

## A Weekend to Remember

The Anchorage is situated near St. David's – the smallest city in the UK. The Telegraph recently reported on what this city has to offer.

The Telegraph

**This Welsh outpost has plenty of history, as well as spectacular coastal scenery and wildlife on its doorstep, says Minty Clinch.**

The Atlantic grey seal looked comfortable on his ledge above the crashing sea. He lay at full stretch, head up, eyes bright, guarding the cove. His extended family lay heaped together on the shingle beach behind him as he watched us, a dozen tourists in a rigid inflatable circling Ramsey Island in stormy weather. Presumably he is used to this. He was indisputably lord of all he surveyed.

During the 90-minute Voyage of Adventure, we thudded along at 45 knots or bobbed about with the engines cut to close in on the wildlife. On RSPB-owned Ramsey Island, much of this is feathered. Cormorants and shags pose, spot fish and dive; colonies of guillemots and razorbills nest precariously on cliffs; a buzzard circles overhead.

We stopped for porpoise-spotting, potentially frustrating as people scream, "Look, look, over there," while you scan for fins that can so easily be wave tips. This time I was lucky: a quarter view, dorsal fin and grey slab side. Undeniably a large seafaring mammal.

St David's is Britain's smallest city: its 2,000 residents could fit easily into the cathedral that shelters in a hollow in the hills. Legend has it that Wales's patron saint was born near the town on March 1, 458. As is traditional, his life as a wandering holy man led to posthumous sainthood and a commemorative church, initially built of wood, circa 550. After the Norman Conquest, the church became a stone cathedral, with a bishop's palace next door, sumptuously extended in the 14th century by the worldly Bishop Henry de Gower.

Like most visitors, I marvelled briefly at Henry's baronial halls and private quarters equipped with cutting-edge latrines, before moving out to the countryside that is turning this corner of Pembrokeshire into a second-home zone for English southerners. It takes a determined weekender to drive for five hours, but those who like their property cheap and their beaches empty are increasingly

prepared to go the distance.

As I walked the Abereidly to Porthgain section of Pembrokeshire's 186-mile coastal path, it was easy to see why. I passed ruined Victorian slate works, but otherwise I had the spectacular cliffs to myself. Imagine northern Cornwall as the relatively remote surfer's paradise it was before it became Surrey in Shorts: that's how Pembrokeshire's westerly tip is now.

Porthgain is a hidden cove dominated by the Sloop Inn, opened in 1743 and an old haunt of smugglers. No doubt they quaffed Reverend James ale, seeking a reward for negotiating the treacherous harbour entrance - just as I did for walking the gale-swept heights. Seared asparagus and pan-fried scallops suggests that the Sloop is well aware of the latest invasion, as is the gastro competition, The Shed, 50 yards away in a converted boathouse. Fisherman Lee Clark sells live lobsters at £9 a pound from his garage: if you don't fancy plunging them into boiling water, his mother will do it for you, or dress you some crabs instead.

As is customary, the new frontier was pioneered by artists, notably London-born John Knapp-Fisher, whose distinctive canvases depict local scenes bathed in eerie light. Allegedly he sells them to Prince Charles, but the rest of the world is free to see them at his gallery, a rose-pink cottage in Croesgoch.

Meanwhile, at Trevaccoon, a Georgian mansion run as a smart b&b, potter Caroline Flynn organises classes for her guests. No sign of her as I snoop through her rooms, but she seemed unconcerned when she found me. ``It's that kind of place," she said. ``I was flying to Australia when I realised I'd left the keys in the ignition, but the car was still there three weeks later."

At Pembrokeshire Sheepdogs, my arrival was heralded by the border collies corralled behind the house. Pensioner Anna Lou Daybell moved to Tremynydd Fach Farm in 1997, attracted by the magic combination of sheep and dogs. She blasts around her cliff-top property on her quad bike, dog perched on the back: a brief command and he's down and running, using his expertise to shift 300 sheep.

Her residential sheepdog-training courses attract an international clientele, but she can't turn a domestic pet into a £2,000 trials dog. "The herding instinct has been bred out in favour of fancy looks," she explained. "Just as you can't train a bogtrotter to win the Derby, you can't train unregistered collies to win trials. A champion is a farm dog wearing his Saturday hat, but he must compete if you are to assess his value."

The next day, calmer conditions brought surfers out in Whitesand

Bay, where Atlantic rollers thump onto a pristine shore. Surfers have known about Whitesand for years, but recently they've been joined by kite surfers and sea kayakers. Another new favourite is coasteering, scrambling among waves and rocks, with cliff jumping for added adrenaline. How high? Whatever it takes. There's no shortage of cliffs.

St David's itself is in a charming mid-20th-century time warp, its guesthouses and tearooms designed for the annual August influx. Warpool Court Hotel, built as a cathedral choir school circa 1860, has superior black pudding, 3,000 heraldic wall tiles, hand-painted by turn-of-the-19th-century owners Ada Williams and her son, Basil, and a grandiose four-course dinner (£45, no alternatives), served in a formal dining room overlooking the sea.

Lawtons, newly opened at 16 Nun Street, is a more relaxed option: Stephen Lawton knows the value of simply prepared produce served in minimalist surroundings and allows guests to pour their own wine, definitely a no-go at Warpool Court. When St David's has more than one Lawtons, the invasion will be complete.

## **St David's**

### **Getting there**

For trains to Haverfordwest, 14 miles from St David's, contact National Rail Enquiries (0845 748 4950).

### **Staying there**

Warpool Court Hotel (01437 720300; [www.warpoolcourt hotel.com](http://www.warpoolcourt hotel.com)), doubles £105 per person per night, including breakfast and dinner. Trevaccoon (01348 831438; [www.trevaccoon.co.uk](http://www.trevaccoon.co.uk)) is a smart b&b with doubles from £35. Lawtons (01437 729220) has good local cooking. *St. David's is a 45 minute drive from The Anchorage.*

### **Further informtion**

Voyages of Discovery (01437 721911; [www.ramseyisland.co.uk](http://www.ramseyisland.co.uk)); Pembrokeshire Sheepdogs (01437 721677); TYF Adventures (01437 721611) for activities.

### **What it cost for one**

Train fare £29  
Two days' stay £267  
Boat trip £18  
Total £314

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