

The Cornish fishing village became popular with painters – but there's far more to it than red ochre says Peter Hardy

# You'll be converted by beautiful St Ives

## SEASIDE CLASSICS

**S**CULPTOR Barbara Hepworth made her home here, and Turner and Whistler were seasonal visitors. But you don't have to be an artist, famous or otherwise, to be entranced by St Ives.

It is the unusual purity of the northern light that first strikes you. This explains how an ancient pilchard-fishing port near the Atlantic tip of Cornwall's coastline had such a decisive impact on the development of British painting in the 20th century.

Art galleries abound in the narrow cobbled streets which fringe the harbour and the sands of Porthminster and Porthmeor beaches. The most famous of these, the Tate St Ives, has transformed the town's economy by extending the tourist season from four months to all the year round since it was built ten years ago.

Stand on either beach by night and you can feast your eyes on a sight that is becoming all too obscured across vast tracts of light-polluted Britain – the stars.

### HOW TO GET THERE

**BY CAR:** 308 miles from London, 191 miles from Bristol, 272 miles from Birmingham. Parking is limited – leave your car at Lelant Saltings and complete the journey by train or bus.

**BY TRAIN:** Paddington-St Ives 5hr 13 minutes, change at St Erth, Supersaver return £59.

**BY AIR:** Stansted-Newquay with Ryanair from £16.99 one-way, Gatwick-Newquay with British Airways from £53 one-way. Newquay-St Ives 35 miles by bus, rail or taxi.

### WHERE TO STAY

**GOLD:** Blue Hayes (01736 797129) stands out in vivid relief from the otherwise bland canvas of hotel accommodation. The house, on the coastal path at the approach to the town, was recently reopened, after a two-year makeover, with

five stylish suites. No children under ten. £45-75 per person per night with breakfast.

**SILVER:** Pedn-Olva (01736 796-222). Overlooking the harbour this was once the fishing fleet's lookout for the shoals of pilchard and mackerel from which the town made its living. Pedn-Olva is a comfortable family hotel with 30 rooms, all with sea views. £55-68 per person with breakfast. £62-85 per person with dinner.

**BRONZE:** Primrose Valley Hotel (01736 794939) is a friendly family hotel in a quiet position, just back from Porthminster Beach. It was bought in 2001 by two couples, who have built a sun terrace with magnificent Atlantic views and are refurbishing rooms.



Something for everyone: For artists the town is a wonderful retreat but visitors enjoy St Ives' great beaches