

THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

FALMOUTH & THE HELFORD

The route: Penryn, Helford River, St Mawes, Mylor, upper Fal, Truro River

The glorious Fal River has fingers of sheltered water that stretch in all directions. You could spend a fortnight here without ever going to sea, exploring the creeks and villages around this grand estuary. At the river's mouth, Falmouth is a fine old town on many levels, steeped in the history of its heyday as a packet port. Across the Penryn River, Flushing is a quietly prosperous quarter where merchants and ships' captains once built comfortable villas.

Start your perfect weekend on Friday evening at friendly Falmouth Marina, near the head of Penryn River. When you're ready for a good dinner, stroll downstream to the Greenbank Hotel, for dinner and waterside views towards Flushing quay.

SATURDAY MORNING

On still mornings, the river perfectly mirrors its rural surroundings and you won't be in any rush to leave. When you do come out past Little Falmouth boatyard and Flushing village, the open reaches of Falmouth harbour are a spectacular sight. To starboard the colourful town stacks up behind jutting piers and meandering quays. Ahead are the dock cranes and jetties.

When you emerge into Carrick Roads, the glittering sea beckons beyond St Anthony Head lighthouse and a 16th Century castle on Pendennis Point. This stretch of water has been the departure point for countless ships bound for the Atlantic, but on this lazy weekend simply cream across Falmouth Bay for three miles to the Helford River, whose shores have changed little in a century.

From a visitors' buoy in The Pool, take the dinghy to one of the river's famous pubs: on the north bank, the Ferryboat Inn has superb seafood, including juicy oysters; on the south is that salty cruising retreat, the Shipwright's Arms.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

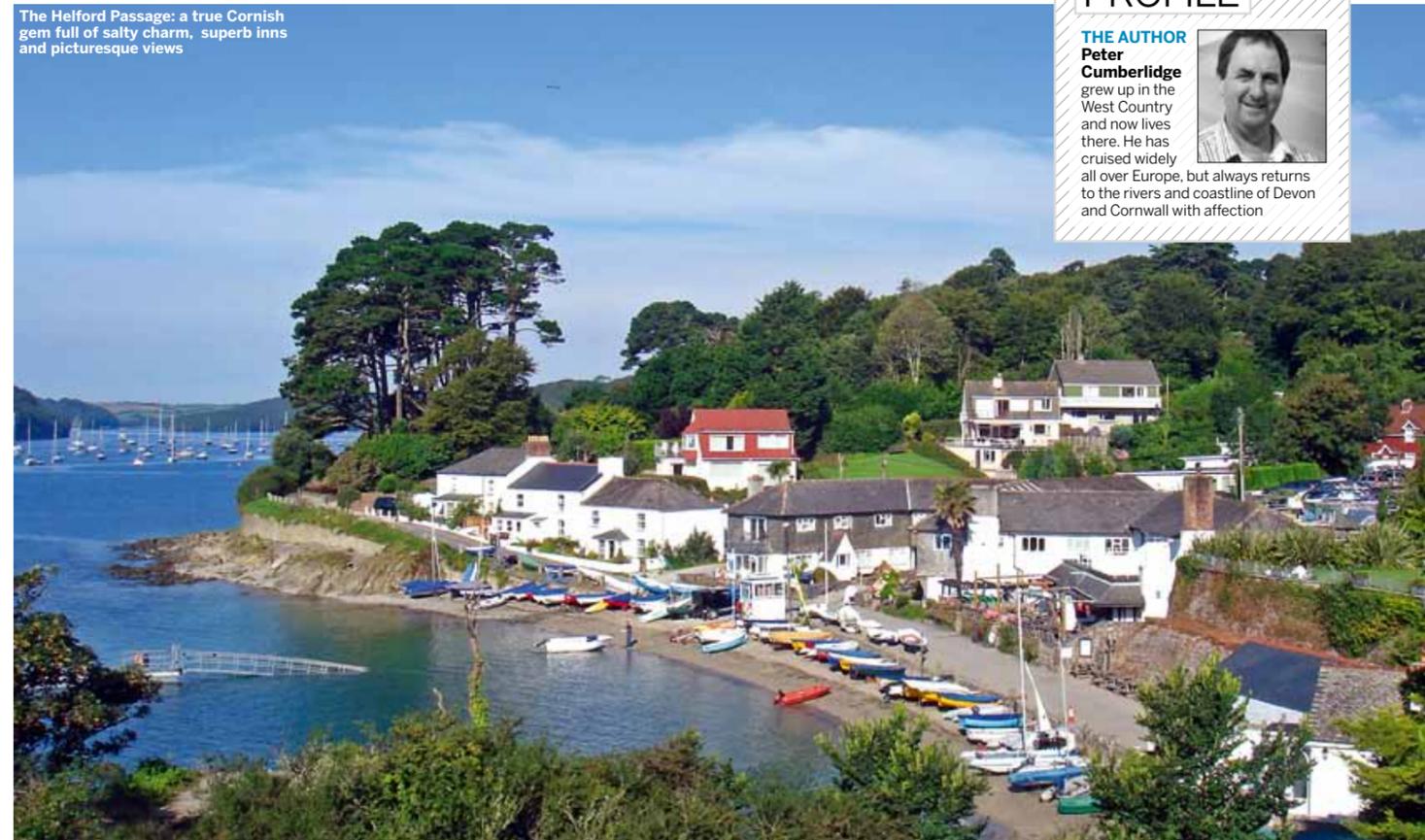
After lunch, just chill out and watch boats in The Pool. A ferry launch shuttles across the river, maintaining the history of this ancient crossing. In the late afternoon, head back to the Fal and turn east into St Mawes harbour, with its very English waterfront. There are moorings here, but before picking one up nudge up the Percuil River a little if the tide allows, just for a look. Oyster beds thrive in this sleepy tributary, one of the Fal's most secret places.

