

LUXURY TRAVEL

1. CAIRNS AQUARIUM

Cairns Aquarium is Australia's newest and most spectacular aquarium. With 71 different exhibits, it is the only aquarium in the world to exclusively showcase the stunning aquatic wildlife from Tropical North Queensland's two World Heritage listed areas - the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics Rainforest.

While we were led around the aquarium by our guide we learnt about how each animal has a unique place in the eco-system and how everything is connected. Humans wouldn't be alive without these animals so it's important to do what we can to protect their habitats. One thing mentioned multiple times was trying to avoid single use plastics, as plastic waste has devastating effects on wildlife all over the world.

After walking through an underwater tunnel with fish and sharks swimming around above our heads, our tour guide took us behind the scenes where they grow coral in a tank. Small clippings are taken from the coral in the Great Barrier Reef which are taken back to the aquarium to grow, the aim is to grow enough to supply themselves and other aquariums with coral in the future instead of having to keep taking it from the reef.

Cairns Aquarium has a strong focus on sustainability, from growing their own coral to educating people about the animals and their environments in order to protect the animals of the future and, in turn, the whole planet.

2. SUNLOVER REEF CRUISES: MOORE REEF PONTOON FULL DAY CRUISE

Departing daily from Cairns Marina. Sunlover Reef Cruises shares the wonder of The Great Barrier Reef with you from the deluxe activity pontoon at Moore Reef. Activities available include glass bottom boat tours,

snorkelling, scuba diving, reef walking and much more.

When we arrived at the pontoon I jumped straight into the water with my snorkelling gear. Moore Reef is an awe-inspiring underwater spectacle, teeming with brilliantly coloured coral and more than 10,000 fish and marine species. Never before have I seen so much action under the water. There were so many different types of coral: hard coral, soft coral that swayed with the water and, of course, some bleached coral too.

At 1 pm, after a filling buffet lunch and a quick go on the pontoon slide that spins you through a dark tunnel before ejecting you into the ocean, I went for my first ever scuba diving experience.

I never thought there would be a big difference between snorkelling and diving, but you can get so much closer to the marine life when diving, and the colours are so much more vibrant when up close. Out of everything I did on the Sunlover Reef Cruise the scuba diving was right at the top of my favourites list.

3. NAUTILUS AVIATION - CAIRNS

During our time on the Sunlover Reef Cruise we were also able to explore the Great Barrier Reef with a scenic helicopter flight with Nautilus Aviation. We took a small boat from the Moore Reef Pontoon to a floating heliport where the helicopter was waiting for us.

The pilot gave us a lot of information about the reef as he flew us around the sky above it. From the Moore Reef Pontoon we weren't able to see the vastness of the reef but from above the water it seemed to go on and on without end.

The colours of the sea from the sky were spectacular, with the turquoise shallow areas contrasting with the darker blue deeper

areas, and where the reef sat under the water it looked almost green. I was able to forget my fear of flying and be totally awe struck by the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef.

4. SUNLOVER REEF CRUISES: SUNLOVER BY STARLIGHT

Sunlover Reef Cruises offers guests a Sunlover by Starlight experience. This is a once in a lifetime overnight reef stay camping under the stars on the Moore Reef Pontoon. After the day cruise packs up and leaves at 3pm the overnight guests stay aboard to continue their day (and night).

When the sun is setting and rising is when the underwater life is most active so we took this opportunity to go on a personalised snorkelling tour with our group of six and our two hosts, Luke and Amelia. A few of my highlights from the snorkelling tour were swimming along with a giant turtle, seeing clown fish and spotting a black tip shark swimming underneath us.

Once back on board the pontoon we set up our 'swags', which are one man sleeping tents, on the top deck before having a hot shower and heading down to dinner where we all sat around the table and enjoyed the smells and tastes of our freshly cooked barbecue.

Once ready for bed we all climbed into our swags, turned the lights out and lay under the stars. Oh my goodness the stars! It's the only time in my life I've seen the stars at night without any light pollution nearby. There is nothing in the world that beats seeing the night sky in this way. There were thousands of stars and I absolutely didn't want to close my eyes to go to sleep, but tiredness got the better of me and sleep I did.

Waking up in the morning was an equally spectacular experience. I woke with the sun at 6am, unzipped my swag and lay in my bed looking at the sky. The stars were



still out but before J knew it the sun started creeping over the horizon throwing colours around. Not only was the sky changing colour, but the sea was too. Minute by minute the colours of the sky and sea changed and, as everyone sleepily looked on in awe, I couldn't help but feel I was in the most beautiful place in the world.

5. FITZROY ISLAND & CAIRNS TURTLE REHABILITATION CENTRE

This idyllic tropical island is only 45 minutes away from Cairns on the Fitzroy Flyer. The island is 269 hectares, of which 93% is national park, and in many areas the rainforest comes straight down to the waterfront.

