroom, and gorgeous flower arrangements that blend in with the objets d'art and furniture sourced from Paris. The breakfast is scrumptious: try pancakes with bacon and berries; dinner is pricey. Sister property **The St Mawes Hotel**, which has just reopened across the harbour, has a Soho House-type feel and serves tapas and pizzas. The owners, who've had a house here for years, realised that prices at The Idle Rocks were on the steep side for locals. At The St Mawes, food and rooms are cheaper and the style is





Clockwise from far left: a vintage petrol pump in the village; the terrace at The Idle Rocks; a chef at the Hidden Hut on Porthcurnick Beach; cakes and meringues at The Watch House; yachting on St Mawes Bay; the Onda boutique; an antique lemonade dispenser at The Watch House; the Hidden Hut





shabby-chic. There are plans for a cinema room and a spa. +44 1326 270270; www.idlerocks.com. Doubles from £150; sea view from £250. +44 1326 270170; www.stmaweshotel.com. Doubles from £140

EVERGREEN CLASSIC

Olga Polizzi's **Hotel Tresanton** is still the grande dame. It may not be hip, but it's certainly beautiful. Fossil sculptures, maps, local art and objects with a nautical theme connect the rooms with their surroundings. Images of lighthouses are dotted around the bar and peek out from menus, towels and coasters. The terrace is understated, a

place to sit in the sun for hours and watch life sail by, with the friendly babble of fellow guests floating in the warm air. The food is indisputably the best in St Mawes. Order a Twitter in the bar – a refreshing vodka-and-Champagne cocktail with a cucumber twist that slips down all too easily. Then sample the fresh Porthilly oysters, followed by seafood linguine or a crab romaine salad. Under long-serving manager Federica Bertolini, the service is flawless. There may now be a couple of rivals in town, but the original is majestic in her quiet confidence. +44 1326 270055; www.tresanton.com. Doubles from £200

RITZY RENTALS

Dreamcatchers is a slick modern house set 200 yards above the waterside, with an unbeatable view. Owner Amanda Selby has had fun with colour – bright floral curtains and pink and blue zigzag headboards. She can organise a masseuse and private chef if you wish: therapist Sarah Greenhalgh will massage away the stiffest neck; and the talented Georgie Stevens, who trained under Rick Stein, will rustle up a three-course dinner (her scallops with celeriac purée, candied bacon and truffle oil are sensational). The beauty of this place is that it has everything. The kitchen, pimped-up with two ovens and two fridge-freezers, is

stocked with all the kit an accomplished cook could possibly need. The beds are large and plump, made up with Egyptian cotton linens, and there are games and fancy-dress costumes for the inevitable rainy days. You won't want to leave.

Moonrakers is the bling in Selby's crown.

This five-bedroom diva, with its glorious sweeping garden, is the place for a multi-family holiday. Tucked away in a secluded part of the village, it's a short stroll from the castle. There's room to sprawl, whether on the terrace, the lawn, one of the wide sofas in either of the sitting rooms or a sun-lounger on the balcony. The style is eclectic: modern furniture is mixed with a mahogany dining table, a grandfather clock and a giant glass amphora. Colourful cushions and daring fabrics give it a modern look. This pad is all about kicking back and enjoying the astonishing sea view, not that the kids will notice – they'll be too busy bouncing on the giant trampoline or getting competitive around the ping-pong table in the garden. Order the breakfast box, stuffed with goodies from a nearby farm, to start your holiday with a banger. +44 8000 886622; www.stmawesretreats.co.uk. *Dreamcatchers* sleeps eight, from £1,100; *Moonrakers* sleeps 12, from £1,395 – both prices are for a three-night weekend stay

NORDIC NOOK

Interior-design fans will love **Vara**, a waterfront holiday house with a Victorian façade and fresh new interiors decorated in Scandinavian style. With its white, oiled-oak floors and understated, bespoke furniture, it has a calm, grown-up look. Design classics such as the Teddy Bear chair will make collectors envious. Work by local artists Myles Oxenford, Ferris ➤

➤ McGuinty and Gareth Edwards sparkle in these surroundings. A pair of range-finding binoculars that date from World War I stand in the window, pointing towards the Carrick Roads. Leave the kids at home and revel in the quiet



sophistication. varastmawes@gmail.com.
Sleeps eight, from £1,200 for a weekend

**WHERE
TO EAT &
DRINK**

THE ALL-ROUNDER

Bag a family-friendly booth and tuck into moules frites or a juicy burger at **The Watch**

House. Chef Will Gould sells takeaway fish and chips out the back, serves up fabulous homemade cakes all day and transforms the place into a smart restaurant at night. Book ahead in summer, and don't miss lobster night. +44 1326 270038; www.watchhousestmawes.co.uk. About £70 for two

