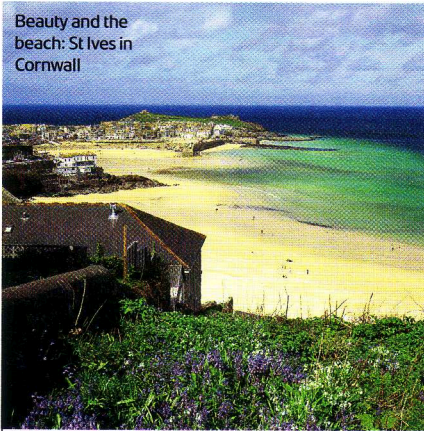


Beauty and the beach: St Ives in Cornwall



WHY GO TO ST IVES?

With the summer crowds just a memory, the town's beaches, refined dining and blossoming art scene will be all yours

Cornwall's famous shimmering light, reflected from the ocean that bounds it on three sides, makes St Ives a natural habitat for artists and, now, art lovers.

Eat at the beachfront Porthminster Café (tel: +44 (0)1736 795352; www.porthminstercafe.co.uk). Aussie chef Michael Smith's fusion seafood is the toast of Cornwall – which already has a plethora of fabulous restaurants. It's a visual feast, too, with abstract art and a lovely view across to Godrevy lighthouse.

Walk westwards along the precipitous coastal path to Zennor, where ancient legend has it that a handsome local once abandoned the church choir to live beneath the waves with a mermaid. The clifftop path weaves and wiggles maddeningly, so equip yourself with serious boots, a map, water and stop for a pint at the Tinnars Arms in Zennor (Tel: +44 (0)1736 796927).

Stay in the new suite at Primrose Valley Hotel, Porthminster Beach (Tel: +44 (0)1736 794939; www.primroseonline.co.uk), whose sustainable-tourism ethic means their supplies, from mackerel and honey to soap, come from Cornish tradespeople. The suite, from £145 including breakfast, has walnut floors, exposed brickwork and a massive, free-standing bath.

Fall in love with British art. There's so much of the stuff around in St Ives, it's a challenge not to. Among the scores of galleries to browse are Salthouse Gallery in Norway Square (Tel: +44 (0)1736 795003), and tiny Wills Lane Gallery in Wills Lane (Tel: +44 (0)1736 795723). In November at Tate St Ives (Tel: +44 (0)1736 796226; www.tate.org.uk/stives) see retrospectives of British figurative artist Roger Hilton and the ceramicist Janet Leach. Alternatively, get drawing yourself. At the St Ives School of Painting (Tel: +44 (0)1736 797180; www.stivesartschool.co.uk) at Porthmeor Studios, there are drop-in life-drawing classes for £6 on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Beginners are welcome! ■ **Sophie Denning**