There is a lot of interest in protecting the island and the surrounding wildlife: there is a plastic straw ban (all coffee cups and straws provided on the island are bio-degradable) and they like to educate their guests about the bleaching effects of sun screen to the coral reef.

One of the biggest gems on Fitzroy Island is Nudgy Beach, a spectacular white coral and sandy beach, which was ranked number 1 in Australia's best beaches awards, 2018.

Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre on Fitzroy Island (CTRC) is a volunteer operated, non-profit organisation dedicated to the rehabilitation of sick, and injured turtles and is the largest volunteer run turtle sanctuary in the whole of Queensland. The Great Barrier Reef is home to six of the world's seven species of marine turtles. A number of these are seriously threatened by a diverse range of natural and, more significantly, human induced factors.

We were taken on the turtle tour by Jen, who explained that the turtles arrive with ailments ranging from physical injuries, starvation from lack of sea grass due to Cyclone Yasi in 2011 or being full of rubbish and plastic. It takes, on average, 18 months

to rehabilitate a turtle before they are able to be released back into the wild.

There are plenty of activities for the whole family on Fitzroy Island including sea kayaking, snorkelling, walking trails, fish feeding, paddle boarding, dive tours as well as having its own cinema and games room. We all wanted to visit Nudgy Beach so we took our riddle boards and kayaks and enjoyed our afternoon on the best beach in Australia.

6. BACK COUNTRY BLISS ADVENTURES

During my time in Tropical North Queensland I enjoyed the Half Day Private River Drift Snorkelling Tour with Back Country Bliss Adventures. After arriving on location and getting into our gear we walked through the ancient rainforest and waded into the crystal clear water where we snorkelled in the shallow areas. We watched fish dart in and around the river stones and even saw a baby turtle swimming around.

After snorkelling in a few spots, drinking the pure Daintree river water and spotting various fresh water species we then got onto our rafts and floated down the river under the canopy of trees. We all had a great time as the current drifted us gently downstream while we ducked and swerved rocks and trees.

This family friendly tour is a perfect way to stay cool in the hot tropics and is a great introduction to snorkelling before heading out to the reefs. Small children can journey down the whole river on the large river sleds if they don't want to snorkel.

7. WALKABOUT CULTURAL ADVENTURES

I went on a Full Day Tour with Walkabout Cultural Adventures and I had such an interesting experience. On this tour you get to spend the day with a local Aboriginal tour

guide, touring the local area and visiting a number of significant sights and local attractions including the World Heritage Daintree Rainforest and Cape Tribulation.

With this experience I was able to learn about the amazing relationship the Kuku Yalanji still have with their land and experience these diverse environments myself. Our tour included a crocodile spotting boat adventure, lunch and a walk through the oldest living rainforest while our guide told us many interesting stories and facts along the way.

The history of Australia is very interesting, and also disturbing, from when the white people 'discovered' the land and how they treated the aboriginal people, to how the aboriginal people are still stereotyped and discriminated against today. Our host was honest and unbiased, and his stories were raw and powerful and he was happy to answer all our questions, and we had many!

While walking in the forest and on the beach we learnt about how so many things from nature were utilised by the aboriginal tribes. From food to medicine to fibre craft: they discovered how to take things from nature and use them in various different ways. The tour was a truly unique cultural adventure.

8. PORT DOUGLAS

Port Douglas is a town known for its beach resorts and is a great place to be used as a base for visits to both the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree National Park. In town, Macrossan Street is lined with boutique shops and restaurants. I enjoyed walking along this street, popping into the shops and peering at the menus outside the various cafes.

Port Douglas Markets are on every Sunday at Anzac Park from 9am to around 1pm. Located right on the waterfront overlooking the Coral Sea, the markets are a delightful mix of local art, craft, souvenirs and fresh



Images left to right: Cairns, Port Douglas. Photo by Starlight - Moore Poot

LUXURY TRAVEL

produce and are a great place to find scores of interesting items.

Locals come from all over the tropical north to sell their products to inquisitive tourists and locals alike. It was a great experience pottering around the market, talking to the vendors and buying some locally crafted gifts to take home with me.

9. FLAMES OF THE FOREST

At Flames of the Forest guests are introduced to the ancient culture of the local Kuku Yalanji rainforest people through an intimate dinner experience in a natural environment. You can arrange stunning business events only 10 minutes from the tropical playground of Port Douglas (one hour north of Cairns International Airport), offering the ultimate corporate gala dinner for up to 800 guests.

You can enjoy this natural evening enclosed by rainforest as you dine on a locally sourced, six course tropical tasting menu accompanied by a selection of wines. Some of the canapés we tried included crocodile and kangaroo.