SECRET SUPPER

For a foodie adventure, try the **Hidden Hut** on a feast night. This tiny, open-air café above Porthcurnick Beach is run by Simon Stallard and his Cornish girlfriend Jemma Glass. Stallard is a talented chef, with crab gratin, bouillabaisse and Goan fish curry among his specialities, and tickets for the feasts – priced from £9 to £20 depending on what's cooking – sell out an hour after they're posted online. Diners bring their own cutlery and booze, and eat around giant fire pits on the beach. Alternatively, go at lunchtime for Italian meatballs, Spanish-style salt-cod or king prawns, all served with a smile. www.hiddenhut.co.uk

FOR THE PICNIC BASKET

Pop into **Deli-cious** and buy a succulent crab sandwich to eat on the sand. And check out the homemade jams lovingly stacked in the window. +44 1326 270045

SWEET TREATS

Anyone with children should explore **Fudge & Moore**, which sells delicious ice cream and fudge, as well as shrimping nets, model lighthouses and buckets and spades. +44 1326 270126; www.fudgeandmoore.co.uk

**WHERE
TO SHOP**

CORNISH CHIC

Grace & Favour is the place for floaty dresses, kaftans, pumps, charm bracelets and

scented candles. For a splurge, check out Charlie Polizzi's wondrous shop **Onda** and pick up some industrial jewellery, a Pazuki print top or a Tissa bag. www.graceandfavouronline.co.uk; www.ondarocks.co.uk

ART ATTACK

It's worth delving about in **The Square Gallery**. Owner Cathy Talbot has a keen eye and sells stunning work by local artists including Trevor Price and Rosie Scott. For pretty seascapes, driftwood mirrors and colourful mosaics, visit the **Waterside Gallery**. Collectors visit **The New Gallery** in Portscatho, where the works of Chris Insoll, Trevor Felcey and Alice Mumford, among others, grace the walls. Insoll

heads up this artists' colony and will guide you through the treasures. www.thesquaregallery.co.uk; www.watersidegallery.co.uk; www.chrisinsoll.com

**WHAT
TO SEE
& DO**

FABULOUS FERRIES

Take the **St Mawes Ferry** to Falmouth and spend a day nosing around its independent galleries and shops. For a morning's walk from Place to St Anthony's Lighthouse, catch the **Place Ferry**. Another option is to charter a RIB (inflatable speedboat) to the award-winning **Pandora Inn** on the edge of Restronguet Creek, and soak up the rays on the pontoon while tucking into half a pint of local prawns. +44 7971 846786; www.stmaweskayaks.co.uk

GOOD CATCH

Anglers of all ages will love mackerel-fishing on the **Madeline Rose** with James Brown. He'll bring up lobster pots while little ones drop lines over the side. They might even spot a dolphin. +44 7891 300078; www.fishandtripstmawes.co.uk

ANCHORS AWAY

Bob Warren of **Roseland Paddle & Sail** is dedicated to getting everyone afloat, whether on a boat, kayak or windsurfing board. Beginners learn on the Percuil



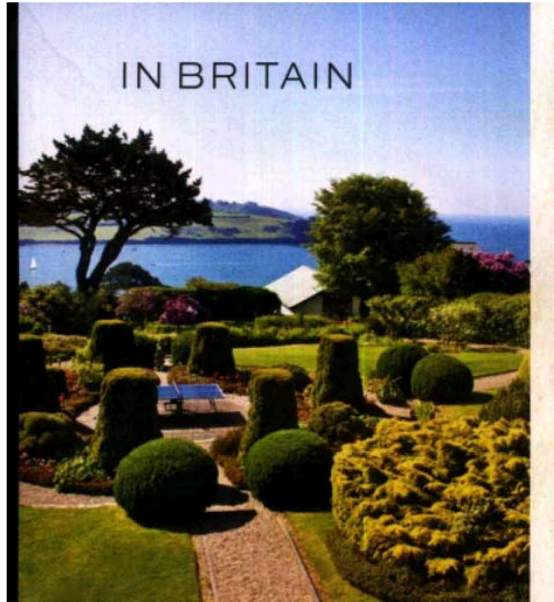
River; the more experienced venture out to St Mawes Harbour and beyond. +44 7970 926409; www.paddleandsail.com

THE TINY TOWER

St Mawes Castle is among the smallest in England. Built by Henry VIII as part of a defensive line to help protect the coast from a possible crusade by the Pope, it is worth visiting to admire its perfect, trefoil-shaped gun tower. +44 1326 270526; www.english-heritage.org.uk

FLOWER POWER

Gardeners love the Roseland Peninsula, and it's no wonder: they are spoiled for choice. Highlights include the subtropical **Lamorran House Gardens**, the extensive grounds at **Trelissick** and the magical **Lost Gardens of Heligan**, where you can amble around a jungle, a wildlife-viewing area and award-winning restored vegetable gardens. The truly committed should book a tour of the **Tregothnan estate**: the Boscawen family's garden has an extraordinarily diverse collection of rare plants and trees from around the globe. Get lost in the world's only camellia maze, then chill out with a cream tea made from fragrant leaves grown on site. 



Clockwise from top left: the manicured garden, and ping-pong table, at Moonrakers; a cottage on Grove Hill; cream tea at Hotel Tresanton