

Slow Travel Family Breaks

Perfect escapes in Britain's special places Jane Anderson and Holly Tuppen

A whole host of wonderful experiences for all ages across the UK that focus on the local, the authentic, the sustainable, the educational and the great fun. Slow Travel Family Breaks is also a little black book of the most authentic, interesting and child-friendly places to stay and eat.

Two seasoned family travellers and travel writers present their hand-picked selection of places to go, things to see and activities to do across the country, from wildlife and star-gazing on The Scilly Isles, Guernsey and Sark to foraging and wild swimming in the Cairngorms.



THE ISLES OF SCILLY

TOP FAMILY EXPERIENCE: SNORKELLING WITH SEALS

St Martin's: ☎ scillysealsnorkelling.com; age: 8+ (12+ during pandemic); intrepid level: XX; booking essential

Anna Browne has been running seal snorkelling trips for over 20 years and has a degree in Zoology, is a BSAC Advanced Instructor and a Marine Mammal Medic with the British Divers Marine Life Rescue. She explains why everyone should swim with wild seals.

"Scilly has a nationally important colony of seals which is part of the reason the islands are designated a Special Area of Conservation. For children who love wildlife and are confident in open water, a seal snorkelling trip off St. Martin's will be a memorable experience, allowing them to get up close to playful Atlantic grey seals (their scientific name is *Halichoerus grypus*, translated as 'hook-nosed sea pig'). These friendly souls could be older than the children's parents, as they live up to 45 years!

"We operate out of half of a rustic hut on the beach, and once we're all kitted up, we jump in the rig and whizz out to the Eastern Isles — generally, Manx (2.81ha) and Great Ganilly (13.83ha). The water is always cold; it's the Atlantic all! Seals are wild animals and we can't guarantee what level of interaction going to get, but they are generally inquisitive. If they are in the mood they will come up behind you, nibble your fin as they use their mouths to feel it and swim round in the water, often for you. Seals are beautiful when you're backing on the rocks, but when under, you realise how graceful they are, an aqua-dabber. They age so quick a look at 'you with these big, big brow. You know you're looking into the so intelligent animal.

"As well as the seals, you get to Eastern Isles, loads of kelp, and the oc



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The go-slow archipelago that feels like you've journeyed halfway around the world.

BEST FOR AGES: XX-XX (but really multi-generational)
TIME: a weekend to a week
KEY ACTIVITIES: wildlife walk, seal snorkelling, star gazing
INTREPID LEVEL: XX

Every single time my children and I have stepped foot on the Scillies, we've felt its magic envelop us. It's the feeling you get when you've left the everyday behind and found yourself in a place that forces you to gaze at the sea and the sky and the way things are done. Typically this happens overseas, and yet this archipelago is part of Cornwall, just 28 miles off the mainland, but somehow other. A UK Neverland which you can't quite place in the modern world.

The first time we touched down on the main island of St Mary's in our tiny Noddy plane (in reality, the Isles of Scilly Skybus where kids can actually talk to the pilot and stare in awe at his unfathomable bank of controls), as far as my two tots were concerned, and possibly into their early teens, we could easily have landed on a Caribbean isle or a Maldivian atoll. These five inhabited islands and around 135 uninhabited isles and craggy outposts have their own microclimate, flora and fauna, not to mention mood. This is the kind of place where generations of families return year-on-year, and holidays turn into family folklore.

If you're coming from London or further afield, by the time you've taken the scenic coastal train to Penzance, overnighted in this delightful Cornish fishing town with a dip in the UK's first geothermal heated lido, and caught the *Scillonian III* ferry or the plane from Exeter, Newquay or Land's End (at the mercy of the sea fogs), and journeyed on to your chosen island, you might as well have travelled long-haul. These islands

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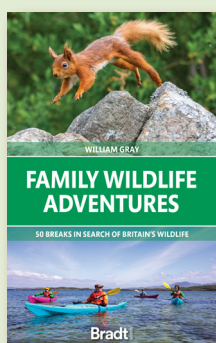


ABOUT THE AUTHORS

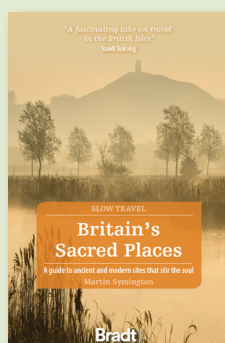
Jane Anderson is editor of *Family Traveller* magazine and Travel Editor at *Prima*. Holly Tuppen contributes regularly to *Family Traveller* as well as the *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and *Conde Nast Traveller*



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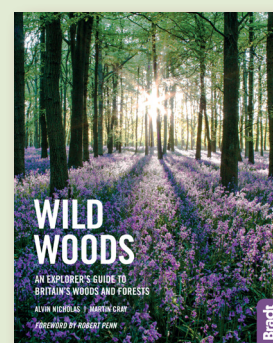
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