This is Australia's only rainforest dining experience. The Cultural evening now operates on Tuesday and Thursday nights, with Saturday nights being dedicated to the romantic at heart featuring intimate tables of two and the serenade of the resident acoustic guitarist, Stu Forbes,

10. LOW ISLES SAILAWAY

Sailaway is one of Australia's leading Leisure Operators. It is a family owned and operated company based in Port Douglas and caters specifically to a small numbers of guests.

Sailaway Afternoon Sunset Cruise departs from Port Douglas Marina and offers snorkelling, guided snorkel tour, glass bottom boat tour, island exploring and walks, and gives guests the opportunity to relax and enjoy the best of Low Isles during prime quiet time.

Departing the island at Spin, drinks and canapés are served for the sail back to Port Douglas with 1st class service, ambient music and a fun relaxed atmosphere. Guests can relax on the deck and enjoy the spectacular sunset views of the Daintree Mountains and Four Mile Beach.



Tropical North Queensland

www.tropicainorthqueensland.org.au

Cairns Aquarium - S Florence Street, Cairns

Tel: +6107 4044 7300

www.cairnsaquarium.com.au

Sunlover Reef Cruises: Moore Reef Pontoon Full Day Cruise -1 Spence

Street Reef Fleet Terminal, Cairns

Tel: +6107 40501333

www.sunlover.com.au

Nautilus Aviation - Cairns

Tel: +6107 4034 9000

www.nautilusaviation.com.au

Sunlover Reef Cruises: Sunlover by Starlight

www.sunlover.com.au/great-barrier-reef-cruises/sunlover-by-starlight

Fitzroy Island Resort - Fitzroy Island

Tel: +6107 4044 6700

www.fitzroyisland.com.au

Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

www.cairnsturtlerehab.org.au

Back Country Bliss Adventures

Tel: +6107 4099 3677

www.backcountrybliss.com.au

Walkabout Cultural Adventures

Tel: +610429 478 206

www.walkaboutadventures.com.au

Flames of The Forest

Tel: +6107 4099 3966

www.flamesoftheforest.com.au

Low Isles Sailaway - Shop 18, The Reef Marina. Port Douglas

Tel: +6107 4099 4200

www.sailawayportdouglas.com

From hiking up the spectacular Le Morne mountain and meeting sharks to exploring the island with an electric bike and horse riding in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius is the ultimate destination for thrill seekers craving a bit of adventure.

HIKE SPECTACULAR LE MORNE MOUNTAIN WITH LUX* LE MORNE

Sheltered at the foot of rugged, majestic Le Morne, LLJX* Le Morne is the place to stay for anyone looking to lune in with nature. A Inking trip to the top of Le Morne mountain is a must-do for some of the most spectacular views of Mauritius. The hotel's exclusive tour uses licensed guides, the only ones on the island with the authorisation to take adventurous guests to the very summit. Upon departure trekkers will be provided with a special LUX* backpack complete with a picnic box packed with homemade food made with ingredients that can be seen growing on the mountain during the hike.

EXPLORE ON TWO WHEELS WITH HERITAGE AWALI GOLF & SPARESORT

Located on the stunning south coast of the island, the historic estate of l-eritage Awali Golf & Spa Resort has its own private nature reserve, ideal for a luxurious tropical holiday that offers both the tranquil beach escape and the thrill of adventure. Travelers looking for some action can explore the island with an electric bike - ideal for discovering traditional coastal villages while admiring the vibrant colours of the lagoon. The half-day experience to Le Morne Brabant is a great choice, with the start and end point located close to Heritage Awali,

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS AT ONE&ONLY LE SAINT GERAN

J he transformed Onc&Only Le Saint Geran has curated a collection of one-of-a-kind action-packed experiences for guests to discover Daredevils can 'meet the sharks' with Hotel Manager Michele Giraud, FADI Divemaster and accredited SSI Shark Ecology specialist, who leads guests on tlic trip of a lifetime to meet these captivating Indian Ocean neighbours. Michele takes guests onboard the resort's luxury legend 33 speedboat where the group heads to Fosse aux Requins and The Cathedral, to sw im with up to fifty Grey Reef and White Tip sharks in crystal clear waters.

HORSE RIDING AT MARITIM RESORT & SPA MAURITIUS

At the five-star Maritim Resort & Spa Mauritius, guests can experience a ride on one of the beautiful horses on the beach and through the tropical garden, which has been awarded The most beautiful garden of Mauritius'. Adventure seekers won't want to miss the opportunity to swim with a horse in the Indian Ocean all while taking in the beautiful surroundings. Experienced trainers for adults and kids offer private and group lessons, workshops, lessons in the coral, on the beach or through the countryside.



