

## Paddling with Purpose in Paradise

After a pandemic delay, our annual Kayak Challenge took place for its seventh year in September. Among the all women challengers – a first – was Beth Richardson and her friend Giselle. Here she recalls her highlights of this three-day adventure

The sea had become my escape during the lockdowns. Winter dog walks along the beach or summer days with friends in or on the water became my family's highlights of 2020.

So, the Marine Conservation Society's Isles of Scilly Kayak Challenge ticked a lot of boxes for me – positive action and outdoor adventure for a fantastic cause in a "bucket list" destination. Come September, one of my oldest friends and I were sat in a Penzance pub meeting our fellow volunteers – a supergroup of seven like-minded women!

After a three-hour ferry trip from the Cornish mainland, we were stepping off into another world: white, sandy beaches in every direction and the sea a tropical shade of blue. Nick, Pa and Mark were our guides for the week and a campsite on St Martin's, the northernmost populated island of the Scillies, was our base. Tents pitched and kitted out in kayaking gear, we headed straight out for a leisurely paddle around the island of Tean.



Part of the Challenge was to take part in the Great British Beach Clean. We combed the beaches for litter at every lunch stop and leg stretch. We didn't find a great deal to begin with, but as we ventured further afield, to the outer lying islands, we came across rubbish and discarded fishing gear that had been carried ashore by the Atlantic currents. One plastic bottle was from Costa Rica! We became all too aware of the challenges island communities face trying to control and remove waste. We left inspired, wanting to do more.

The peace and tranquility of the Scillies was a world away from post-pandemic anxieties, and unexpectedly liberating. We had time to explore ancient settlements or just drift for a while to admire the wildlife. The changing light and shifting tides constantly altered the views both above and below the water.

Grey seals often appeared around the kayaks. Sometimes they escorted us between islands or momentarily popped up for an inquisitive glance before disappearing again. One day, we spotted three porpoises in the distance. And an array of wading birds busily scoured every shoreline. There's beauty all around the Isles of Scilly.

I can't recommend the Isles of Scilly Kayak Challenge enough. For anyone wishing to support the marine environment, whilst being in nature in the most stunning surroundings, this adventure is for you. ●



If you'd like to take part in our next **Isle of Scilly Kayak Challenge** it takes place between **11<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022**. Register your interest by contacting [fundraising@mcsuk.org](mailto:fundraising@mcsuk.org). Cost for 2022 to be confirmed. Challengers pay a deposit then commit to pay or fundraise the balance by a date to be confirmed.

## Plastic-free seas



Thank you so, so much for supporting our appeal

# We've raised over £80k!

Hello, you may remember back in June I presented the BBC R4 Appeal on behalf of the Marine Conservation Society. It's often hard to judge how these things will go, but it's fair to say we've been overwhelmed by the generosity of the listeners and the many other people who donated in the weeks following the appeal.

Our final amount was incredibly over £80,000 (excl Gift Aid). An unbelievable but much needed boost to the Marine Conservation Society's coffers at what has been a really tricky time for charities. If you were among those who donated then thank you so very much for taking the time to do so, in addition to being a member. If I could come and give you a hug – I would! The money you donated will have a massive impact on Marine Conservation Society work. In

the appeal I talked about the terrible damage single use plastic is doing to our seas and wildlife. Littering our beaches, damaging habitats and killing the animals that live in them. More Marine Conservation Society run beach cleans and surveys will allow the charity's experts push industry, businesses and us, the public, to come up with alternatives and to cut our consumption of one of the biggest dangers our ocean is facing right now. Your generous donation will help the charity make bigger and more lasting changes.

Thank you once again for your generosity and continued support. ●

**Simon Reeve**

TV presenter and Marine Conservation Society Ocean Ambassador

It's not too late to donate at  
[www.mcsuk.org/plasticfreeseas](http://www.mcsuk.org/plasticfreeseas)