

Travel

The relaxing 'secret' hotel which overlooks an

Helen Pearse visits Cornwall and discovers one of the top 'secret' hotels in the world...

The cat is out of the bag now. The Mount Haven Hotel and Restaurant in Marazion, Cornwall, has been named as one of the top nine secret hotels in the world by the travel website www.budgettravel.com.

I suspect it may not remain a secret for much longer as it provides a brilliant break from all the hustle and bustle.

It may only be an hour and 40 minutes drive from my home in Plymouth, but Marazion and its surrounding area seemed a different world away.

Situated just 12 miles from Land's End, set on the shores of beautiful Mounts Bay, Marazion is a hot favourite with tourists visiting West Cornwall, and you can see why.

Its clean, sandy beaches, with stunning views toward the Lizard Peninsula, provide an ideal spot for seaside lovers, whether they want a romantic walk at sunset, a swim, or a little more action – Marazion is also a popular destination for windsurfing, kitesurfing and sailing.

The town is renowned for being the gateway to St Michael's Mount, said to be the jewel in Cornwall's crown, but it is also an ideal spot from which to explore West Cornwall, with Land's End, St Ives, Penzance and Sennen.

The Mount Haven is a family-run hotel with a stunning view of St Mich-

'A two-hour massage by Katie is not for the faint-hearted as she pummels you from head to toe'

ael's Mount from the rooms. A trip to the mount is obviously high on the agenda.

At low tide you can walk across the sand to it, or use the boat. For centuries, it has belonged to the St Levan and St Aubyn families. Lord St Levan retired a couple of years ago when his wife died and now lives on the mainland, but his nephew, James St Aubyn now lives on the Mount with his wife and children. The house, chapel and gardens are well worth a visit, but not on a Saturday when it is closed to the public.

The Minack Theatre is another must. Whether you want to see a performance or just have a quick tour around the open air theatre and visitors centre.

We parked at Porthcurno beach late afternoon, and just to see the scenery was a treat. The sea was tempting, but the coastal path and the views it offered were even more so. The steep climb up was worth it, and it didn't stop just at the Minack. We decided to carry on around the coast to the next bay, and what a treat that was. As the sun was setting, we were the only ones on the deserted sands. It was perfect for a paddle and a romantic walk along the shore as the sun slid down behind the striking coastline.

With Marazion so close to Land's End, we decided to head in that direction and Sennen Cove. I'd heard great things about the place from friends but had never been there, and would now recommend it to anyone.



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The sea was full of surfers whilst the beach was attracting dozens of people to the shoreline. Whether they were walkers hiking around the coastal path, couples dog walking, or families paddling in the waves, everyone was making the most of the late September sunshine and the chance to enjoy such a beautiful place.

The Mount Haven Hotel is owned by Mike Trevillion and his wife Orange. They run it with a great team of staff most of whom have been with them for a long time.

I've never experienced such good service in any hotel, from the helpful and informative reception staff, to the attentive and polite restaurant team. We even sat at the bar after our

meal chatting to the staff, learning more about the area and taking in their recommendations. It was the staff that definitely set this place apart from elsewhere.

The original hotel building dates back to the 1940s when it was the coach house for two Victorian villas in front of it. It has been run as a hotel since the 1920s and the Trevillions took it over in 2001.

The hotel is homely and enticing, you're greeted by the smell of incense, fresh flower arrangements, and chic and contemporary decor – an inspired fusion of Eastern culture and Western comfort. There are also tapestries from Jaipur, caskets from Bhutan and figurines from Nepal, Bali and India displayed throughout the hotel's public areas.

Our room, furnished with sumptuous fabrics and exotic artwork,

overlooked the bay, and the loungers on the balcony proved to be a relaxing way to chill out with a glass of wine whilst taking in the view.

The highlight of the weekend was the hotel's restaurant. It blew us away and definitely deserved its two AA rosettes. The food is all locally sourced and they have the best fish delivered from Newlyn daily.

We couldn't rave about it enough and have already insisted many of our friends try it. It was also the ideal place to sample a Sunday afternoon cream tea on the terrace.

The Mount Haven also boasts its own Healing Room. Therapist Katie Trenary treated me to a two-hour deep tissue massage, not for the faint-hearted as Katie pummels every inch of you from head to toe.

But the feeling afterwards was amazing.

And hotel guests don't need to feel guilty about indulging themselves on treatments.

The Mount Haven gives all their profits from the Healing Room to their adopted school and orphanage in India, where Orange used to see these children begging on the streets. The hotel also supports medical camps to tribal villages and a colony of Tibetan monks in the north of Karnataka in India.

The couple say they are totally in love with the West Cornwall and you can see why. Whether it is the beaches, the beautiful bays, moors, walks, gardens and art galleries there is something for everyone.

And if you do fancy making the short trip down to Cornwall, the Mount Haven is most definitely the place to stay. It's not a secret any more.

iconic Cornish landmark



The stylish interior of the hotel, with its view over St Michael's Mount, top. Looking back at Marazion from the mount itself, above. The hotel entrance, centre far left. And kitesurfing, left – one of the many watersports the area is known for

THE FACTS

Helen Pearse stayed in the Mount Haven Hotel in Marazion. For more information, log on to www.mounthaven.co.uk, e-mail the hotel at reception@mounthaven.co.uk or call 01736 710249.



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