- LUX* LE MORNE
Coastal Road,
Le Morne, Mauritius
t:+230 401 4000

- HERITAGE AWALI GOLF & SPA
RESORT
Coastal Road, Bel Ombre, Mauritius
t:+230 601 1500

■ ONE&ONff LE SAINT GIZRAN
Pointe de Flacq, Poste de Flacq
41518, Mauritius
tr+230 401 1688

-MARITIM RESORTS SPA
MAURITIUS
Turtle Bay Balaclava, Terre Rouge,
Mauritius
t:+230 204 1000

DESTINATION EUROPE

Need a break? Cheese radette at the Cabane des Tables, pizza at the family friendly Arnouva restaurant or a bistronomic experience on Cry d'Er's panoramic terrace followed by a wild evening in the altitude dub - with over 20 restaurants and cabins to choose from, we trust you will not go hungry or thirsty.

CRY D'ER CLUB D'ALTITUDE & RESTAURANTS

Ever clubbed at 2220m above sea level? Cry d'Er Club d'Altitude is the new hot spot you should not miss when in Crans-Montana. The complex, encompassing a self-service area, a "bistronomic" restaurant and a night-club, offers a unique experience and breathtaking scenery attracting world renown DJ's such as M.A.N.D.Y., The Martinez Brothers and Matthew Jonson.

NIGHT SKIING

A fairytale-like environment for a unique experience; night skiing will change your perspective and heighten sensations.

FREE ACCESS TO ARNOUVA

Free access to the Montana-Arnouva gondola is offered, allowing parents to attend their children's first ski classes, and permitting pedestrians to get a breath of fresh air and a much appreciated sunbath while sipping a warm beverage on the Arnouva terrace.

SNOWPARK

Crans-Montana offers two snowparks for different levels located near the Cry d'Er area; the easy snowpark will allow beginners to train safely, while the regular snowpark and its Olympic-standard half pipe will welcome the experienced riders.

RANDO PARC

This winter, Crans-Montana is offering 15 new ski touring routes (blue, red and black) with over 40 km of marked and secure paths. Unique in the world, the routes in this gigantic park offer over 8,000 metres of height gain. Suitable both for beginners and the more advanced, it includes three introductory level routes, as well as a route called "La X'trême" with a height gain of 3,000m and four uphill. The ski mountaineering routes have been created in collaboration with Severino Font-Combe, ski-mountaineering champion.

A VARIETY OF WINTER ACTIVITIES

GRANDEUR NATURE

The Aminona region has established itself as a paradise for wildlife, with views over the Valais Alps to take your breath away. Between December and April, don't miss our free guided weekly activities, such as snowshoe excursions, ski mountaineering, treasure hunts for children, cam-walks with huskies etc.

ICE SPORTS TAKE PLACE OF HONOUR AT YCOOR

A wonderful indoor and outdoor ice rink with a total area of 3,340m², bordered by sunny terraces, provides entertainment in the centre of Montana. Open every day, families can share fun and joyful moments with each other, as well as training in ice

hockey or figure skating, and not forgetting curling, a sport you absolutely have to try in the indoor centre. In winter, there will be night ice skating every Saturday night as well as ice discos, shows, and competitions. Rendez-vous from 7 to 9 December 2018 for the Winter Opening, which will provide the entertainment in Ycoor with lots of activities, concerts, introductions to ice sports etc.

THE MANY ATTRACTIONS OF THE GOLF COURSE IN THE SNOW

In winter, the golf course is covered by a beautiful white coat of snow and offers lots of activities for all tastes. Snow Island, Bibi's home quarters, invites families to take part in different activities, games and entertainment. This is also where beginners can try skiing thanks to the very gentle slope and magic carpet which will take them back to the top of the run, or you can hurtle down the snowtubing piste at top speed. The Severino Ballesteros and Jack Nicklaus courses are also very popular for walking. They're accessible to everyone, and several circuits which can be completed on foot or on snowshoes offer the chance to enjoy wonderful views and take a break on one of the sunny terraces. 7 km of cross country ski tracks are also available for the sporty; and the more daring can explore this wonderful area by fatbike.

EVENTS

CRANS-MONTANA AUDI FIS LADIES' ALPINE SKIING WORLD CUP

The reputation of the demanding Mont-Lachaux piste for ski competitions is already established. Crans-Montana is delighted to be preparing once again this year to host two Ladies' World Cup races. On Saturday 23 February 2019, the skiers will be racing in the downhill and on Sunday 24 the famous Alpine Combined will take place, with a downhill/slalom. Don't miss this legendary event, which will also include great entertainment for spectators who have come to support the athletes.

CAPRICES FESTIVAL

The sixteenth edition of the Caprices festival will take place 11th to 14th April 2019. As in previous years, aficionados of the Modernity (MDRNTY) events can party to the sounds of the best DJs on the planet in an unbelievable setting at 2,200m above sea level, right in the middle of the ski area.



The Ardèche does not count as one of the great rivers of France, if celebrity is measured by their length, the accumulated history among their banks, or even if they have a wine region named after them. This stripling is just 78 miles long, and the Rhône swallows it long before its waters reach the sea.