PROFILE

THE AUTHOR
Peter Cumberlidge grew up in the West Country and now lives there. He has cruised widely all over Europe, but always returns to the rivers and coastline of Devon and Cornwall with affection



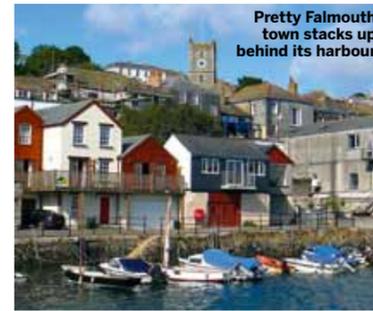
The Helford Passage: a true Cornish gem full of salty charm, superb inns and picturesque views



1 SATURDAY MORNING



Deep water and moorings galore at Falmouth Marina



Pretty Falmouth town stacks up behind its harbour



Sailing dinghies race in Carrick Roads

2 SATURDAY LUNCH



The wooded banks of Helford River have a timeless beauty

The glittering sea beckons beyond St Anthony Head, but on this lazy weekend simply cream across to Helford River, whose shores remain unchanged

3 SATURDAY AFTERNOON



A castle guards the approach to St Mawes



Percuil River is little visited but lovely



Juicy oysters are the area's foodie treat



The distinctly English seafront of St Mawes



4 SATURDAY EVENING

Mylor Yacht Harbour has idyllic views and pubs on the doorstep

**FAVOURITE MARINAS**

Falmouth Marina, Penryn
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 316620, VHF Ch 80)
Port Pendennis Marina
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 211211, VHF Ch 80)
Mylor Yacht Harbour
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 372121, VHF Ch 80)

HANDY FUEL BERTHS

Falmouth Marina has diesel at pontoon 'J' and Falmouth Visitors Yacht Haven has diesel and petrol alongside (call on VHF Ch 12). Diesel and petrol at Mylor Yacht Harbour is alongside the visitors' breakwater.

