

Family affair

Stumped for a fun child-friendly destination?
Our writers find holidays everyone will love

Cornwall

If I didn't have to write this review, I wouldn't be telling anyone about St Mawes. It's one of those little gems you never want to leave and don't want anyone else knowing about.

It's a fishing village tucked away at the end of the Roseland Peninsula on Cornwall's south coast. Compared to the rest of the county, it seems to escape the levels of tourism that towns such as Padstow and St Ives get, so it feels as though you've stumbled upon something special.

We stayed in Penolva, a beautiful house overlooking the water with four bedrooms and four bathrooms, making it an ideal family home-from-home getaway. The expansive garden leads to its own private jetty and from here we went kayaking and even spotted a starfish.

The house was built in the 1960s by Dick Wilkins, a friend of the Queen Mother. She and other members of the Royal Family visited Wilkins at Penolva, arriving by HMY Britannia and using the very same slipway.

Beautiful setting and amazing house aside, our stay was made complete by the detail and thoughtfulness of St Mawes Retreats, which manages Penolva. We arrived to find a huge pile of home-made scones, complete with clotted cream and jam, in the fridge. The children were delighted to find a bucket and spade and a Cornish teddy bear on their beds to welcome them and a circus tent full of toys in a corner of the enormous living room. We were staying there with our 16-month-old daughter and were impressed to find everything we could have needed for her, including a travel cot, baby monitor and even a babysitting service.

The concierge service available is second to

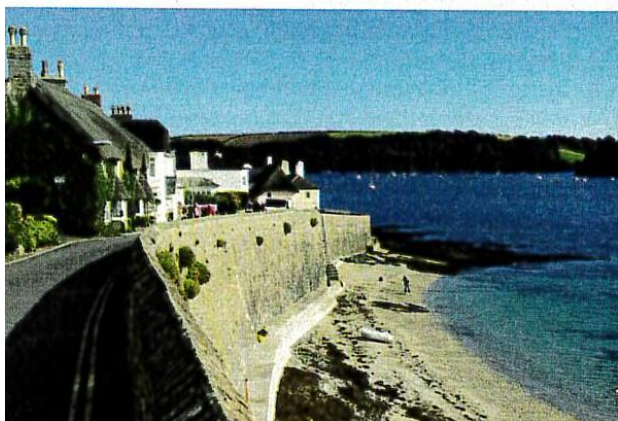
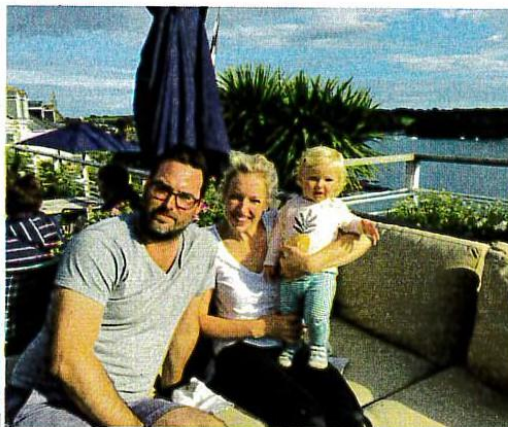
none and is the reason so many guests return. One of our favourites was the in-house spa treatment where a qualified therapist comes to the house to give therapies – ideal for busy mums or grandparents who need a bit of time out from the mayhem of excited children.

We also couldn't resist trying out the private chef service. Our personal cook for the night arrived with crates of locally sourced, mouthwatering produce, including scallops and venison plus blackberries from her own back garden. She cooked a delicious three-course meal and served each with a carefully chosen wine. The kitchen was left immaculately clean, so you can enjoy the relaxation of eating in, but with none of the bore of clearing up.

To burn off the treats, there's plenty to see on foot, mooching around the village and crabbing from the harbour. On Penolva's doorstep is St Mawes Castle, Henry VIII's coastal artillery fortress built in the 1500s, and you can visit Falmouth, less than a mile away, with a short ferry hop. After taking in the sights, the Hotel Tresanton terrace is perfect for a G&T sundowner.

We'll definitely return and having experienced the service from St Mawes Retreats, I can't imagine visiting in any other way.

Anna Woodham



A week on Cornwall's Roseland Peninsula proved just the ticket for Anna and her family (above)

Penolva By St Mawes Retreats is available for private rental from £4,500 for seven nights. For reservations and further information, call 0800 088 6622 or visit stmawesretreats.co.uk.