In the Ardèche Gorge, it has the largest and longest canyon in Europe. And the complicated underground topography, the caves and caverns, along its banks opens a deeper window into man's past than almost anywhere on earth.

The Chauvet Cave is an incomparable wonder. It was discovered, down a fissure in the garrigue, a wild, fragrant land of rock roses, broom, lavender, rosemary and thyme, by the man whose name it now takes and two colleagues in 1994.

That narrow entrance led into a fabulous succession of caverns decorated with hundreds of paintings of animals, made between 30,000 and 32,000 years ago and preserved when a rockfall sealed the cave. Chastened by the ruination of other caves, such as Lascaux, where prehistoric paintings (and only half as old) were damaged by the breath of tourists, the government decided that only a few experts would ever be allowed in.

Instead it commissioned, for £49 million, The Font d'Arc Cavern, an exact three dimensional underground facsimile of the Chauvet Cave, a few miles from the original. It opened in 2015 and has become one of foremost 21st-century visitor attractions.

We follow our guide past compelling representations of animals, bears, rhinos, mammoths, lions, snow Jeopards. Painted directly onto the contours, cavities and protuberances of the cave walls, they give a thrilling sense of movement and energy. We quickly forget that this is not even the real thing.

One monumental panel shows 36 lions, chasing down 100 mammoths, bison and rhinos. It is the oldest fusion of drawing, shading, perspective, and movement techniques ever discovered.

But that's only a foretaste of the most remarkable thing of all. The guide points to the outline of a human hand. It may have belonged to one of the artists. Are we looking at the signature of a prehistoric genius?

The only appropriate response as we emerge into the sunlight, is humility. The oldest known civilisation is the Mesopotamian, which began around 3500 BC. Yet the thoughtful, cultured people who sheltered in these caves were depicting the world about them 30 millennia earlier.

Driving back to our accommodation, we

wonder about the power of this river to make and remake this dramatic landscape. The only lasting impression man has ever left here was on the walls of a cave.

The river in its gorge is untamable. There are bridges over it and roads alongside it, but you feel a rising, raging river could easily carry them off. Only the Arc itself, the stone bridge gouged out by the river, is safe.

We had taken the through train from London St Pancras to the South of France, just under six hours to Valence, after a change at Lyon. Then an hour's drive in our hire car to Balazuc.

On our visit, the region is emerging from a drought. The river is as docile as a neutered tomcat, tinkling amiably under Balazuc's high bridge. Behind us the old village buildings rise, in light ranks, up the hillside. Balazuc has "one of the most beautiful villages in France" status. Anything resembling a standard hotel would be quite wrong.

Our base is a restored 800-year-old castle, the Château de Balazuc, with just three ample rooms. Two Parisian journalists gave up their high-pressure jobs in the capital to run it. From our room we have a perfect view down to the Ardèche river. Our hosts cook dinner for us, as is their rule. There is an unspoken understanding that we are not to even consider looking anywhere else that night. They invite a celebrated local potter and his wife to join us for a convivial evening of conversation.

Once French hotels were formal, and a bit dull. Within a generation France has built a network of superior accommodation, B&Bs and small hotels such as this: small, distinct interesting places with warm, welcoming hosts.

The Ardèche river crosses the foot of the French department of the same name, east of the river Rhône, and midway between Lyon and Avignon. We use our satnav to guide us through an intricate web of "D" roads, blissfully deserted, and, for lunch, find one of the infinite numbers of unofficial picnic spots deep in the perfumed garrigue.

We are en route on to another underground wonder, but this time a place it's possible to visit. Locals always knew about the Aven d'Orgnac, an apparently bottomless abyss, into which they tipped rubbish. In 1935 a brave local caver became the first to venture

down into this aven (it means vertical shaft), an Everest in reverse.

I discovered limestone caverns as wide and high as many cathedrals put together, full of majestic crystal formations. It was named one of only 14 Grands Sites de France, a listing reserved for the "most famous and emblematic landscapes".

Visitors are allowed into just a tenth of the cave system, but that's massive enough. Our guide picks out distant features, directing his spotlight at stalagmites and stalactites moulded into fantastic shapes by dripping water over vast ages. Back on the surface there is an excellent museum.

Many well-signposted paths lead to the edge of the Ardèche Gorge, and the views are prodigious. Another way to experience the gorge is to canoe down it. The 21 miles descent includes 25 rapids, take a day, or better still two, with a night under canvas in the heart of this nature reserve.

In St-Martin d'Ardèche, Rose Archambault, who runs the Domaine de la Croix Blanche wine business, has a newer suggestion. Vineyards and cycling are two great French institutions. Why not combine them, with electric bikes to make the going easier? We sampled an assisted spin, part of the Vines and Discovery programme, in the company of Rose.

