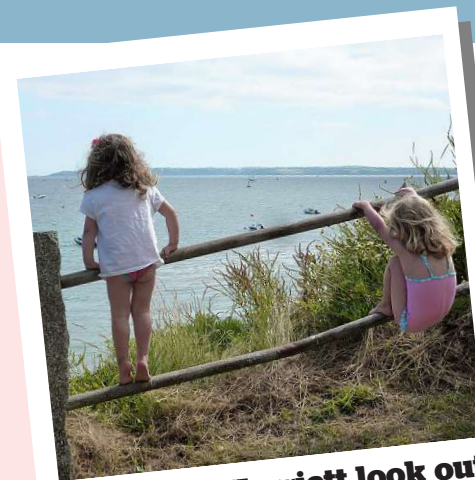




GOING AWAY

**Charles Summers with some of his work****Agapanthus****Harriett and Heidi at Princess Pavilion****Heidi and Harriett look out to the River Fal**

Cornish town has plenty to offer visitors

Tim Saunders and his family enjoy a break in St Mawes

Those hunting a subtropical climate will be pleased to hear that they do not have to endure long flights to Vietnam or Taiwan. Thanks to the Gulf Stream, Cornwall enjoys the very same conditions.

This means that spring comes early and autumn lingers longer, allowing for a rich variety of plants to thrive. There is over 1,500 hours of sunshine annually in the county.

No wonder it is such a popular tourist destination. In fact during our trip to St Mawes, which lies within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, we encounter visitors from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and America.

Once a thriving fishing port, the domain of true Cornish folk with their regional accents, it now has a high proportion of well maintained holiday homes. At the height of the tourist season the pubs are buzzing and it has a great atmosphere.

"We are literally the only area of greenbelt left at St Mawes," reveals Ned, the head gardener at Lamorran Gardens, the delightful garden window onto the sea. "Lamorran was bought by Robert and Maria Dudley-Cooke in 1982 and has grown to become four acres." It is a Mediterranean-style garden set on the south facing hillside overlooking the River Fal. There are 35 species of

seven days before her second daughter was born. "We house 75 per cent of the staff and when the sun comes out trade can double and it's not easy to recruit extra bar staff in St Mawes because it's so small."

Over the water is Falmouth and it takes 40 minutes to get there by car or just 20 minutes on the passenger ferry from St Mawes, by far the best way on a beautiful summer's day.

Ferries leave frequently and staff help passengers on and off.

Arriving at Falmouth we mooch about and visit Marin Gallery where owner Nick Gibbard recommends that we visit Princess Pavilion and Gyllyngdune Gardens. Here there are plenty of benches in which to sit and enjoy the splendid gardens. We are able to buy an Agapanthus and the informative gardener tells us that it is very hardy.

On another day we board the King Harry car ferry to make a quick crossing across the water to Trelissick, the National Trust property. There is a sensory garden and some nice walks including Hydrangea Walk where there are views out to the River Fal.

We visit Portscatho, where if you are not careful you can drive straight into the River Fal! Artist Charles Summers and his wife owned a bookshop there for many years and we can see the attraction. The couple have a romantic tale to tell. "We met at a restaurant in Cornwall where Charles worked," explains Diana. "He was earning money to buy his ticket back to Brazil." Needless to say that Charles never did leave the county and the couple have now been married for 43 years. Charles, who has been a professional artist for 40 years, has just sold a painting for £7,000 to an American collector.

Painting mostly figurative work including trees in the Minions, he is now turning his focus to abstract collages derived from nature.

We also visit Lanhydrock, the magnificent late Victorian country house with gardens and wooded estate in Bodmin, maintained by the National Trust. We really do love Cornwall and will return.

**Blue Seas bungalow****Harriett and Heidi at Lamorran Gardens**

With numerous hotels and restaurants there is much on offer in St Mawes

We stay at Blue Seas, a chalet bungalow from the Portscatho Holidays collection. The company is run by Andrew and Jane Knights who look after a selection of 85 such properties around the St Mawes area. Accommodation is available from £250 a week up to £4,000.

"We have owned the business for about a year," says Andrew. "I used to work in security and Jane is a chartered accountant, who was previously the director of finance and operations for a large girls' day and boarding school."

On the edge of the small town Blue Seas is set in its own grounds where the River Fal can be seen in the distance. It is a joy to just sit in the garden and savour the views of the yachts against the rolling hills of St Anthony's Headland as the sun shimmers on the sea and the distant lighthouse.

Harriett (4) and Heidi (2) enjoy playing hide and seek and running down the hills in the large garden.

Blue Seas is about 15 minutes walk from the town centre and the harbour, which claims to be the third largest natural harbour in the world.

palm trees. We all enjoy the many streams, bridges and water features. Harriett and Heidi particularly enjoy exploring together along the gravel paths and, after a quick bite to eat beside the Koi pool, collecting some stones. There are benches throughout and on a hot summer's day it is a joy to just sit and relax in the shade of the tall trees. Due to the location it escapes the frost and cold winter winds.

With numerous hotels and restaurants there is much on offer in St Mawes and a very warm welcome can be found at The Rising Sun. Landlords Sally and Alan Jones provide an enjoyable carvery accompanied by home grown vegetables on a Sunday.

"We have six acres of land and grow our own vegetables for both The Rising Sun and another pub we operate in Padstow," explains Sally. "We are in the second year of becoming self-sufficient and have erected a 95ft long polytunnel."

When the couple visited St Mawes eight years ago they felt that the town could really do with a proper pub. "And so that's what we set about creating," says Sally, who took it over

Trip details

For more information visit:
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www.risingsunstmawes.co.uk; www.lamorrangardens.co.uk;
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