



AllWays Traveller

Isles of Scilly, UK

www.allwaystraveller.com

People make places and what a place this is

Scilly is (or the Isles of Scilly are) a string of islands forming an archipelago some 28 miles off Lands End, the south-western tip of the UK's Cornish peninsula.

With a total resident population of just over 1,600 - and given all the friendly waving, smiling and nodding that takes place - everyone seems to know everyone else.

From a visitor perspective, it also means almost everyone is involved with, or benefits from, tourism - the economic mainstay of the Isles.

This goes a long way to explaining the genuine welcome visitors to Scilly receive.

And why so many of those visitors return again and again and again.

This issue of AllWays takes a look at some of the people who make Scilly the great place it is.

Ashley Gibbins

The International Travel Writers Alliance
www.itwalliance.com

Outstanding natural beauty

Designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the isles are known for their bird life, particularly Puffins and Storm Petrels and the number of rare migrants that have ornithologists flocking to Scilly.

While its Gulf Stream location makes for a temperate climate with frost and snow rare it is also exposed the Atlantic winds, which can see spectacular winter gales lashing the islands.



www.simplyscilly.co.uk



Seldom more than a stones throw from the sea

by Ashley Gibbins



There is something surprisingly reassuring in the incessant screeching of seagulls.

Even as an early morning wake up call.

It reminds one that this is a break where one is seldom likely to be more than the proverbial stones throw from the sea.



During my stay, a snow white herring gull had decamped her two dowdy, gawky chicks on the roof outside my hotel room.

Spending their last land bound days here they would scream for a first feed as soon as each dawn broke.

I became really rather attached to the raucous fellows.

And I must confess to sneaking out the odd piece of breakfast toast for them (despite the hotel signs asking me very nicely not to feed the birds).

OK, I should have known better at my age. But they were such little characters.

And talking of characters and indeed personalities, it is this that makes the Isles of Scilly unique.

The Isles of Scilly

The islands

Scilly comprises five inhabited islands and 134 smaller islands, islets and rocky outcrops.



St Mary's (pop 1,600)

St. Mary's the largest of the Isles and in Hugh Town, its main settlement. St Mary's has the Isles main air and ferry port.

Tresco (180)

Tresco, the second largest island, is an area of contrast with rugged granite outcrops, heath land of the exposed north coast and mainly shell beaches in the east and south.

St Martin's with White Island (140)

St Martin's, the northernmost populated island.

Bryher (92)

The 327 acre Bryher is the smallest of the five inhabited islands. Off the southern end of Bryher is the uninhabited island of Samson.

St Agnus and Gugh (70)

St Agnes, the southernmost populated island, joins the island of Gugh by a tombolo, or sandbar, called the Gugh Bar, which is exposed only at low tide.

Fraser and Rebecca Hicks



Ask for the best person to talk to about the boats that ply the four inhabited Isles of Scilly and Fraser's name will invariably crop up.

Fraser and daughter Rebecca Hicks are skipper and 'mate' of the Sea King, one of the 10 independently owned boats and crews in the St Mary's Boatman's Association.

A born and bred Scillonian, Fraser has been working the boats all his adult life and Rebecca is well on her way to obtaining a skippers licence in her own right.

The Sea King itself, a 1947 built boat, was brought to Scilly from Torquay, by Fraser's father in 1963 with Fraser taking over the helm in 2002.

The combination of changing tides and weather conditions, means no day is ever the same and, in the Association, Fraser and Rebecca work with a great bunch of guys and a couple 'sea dogs'.

The St Mary's Boatman's Association fleet offer daily sailings between the four inhabited Isles of Scilly between April and October.

www.scillyboating.co.uk

Don Williams – Classic car tours

The open top bus tour is the norm in destinations around the world.



On St Mary's you will see Don Williams taking two or three visitors around in his open top 1929 Riley.

A Scillonian for over 40 years, retired maths teacher Don now combines his love of classic cars and island history.

Don picks up and drops off his guests and hones the two hour tours to meet their interests. Within reason, of course. There are, after all, only nine miles of road on Scilly.

Getting to Scilly

By sea

The Scillonian III has daily sailings from Penzance, Cornwall to St Mary's.