We inspect her organic vines, then make a power-boosted climb into the garrigue. We freewheel back on the Route Lounstique, with heart-soaring views down into the gorge. It would have been tough on conventional bikes. Then a tasting session back at the winery.

Our last call is at a splendid example of the family-run village restaurant in the region. France is determined to save these essential details in the urban fabric. It launched the Bistrot de Pays initiative, to promote the thousands that still survive. To qualify for the marque the independent restaurant has to be in a place of fewer than 2000 people. They must serve unfussy home-cooked fare using, mainly, local produce.

We sit outside at Auberge La Farigouie, in Bidon, a tiny place close to the Font d'Arc Cavern. The swifts shriek and the collared doves coo. Only a handful of cars pass all the blissful evening. Three courses and a glass of wine cost just €26 each.

DAY 1

Stepping off my short flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco I instantly noticed the chill in the air. August, my time of visiting, is known locally as 'Fog-usf' because of the rolling fog that habitually covers the city during this month. I was glad I had packed a jumper!

My friend picked me up from the airport and drove us straight to Plow⁷ in Potrero Hill in the Eastern side of San Francisco to get breakfast, but as Plow⁷ is fiber cool and popular we had to add our name to a lengthy waiting list and so we took a walk while we waited.

POTRERO HILL

Potrero Mill is a beautiful residential neighbourhood but very⁷ hilly. I would have to describe our walk as a struggle rather than a stroll. But, as much of life is, it was a beautiful struggle. This was where I first saw the mix and match architecture of the residential San Francisco dwellings, and it totally fascinated me.

In the UK it's common to see rows upon rows of identical houses. Not in San Francisco! Every single house is built totally unique in style, colour and personality to the one next to it. For anyone interested in architecture, as I am, walking the streets of San Francisco will be a non-stop stream of eye candy.

BREAKFAST AT PLOW

Plow⁷ serves farm-to-table American comfort food, sourcing their ingredients as locally as possible, and while on the more expensive side, the food was definitely worth it.

I had the BLT: bacon, little gems, tomatoes and aioli on sourdough. I thought back to this meal constantly throughout the trip; it was so delicious and fresh tasting with satisfyingly crunchy⁷ textures. A truly memorable meal.

My friend ordered The Plow: eggs, bacon, two lemon ricotta pancakes and plow⁷ potatoes. I tasted some of the lemon ricotta pancakes (which Plow⁷ is apparently well known for) and I was tempted to order a side for myself, they were that good.

My daughter chose almond flour pancakes with butter and maple syrup: a really great traditional pancake option and a very generous sized portion too.

DOLORES PARK

After filling up on breakfast we drove the short distance to Mission Dolores Park where we spent some time in the large kids play ground, which has different areas for all ages to enjoy, if you don't have any children to entertain then in Dolores Park you can also find a 'soccer' field, tennis courts and a basketball court to play in, big kid style. This

was the perfect place to enjoy spectacular views of the city's skyline under the shade of dramatically tall palm trees.

After blowing off some steam in the park we went to meet another friend at San Francisco Airport before all jumping into the car for the one hour drive to the first stop on our girls¹ vacation.

AÑO NUEVO STATE PARK

Año Nuevo State Park is a state park encompassing Año Nuevo Island and Año Nuevo Point. We were really excited about visiting when we found out that thousands of elephant seals go there to breed, give birth, and molt their skin every year. After buying our permit at the gate, and a non-strenuous 3-4 mile hike, we arrived at our first 'seal spotting' location.

We visited at the end of molting season so it wasn't as crowded with seals as we'd hoped, but we did see a few, and we also saw a colony of little seal pups, there were telescopes mounted on stands through which we were able to see the seals 'close up', and get excited about every⁷ small movement we saw, as they lazily lay on the beach.

Elephant seals can be observed here year round either on a docent lead tour or through a self guided permit system within the Wildlife Viewing Area. One of the things I will remember most from my trip to Año Nuevo State Park isn't actually the elephant seals, but the sea lions on Año Nuevo Island.

AÑO NUEVO ISLAND

Año Nuevo Island is a small island off Año Nuevo Point. The island (and it's eerie looking abandoned house) is closed to the public, and is an important breeding site for the endangered Steller's sea lion, but you can see it easily from the shore.

The noise coming from the hundreds of sea lions on the island is immense and travels right the way to Año Nuevo Point, where we were sat. While the elephant seals appear to be a lazy bunch, the sea lions sound like they're enjoying a non-stop party⁷ over on their secluded island.

ALCATRAZ ISLAND

On our drive home my friend pointed out a small island in San Francisco Bay⁷ called Alcatraz Island. Alcatraz Island is home to an abandoned prison which was in use from the 1860s to house Civil War prisoners of war and later, in 1934, turned into a federal prison which housed troublesome inmates. Even Al Capone did a stint here.

