

CORNWALL STAYS

The perfect luxury getaway destination is just a few miles west of Land's End, as OWEN JONES discovers on St Martin's in the Isles of Scilly

IS there a more romantic way to arrive at a beachside hotel than being dropped off by boat at a private jetty?

Airports and hotel transfers can create a world of unwelcome stress at the start of a holiday – but that's not how they do things on the Isles of Scilly.

So smooth is the operation at St Mary's airport that within minutes of our aircraft touching the tarmac we're in a minibus and on the way to the harbour. Moments later and we're aboard a boat, bathed in sunlight, gazing down through amazingly clear water as we head for the island of St Martin's.

Our destination is Karma St Martin's, the island's only hotel which reopened last year after a major refurbishment. It's now part of the global Karma Resorts group with sister hotels in equally beautiful and exotic parts of the world – including Bali, Fiji and the Bahamas.

The boat drops us at the jetty at the front of the hotel – a long, low building made from local stone and designed to look like a hamlet. Already this island – just 28 miles from Land's End – is beginning to feel like somewhere on the other side of the world. Even the plants have an exotic feel about them – colourful succulents looking like alien cacti in the dry stone walls.

The hotel welcome is an exercise in customer

care – a refreshing citrus cocktail appears while the friendly reception team talk through the hotel's facilities and offer to book spa treatments, dinner reservations and even snorkelling with seals adventures. Now the only thing to decide is whether to stay in – or go out...

STAYING IN

If St Martin's wasn't such a beautiful island you might be tempted to spend all your time in the hotel. There's certainly enough to do at Karma St Martin's to treat yourself to a day of luxury pampering.

The hotel spa offers a range of soothing treatments to make you feel as laid back and relaxed as the island itself. You can sink into a comforting cocktail in the hotel bar while leisurely watching the yachts and fishing boats in Tean Sound, the

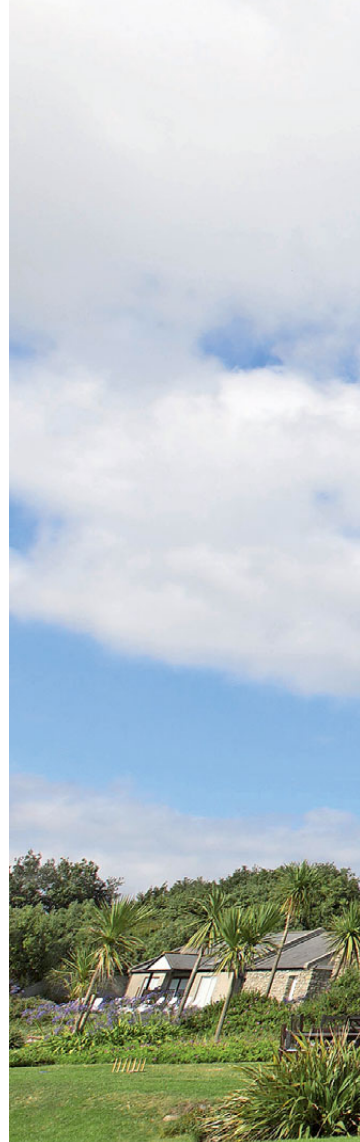
'The beautiful white sand beaches are utterly unspoiled and – when we were there in September – almost deserted.'



Get out on the water at Karma St Martin's



Ready for romance: the honeymoon suite at Karma St Martin's





Welcome to Karma St Martin's

stretch of water the separates St Martin's from neighbouring Tresco.

Dinner in the Cloudesley Shovell restaurant is sure to be memorable – fine dining with an emphasis on using fresh, local produce.

After dinner you can relax with a glass of wine and get nostalgic with the hotel's extensive collection of vinyl records from years gone by – remember the skill required to set the needle down at the start of the right track?

GOING OUT

St Martin's isn't very big – but that doesn't mean there's nothing to do. The beautiful white sand beaches are utterly unspoiled and – when we



above The hotel has a large collection of vinyl discs

below Looking across the water from Karma St Martin's

were there in September – almost deserted. Perfect for swimming, kayaking and stand up paddle boarding.

The island has few roads and it's rare to meet a car on them. A network of footpaths make it a great place for walking. In September feast on juicy hedgerow blackberries.

From the hotel take a couple of hours at a gentle pace exploring the coastal footpaths - past beaches where curious seals poke their heads out of the water to watch you - and on to the daymark, a 17th century red and white striped navigation aid that looks like a cartoon space rocket.

On the way back pop into the island's art gallery – a great place to pick up gifts – or enjoy tea and cake at the local bakery.

At low tide pick your way across a rocky causeway to White Island – just be sure to head back before the tide comes back in again...

And do climb the steps to the Seven Stones Inn to see if you agree with their claim to have the best pub view in the world.

However you choose to spend time at Karma St Martin's eventually the time will come to catch a boat home – and before the hotel disappears from view I bet you'll be calculating how soon you can return. ♦

karmaresorts.com
visitislesofscilly.com