The trip provides a two and a half hour mini-cruise to Scilly taking in the Cornish Coast taking in sites such as Minack theatre, Lamorna Cove, Tater Dhu Lighthouse and Land's End.

www.scillonian.co.uk

By air

Fixed wing flights to Scilly leave from Southampton, Bristol, Exeter, Newquay and Land's End.

www.ios-travel.co.uk

The 20-minute helicopter service, operated by British International Helicopters flies from Penzance to St. Mary's and Tresco.

www.islesofscillyhelicopter.com

By rail to Penzance

First Great Western operates regular rail services from London Paddington through Devon and Cornwall to Penzance including it's overnight Rivera Sleeper service.

A good, and really quite romantic, way to get down into Cornwall

www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

Staying on Scilly



Most visitors will stay on St Mary's, which has the highest concentration of accommodation and amenities.

Of the other inhabited islands, Tresco is run as a timeshare resort, and Bryher and St Martin's each has a hotel.

There are also campsites, B&B's and self-catering available on the islands.

www.simplyscilly.co.uk/site/stay-on-scilly

Enjoying a pint of local in the local

When it comes to beer the locals on Scilly are likely to be enjoying a pint or two of *The Ales of Scilly*, brewed by Mark Prager.



Mark has been brewing since, aged 13, he and a friend were given a school project to make things from natural products. The two chose yeast, baked one loaf and brewed several gallons of surprisingly good beer.

Mark's first career was teaching, and this brought him to Scilly in the 1970s. But beer making remained a passionate pastime and, in 2001, he quit academia to see if the hobby could be turned into a business.

Mark remembers the first guy to buy a pint of the first brew (aptly named Maiden Voyage) and then a second. Nine years on and Mark is producing 250 gallons of his *Ales of Scilly* range each week for nine pubs across the islands.

The current range includes *Three sheets*, *Scuppered* and *Firebrand*, while other brews *have been* Old Bustard (for the autumn twitchers) and Asbo named by Mark's son.

Where to enjoy the Ales of Scilly



St Mary's : the Mermaid; Old Town Inn; Juliet's Garden Restaurant; Star Castle Hotel and the Scillonian Club

St Agnas : The Turks Head

St Martins : The Island Hotel and the Seven Stables Inn

Tresco : The New Inn

Top tip's people on Scilly



Hidden islets and coves

There are many hidden islets and coves on Scilly that are perfect for whiling away an afternoon.

One of my favourite spots for utter seclusion is the uninhabited island of St. Helens.

Take a charter boat, picnic, and swimwear then after beachcombing and paddling on the pretty pebbly beach climb to the top of the hill for a picnic.

The views are spectacular, and if you've got kids you can watch them hunting for crabs in the rockpools on the beach below.

Another must is Gig Racing - a traditional sport where crews of 6 row between the islands. The boats are 32ft long and made of elm, and date back to 1830 when they were used for pilotage and smuggling.

Join a passenger boat and cheer on the crews on either a Wednesday or Friday night.

Followed by a healthy knees up in the island pubs.

Sophie Hughes, Isles of Scilly TIC, Acting Manager

A blend of myth and reality

In the Scilly Isles, myth and reality seem to blend in a cocktail of romantic escape

Richard Wates, The Guardian

Everyone find's their way to Juliet's

If there is one place that epitomises the pleasure of a stay on Scilly its a visit to Juliet's Garden. Set on a hillside overlooking St Mary's bay, it offers a truly picture postcard backdrop to morning coffee, lunch or an evening meal.



Juliet and son Arran

But business nous and a passion for the project has turned Juliet's Restaurant into one of the meet and eat places on St Mary's. Julie has also found time to add six self-catering cottages nearby.

Not content with making her own business a success, Juliet is also Chairman of Island Tourism, the Isles of Scilly chamber of commerce. In this way Juliet is able to lend support to other tourist projects and to help in the overall marketing of Scilly as a tourist destination.

www.julietsgardenrestaurant.co.uk

It's always good

Tim Fortey and the Calyso is another well known combination on Scilly.



Tim, who came to Scilly from Gloucestershire 20 years ago (for a wedding) and stayed, runs daily boat trips aboard the 31 foot Calyso for parties of 12.

These go to and around the islands with Tom taking trips to the out of the way places, uninhabited islands.

When asking fellow guests at my hotel where they were going they replied "out with Tom".

When I asked where, I was told "wherever he wants to take us because it's always good."

An exotic isle

Arguably the most exotic place in all of the British Isles.

Martin Clunes

Tresco



I adore Tresco, it makes me feel I have returned to my childhood"

Tim Smit founder of the Eden Project

Never feel safer

It reminds me of all the good things, not only about England, but the world on. My family never feel safer.

Jude Law



Delights around every corner

There are fresh delights around every corner.