Alcatraz Island is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been declared a National Historic Landmark. The prison is now a museum with audio tour, accessible by a 15 minute ferry ride.

DINNER AT IN-N-OUT BURGER

By this point we were all hungry and wanted to grab some easy food on our way home. In-N-Out Burger is an American fast food restaurant that serves the typical 'burger, fries and milkshake' combo. They pride themselves on not using processed ingredients and (more importantly) there is a secret menu!

When I found out there was a secret menu my mind was blown and, after being filled in on the secret options, I decided to order my cheese burger 'animal style' which consists of a mustard-cooked beef patty with lettuce, tomato, pickles, extra spread and grilled onions.

Actually I found out later that the 'secret menu' isn't so secret. While they don't advertise it on the boards in store you can find their not-so-secret menu on their website. The burger was delicious and we all left feeling satisfied and ready to finish the drive back to our digs in Oakland.

DAY 2

PASTRIES AT LA FARINE BOULANGERIE PATISserie

We awoke to another crisp morning. We got ourselves ready and went to buy breakfast. La Farine is a French bakery offering pastries, cookies, rustic breads and more. My daughter and I shared a Swiss Twinkie, a Choclatine and a croissant between us. We're big pastry lovers and we enjoyed everything!

COLE COFFEE

I'm not the biggest coffee drinker but I occasionally like to indulge, especially when I'm in possession of a bag loaded with pastries. Cole Coffee makes a mean coffee and is well known with the locals in its neighbourhood. We all ordered our coffees 'to go' and hit the road again for the 80 minute drive to the Muir Woods.

MUIR WOODS

The road to the Muir Woods was long, uphill and windy. Anyone who gets car sick will need to prepare themselves for this trip. There were a lot of cyclists schlepping both uphill and down at various speeds on the final mountainous stretch of road. Luckily my friend has driven this road many times and drove it with ease and confidence. I'm not sure if I'd like to have done the drive myself.

It was still morning when we headed into the forest and it was shrouded in a coastal marine layer of fog which gave the forest a mysterious vibe. I wasn't prepared for how⁷ cold it was going to be. Luckily, since we were walking, our body heat warmed us up quite quickly, however my ears definitely suffered



from the biting cold.

Muir Woods National Monument is known for its towering old-growth redwood trees. The tallest tree here is 79 m, and the oldest is at least 1,200 years old. You can't quite grasp the size of these trees until you're actually standing amongst them, they're spectacularly tall, and the trail we took wound right through these magnificent giants.

A small stream flows through a gorge to one side of the trail and at some points collects into a little waterfall or pool. Whenever I caught the sound of the bubbling water here and there it filled me with a feeling of tranquility. Being surrounded by nature really does wonders for the soul.

STINSON BEACH

At the end of the trail we arrived at Stinson Beach: a small town with a population of just over 600. We grabbed a bite to eat at a diner and then headed to the beach (voted one of the cleanest in the state) to relax in the powder soft sand before making the trek back up through the woods to our waiting car.

THE ITALIAN HOMEMADE COMPANY

At home after our long day of walking and we were too tired to cook or go out for dinner so we decided on a take away. The Italian Homemade Company is an Italian deli and market serving various things including house made pasta, imported cheese and charcuterie. You can eat in or take out.

We weren't too hungry so we ordered two pasta dishes and shared them between us all. We cracked open a bottle (or two) of wine, gathered around the table and ate our pasta like a big Italian family. The food was delicious and filling, and perfect accompanied by some wine.

DAY 3

Day three was a Monday and my Californian friend was back at work so the British tourists were left to fend for themselves. After some breakfast at home we headed out the door and walked to the nearest BART station.

BART (BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT)

The BART is a public transportation system serving the San Francisco Bay Area. It's fast and reliable and really easy to get around the city with. We each bought a Clipper card (similar to the Oyster cards used in London) which cost \$3 to purchase and youths, seniors and people with disabilities can get discount cards.

BART fares are set with a mileage-based formula and it's definitely one of the pricier public transport systems I've come across but, as I was learning, everything in San Francisco is expensive! After buying our Clipper cards and picking up a BART map we selected our route and headed into the city.

MRS DOUBTFIRE'S HOUSE

The Mrs Doubtfire movie was filmed in San Francisco, and the grand family house that was featured so many times in the heart warming film is still there. After quite a long walk (lots of it uphill), with a few stop offs on the way to photograph the stunning street art and buildings all around San Francisco (the City Hall is a beauty of a building), we arrived at Mrs Doubtfire's house.

This house is a residential home, and the owners have planted a couple of large trees in front of the property and installed a gate at the bottom of the front stairs, no doubt to deter people from invading their privacy too much, which is totally understandable. We gawped at the house fondly, snapped a couple of photos and went on our way.

