



DOGGIE PARADISE



Escape to the beautiful St Martin's on the Isles of Scilly, the perfect destination for you and your pooch.

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Glittering white beaches seem to leave tiny pieces of silver and little diamonds shimmering on your toes and make for wonderful digging for your four-legged friend. Turquoise seas with plenty of space to run will please any dog, whether it's a full-on swimmer, shallows galloper or timid paddler. The Isles of Scilly are an uncrowded and unspoilt archipelago with five inhabited islands and about 140 small rocky islets. The five main islands each have their own thriving small communities of farmers and fishermen (and women), artists, gardeners and food producers. There are plenty of small studios and galleries to visit and most will have a bowl of water outside for your dog, with honesty boxes to buy local produce and artefacts. You can take your dog on the boats that regularly journey between the islands – it's part of the joy of exploring these glorious islands – locals and visitors

rub shoulders and look out for unusual birds, seals and dolphins or just exchange the latest gossip.

This year we took our loveable cocker spaniel, Leven, to stay at the luxurious Karma St Martin's hotel with its stunning sea views, helpful friendly staff and fabulous food; where the beautifully landscaped gardens lead to a beach of powder white sand, perfect for owners and their dogs. The island is tranquil and absolutely gorgeous. Arrival on the jetty saw a welcome by three of the team, who efficiently unloaded our luggage into the small van and drove it the 50 yards to the front door! The staff are charming – it felt as though we floated through the reception area to a soft brown leather armchair, welcome-cocktail and a personal concierge's guide to the hotel, dinner, breakfast, and the island. I didn't hear a word as we sat gazing at the amazing view.



Karma St Martin's Hotel



Our room was immaculate, with modern Asian influences (Karma Group's business started in Bali and India and is spreading to Europe with plans of luxury resorts to come). With very few cars on the island, St Martin's really is a world away from the mainland – a true doggie idyll to escape it all – where Bread and Cheese Cove, Lawrence's Bay, Great Bay, Little Bay and Par Beach all jostle for the honour of best beach in the UK. And, you can't visit the island without making the trek to the iconic daymark erected north east of St Martin's in 1683 by Thomas Ekins – it's an awe-inspiring walk, with 360-degree views across Chapel Down.

No coastal walk is complete without a pit stop in a proper traditional pub. Thankfully, we were lucky enough to stumble upon the Seven Stones Inn, a lovely stone building offering a good pint and quite possibly the best view from a pub garden anywhere in the UK – even Lev appreciated it! It was also a delight to meet Fay Page in her studio and workshop. Fay makes amazing silver charms and jewellery all inspired by the islands – worth a visit just to hear the tale of the whale on the beach and the subsequent charm she produced.



Image: © Visit Isles of Scilly

On our travels, we also passed Churchtown Farm, home to Scilly Flowers – an inspiring industry now sending 90,000 bunches of flowers to Cornwall, the UK and beyond. Call in to meet the friendly team and send a ‘wish you were here’ gift home (they will wish they were there when they see your photos!). Another favourite was Dible and Grub on Porthcressa beach, St Mary’s. Here we savoured the last taste of paradise sat with a glass of sauvignon blanc or pinot grigio, a salad, wrap or sandwich (I love the lamb souvlaki in pitta), watching the sea and wishing we could stay forever.

Of course, after each day exploring, you want nothing

more than to retreat to the perfect sanctuary, and Karma St Martin’s exceeded every expectation. The hotel’s restaurant is the perfect spot to indulge in some seriously delicious food whilst watching the sun go down over Tean, one of the uninhabited islands between St Martin’s and Tresco. And, if you’re here for some rest and recuperation, then a treatment or two in the luxury spa will do just the trick. So there you are: plenty of fresh air, stunning scenery, gorgeous white sandy beaches, lots of walking, fabulous local food, peace and quiet... and you can take your favourite four-legged friend with you. What more could you need?



GETTING THERE

Taking the boat across with your dog becomes a part of the holiday and there are often dolphins, sunfish, occasional whales and wonderful sea birds to be seen. Or the little plane is an excellent choice and gives you fantastic views over Land’s End before catching your first glimpse of the islands and the wonderful colours of the seas around them. Your dog can fly in a special dog crate. For more information www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk



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