A deserted cove; a windy headland; a hedgerow speckled with wild flowers; a necklace of other islands shimmering in the distance

Max Davidson, The Telegraph
Just birdsong

The voice of Scilly



Radio Scilly 107fm was one of the first community radio stations in the UK and also lays claim to being the smallest in the world.

It certainly enjoys one of the most loyal followings with 20 voluntary show hosts, 80 regular contributors and many occasional providers of news and views.



But most of all Radio Scilly has won through because of an astonishing commitment by Keri Jones.

With a career running radio stations on the mainland, Kerry first set foot on Scilly in 1998 and was collared by a couple of with the idea of getting Scilly 'on air'.

Keri took up the baton, set up a pilot station, ran trial broadcasts, applied for a permanent licence and waited.

Radio Scilly was granted a licence to broadcast when the first wave of community stations were announced in 2007.

The station went live in September of that year and has been thriving since then by balancing very local news (think whose library books are overdue or the police suggesting residents help cut the crime stats by returning the bikes they have borrowed); daily what's and relevant commercials promoting local business and really rather good music.

While this parochial approach would not work in large urban areas it becomes relevant and highly compulsive listening on Scilly.

www.radioscilly.com

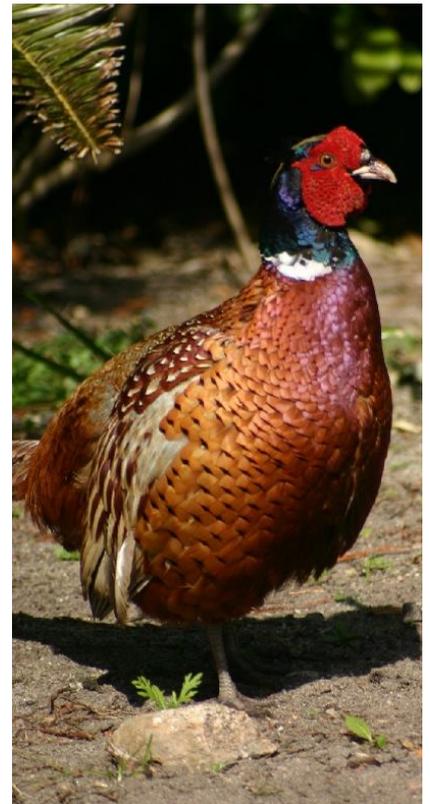
Old boneshaker is the best



The Scilly community bus service, or 'old boneshaker' as it is affectionately known, is St Mary's bus service.

The service runs daily from one end of the island to the other and back again

Run and driven by Steve, it is a 'thrill ride' in its own right.



These incredible islands are in a world of their own. No sirens, just birdsong. No traffic, just boats. A real haven.

Amanda Platell



An annual ritual

An annual ritual for me staying on Bryher is an afternoon picking wild blackberries by Dan Bennett's boatyard.

On the lower slopes of Samson Hill you have a great view across to Tresco and the traffic moving up and down the channel.

This year I watched the flotilla of boats celebrating the return of the gig Czar, its crew having rowed to the mainland and back on consecutive days.

Alun Armstrong (Actor)

A place to stay

Tregarthen's Hotel

Tregarthen's Hotel is one of the landmark hotels on St Mary's.



It was founded in 1848 by Captain Frank Tregarthen, who ran the steam packet 'Little Western' delivering mail, provisions and visitors between Penzance and the Isles of Scilly.

He began to bring visitors with him to the island of St Mary's to stay at his house, which became the first hotel on the Isles of Scilly.

The hotel overlooks St Mary's Harbour with views of Tresco, Bryher, Samson and St Martin's.

Tregarthen's has recently undergone a major upgrade.

www.tregarthens-hotel.co.uk

And other comments made ...



The Scillies offer sub-tropical seclusion – perfect for Famous Five –style family holidays

Here the land lies low, with shallow turquoise lagoons hiding around every corner. It's like a chunk of the Mediterranean has drifted to the UK and decided to stay.

When the islands appear they look extraordinary-sudden bursts of green, fringed with sand, constantly washed by the waves that roll on to the coastline.

The sky, lit by a slowly fading sun, is a flawless cerulean blue and there is a stillness, a calmness that is completely hypnotic.

Its strikes me that I have never been anywhere like the Isles of Scilly in my life. Unspoilt, utterly beautiful and unexpectedly wonderful. I can't wait to go back.

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www.allwaystraveller.com

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with an equally independent view of the world from the experts.

The International Travel Writers Alliance

www.itwalliance.com

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