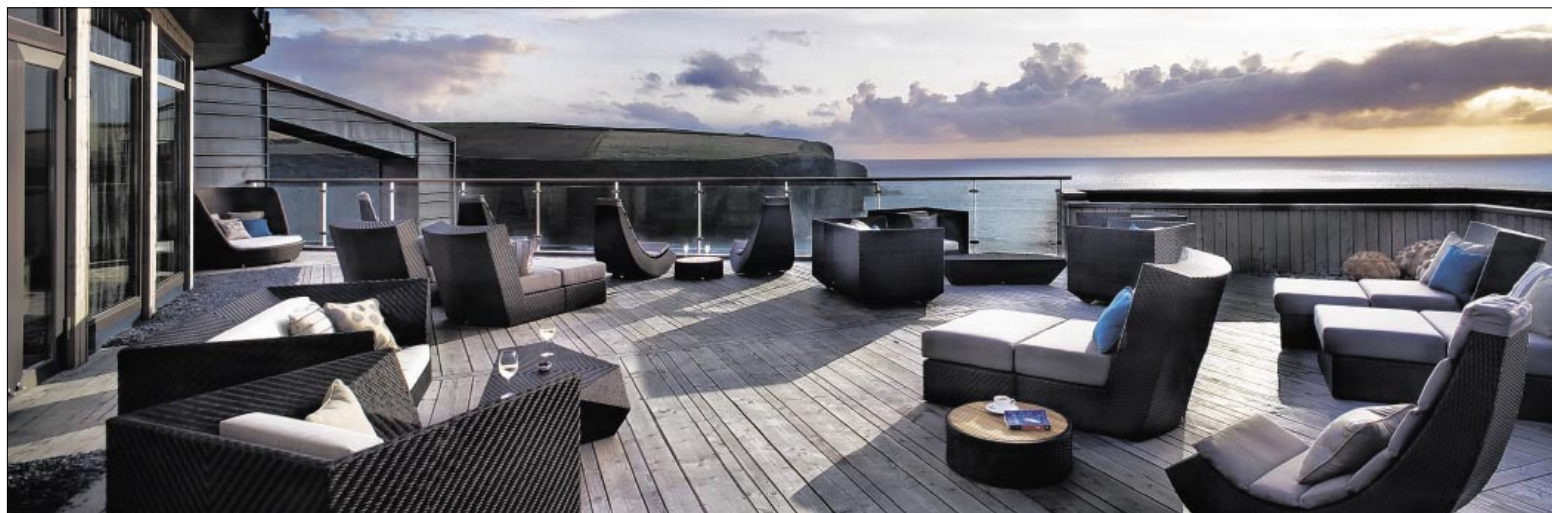


Travel



The Scarlet Hotel in Mawgan Porth, Cornwall

Beaches so good you wonder why anyone holidays abroad

by Danny Boyle

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THE narrow country lane was barely wide enough for one car and so winding there was no way of telling if we were about to have a head-on crash.

The drive to the tiny Cornish harbour village of Portloe is not for the faint-hearted, but I was just about managing – until I was confronted by Mr Vauxhall who seemed to want to defy the laws of physics by forcing his way through a gap the size of a postage stamp.

Fortunately, I was driving a bigger car and Mr Vauxhall backed off, hurling something about the Highway Code in my direction.

After a hellish journey, Portloe was the perfect place to relax. There's little else to do in this picturesque cove, which offers the escape of having no mobile signal.

We stayed at The Lugger, right on the harbour.

Surrounded by headlands forming part of the Cornish Coastal Footpath on the Roseland Peninsula, the hotel is just steps away from some dramatic cliff-top walks.

The 17th century inn is reputed to have been the haunt of local smugglers, with one of its landlords – Black Dunstan – hanged in the 1890s.

Its liquor licence was withdrawn and the inn ceased trading.

The Lugger, which thankfully has a licence again after reopening as a hotel in 1950, is now a destination for famous faces.

Prime Minister David Cameron stayed last year, Morrissey celebrated his birthday there a few years ago and other famous guests include Dawn French, Catherine Tate and Will Young.

The restaurant is certainly up to serving star names, with sea views to die for and food to match.

Attentive and knowledgeable staff



The Lugger Hotel, in Portloe, Cornwall



Porthcurno beach in Cornwall

talk guests through the menu, which has an emphasis on locally-sourced produce.

The high level of service extends to the rooms, where we found hot chocolate and the next day's weather forecast when we returned from dinner.

The weather is one thing you cannot guarantee on a British holiday, but Cornwall always manages to feel slightly balmy than the rest of the country.

Even if it does rain, the spectacular Eden Project and the Lost Gardens

of Heligan are nearby.

But when the sun shines on Cornwall, there's nothing better than wondering among fishermen in a busy harbour, ordering a cream team in a tranquil village or soaking up the culture in St Ives.

Cornwall has more sandy beaches and rugged coastline than almost anywhere else in Britain.

When you visit the magnificent golden beaches, such as Porthcurno, you'll wonder why anyone holidays abroad.

Surfing is best on the north coast

Factfile

■ Rooms at The Lugger Hotel start from £100, based on two people sharing, including breakfast. Phone 01872 501322 or visit www.luggerhotel.com.

■ Rooms at The Scarlet start from £190 per room, based on two people sharing, including breakfast. Phone 01637 861800 or visit www.scarlethotel.co.uk

on a series of beaches between Bude and Newquay. Among them is Mawgan Porth, the home of luxurious eco-hotel The Scarlet.

Scarlet by name, green by nature – this is one of Britain's few truly environmentally-friendly hotels.

This airy, multi-level building overlooking the bay has solar panels to heat the indoor pool, a biomass boiler fuelled by local wood chippings, as well as grass roofs, reed-bed filtration and grey-water recycling.

An adults-only retreat, The Scarlet is the ultimate indulgence. Despite wanting to explore the area, we just couldn't tear ourselves away.

Relaxing diversions include log-fired hot tubs overlooking the beach, a natural reed-bed swimming pool and a calming spa, which has a deep relaxation space with hanging canvas pods that are far too easy to fall asleep in.

After a hard day's relaxation, the sophisticated restaurant feels like you've been transported to a city – until you look out of the window.

It's the perfect place to watch the sunset while enjoying delicious local food.

I don't think I've ever woken up to a better view than at The Scarlet – the sliding balcony doors at the end of our bed had spectacular views.

I can't wait for my return to Cornwall, but next time I might let someone else do the driving.

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