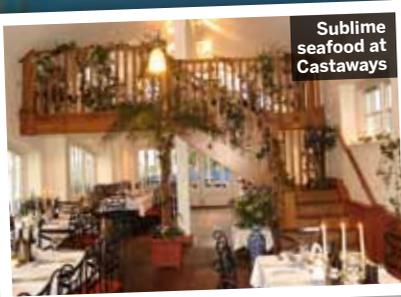
FAVOURITE EATERIES

Falmouth: Greenbank Hotel
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 312440)
Rick Stein's Fish and Chips
(Tel: +44 (0)1841 532700)
Helford River: Ferryboat Inn
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 250625)
Shipwrights Arms
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 231235)
Mylor: Castaways
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 377710)
Truro River, Malpas: Heron Inn
(Tel: +44 (0)1872 272773)
Restronguet Creek: Pandora Inn
(Tel: +44 (0)1326 372678)

NAVIGATION NOTES

Falmouth has deep water and is easy to navigate. The Fal and Truro rivers are well buoyed and shallow areas can be crossed near high water. Penryn River is navigable at almost any tide up to Falmouth Marina. Above Greenbank, a drying shoal extends from the south shore, so leave five red buoys to port heading upstream. Enter Helford River by leaving August Rock green buoy to starboard. Larger boats should anchor in Durgan Bay, to starboard, but those under 15m can pick up a visitors' buoy in The Pool opposite Helford Passage.

Sublime seafood at Castaways

**5 SUNDAY MORNING**

Peaceful hideaway St Just Creek

Smugglers Cottage is ideal for a lazy lunch



A chain ferry crosses King Harry Passage

Coming out of St Mawes head north through Carrick Roads, but near St Just red buoy curve west towards Mylor Yacht Harbour, a restful marina north of Penarrow Point.

SATURDAY EVENING

Mylor is an idyllic place to spend a summer evening, especially if the tide is high and you are able take the dinghy a mile up Mylor Creek for a taste of real secluded Cornwall. To starboard you pass an overgrown quarry, to port some enviable houses in rambling grounds far from the 21st Century.

Near the head of the inlet is Cockwells' boatyard in Mylor Creek. As well as building traditional yachts, Cockwells produce stylish launches and superyacht tenders. Landing at Mylor Bridge, it's a short stroll to the Lemon Arms, a little-known but charming pub that has St Austell ales and succulent chargrilled steaks.

If you prefer to relax on board with a sundowner, you can eat well later on Mylor waterfront. Castaways wine bar is the place to continue sharpening your appetite before moving to their seafood restaurant in an atrium overlooking the harbour. Cornish scallops are the perfect starter, then look for a fillet of brill if they have it, a fleshy flatfish like turbot that's delicious with a lemony sauce *vierge*.

SUNDAY MORNING

There's no such thing as a rush on Sundays in Mylor Creek. The water is magically still until the sun lifts over St Just village on the far side of the estuary. Then crews slowly come to life and there is a general drift across to Castaways for breakfast and coffee – a leisurely full English here is the business.

When you are ready for action, head across to St Just, where you can usually find a mooring off the creek for a while. This peaceful hideaway is a timewarp even by Cornish standards, its church looking down from magnificent sub-tropical gardens. Pasco's Boatyard is nearly two centuries old.

In the late morning follow the channel up the Fal. The river is wide at first but narrows off Turnaware Point as you enter one of the most scenic sections. King Harry Passage has a famous chain ferry that's still going strong and Trellisick House graces the west shore. Above the ferry you pass huge laid-up ships waiting for trade to improve. At the head of this reach, moor alongside Smugglers Cottage for lunch, a delightful café with riverside terraces.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

It's time to explore the upper reaches after lunch – you can get to Malpas Point visitors' pontoon at any tide. At Malpas the Truro River forks to port and two hours before high water boats of modest draught can follow the winding trail of buoys and beacons to the attractive market town of Truro.

Returning downstream in the late afternoon, you may be able to find a mooring in Restronguet Creek and land for a nutty pint of Bass at the Pandora Inn, a 13th Century thatched pub with low beamed ceilings. From Restronguet back to Falmouth is about five miles, a picturesque finale to a cracking weekend. **MBY**

Next Month: Milford Haven.

DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND? If you'd like to show fellow **MBY** readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters, drop an email to hugo_andreae@ipcmedia.com. We pay for successful submissions!

6 SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Snug Pandora Inn at Restronguet Creek