While this experience is nothing fancy it's a

warming experience to see the house, in real life, from one of the most loved movies from the 90s. I'm glad I went, and it made watching the movie again a few days later an even fonder experience.

MOCHIS ATPOKSTIME

After leaving Mrs Doubtfire's House we walked down Fillmore Street and, feeling very indecisive about what to eat, we popped into Poki Time to try some frozen ice cream mochis. We tried the chocolate espresso, strawberry and pistachio flavours: all were amazing, but the chocolate espresso flavour reigned supreme.

THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

The Golden Gate Bridge is a suspension bridge which is one of the most internationally recognised symbols of San Francisco. At the time of its opening, in 1937, it was both the longest and the tallest suspension bridge in the world and has been declared one of the Wonders of the Modern World.

We had our route all planned out to get up close to the bridge. But as we walked along the waters edge, with a view of the bridge in the distance, the weather got continuously colder and foggier, until the bridge was covered in fog and we knew that if we walked all the way there our vision of it would be so poor that it wouldn't be worth the journey. So, we snapped our pictures where we stood, and headed to the next place on our list.

PALACE OF FINE ARTS

The Palace of Fine Arts is in the Marina District (another place for architectural eye candy) and is an incredibly beautiful outdoor structure. It was originally constructed in 1915, inspired by Roman and Greek architecture, for an exposition as a place to showcase art work. However, when most of the structures were demolished at the end of the exposition, the Palace was saved from demolition.

Sitting on the shore of a man made lagoon, where many forms of wildlife have made their home, and surrounded by Australian eucalyptus trees, this jewel in the city is absolutely worth a visit, and is totally free too.

HOMELESSNESS

There is currently a national homeless crisis that is having an impact on the entire Bay Area. By some estimates there are as many as 30,000 homeless people in the region, and it's very evident how big the problem is while walking around the city.

I've seen plenty of homelessness before, but never like this. There are whole camps of homeless people, all over the city. I never felt unsafe or threatened by anyone on the streets. I just felt sympathy for them and their situation. But this is a very real situation, and it's on every corner, and it's a side of San Francisco that is hard to avoid when visiting.

DAY 4
FOURNÉE BAKERY

Fournée Bakery is a small French artisan bakery and pastry shop located in Berkeley. The pastries here were very authentic, similar to those you'd actually find in France, and utterly satisfying.

PEETS COFFEE

Peet's Coffee is a Berkeley-born chain featuring signature coffee, tea and blended drinks. I got a steaming coffee to sip while eating my pastries and it was, indeed, a good cup of joe.

SAN FRANCISCO BOTANICAL GARDEN

We hopped on the BA KI and headed to the The San Francisco Botanical Garden, located in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, which showcases over 8,500 different kinds of plants from around the world.

The Bay Area's unique weather conditions allow it to grow and conserve plants from all over the globe, including plants that are no longer found in their native habitats. We had a lovely time walking around enjoying, particularly, the succulents, the pond and the wildlife we saw including hummingbirds and colourful caterpillars.

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

I really wanted to explore the California Academy of Sciences but due to lack of time and high ticket prices we decided to give it a miss, however I'd love to come back another time. The California Academy of Sciences is among the largest museums of natural history in the world, housing over 26 million specimens.

We did make time to have a nose around the gift shop, which you can go into without having to enter the academy, and there were so many interesting and beautiful items in there.

LOU'S CAFE

After spending another day on our feet we headed to Lou's Cafe: a small coffeehouse and sandwich bar with a big board menu up

on the wall. We ordered a cup of New England Clam Chowder to share, which came with a slice of baguette topped with melted cheese. We also ordered a Chicken Pesto sandwich: chicken breast, avocado, cheese and pesto aioli spread served in a soft roll.

The food at Lou's is top notch. The clam chowder is not to be missed. It was so full of flavour and creamy, and they didn't skimp on the clams at all. The sandwiches are big! So thank goodness we decided to share. Everything was really good and totally filling. It was the perfect last meal in San Francisco.

After our meal at Lou's we went home to pick up our bags and then took the BART all the way to Oakland Airport for our flight back to LA.



JmQgesfmm bottom left antr-dodevise. flM JigJif (BAA^wv) fly pwrA'.v.t agwn Sireer Art in Son FTAHC/TCA Ar 4 ZC'.v Haimaii. SAJI Fraud,tew BA/AlICA/ GAFL/CTI Ay 4ta HA/HAIL

GERMAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS

WHAT TO DRINK

The traditional seasonal drink infused with oranges, cloves, cardamom and cinnamon, Red Mulled Wine cannot go a miss at the markets. Festive drinks also include Lumumba, the delicious hot chocolate drink with rum. Punch, a hot mixture of alcohol, spices lemon juice, sugar and water. As well as Eggnog, a combination of eggs, white wine, sugar, rum and cinnamon.

WHAT TO EAT

For hearty, traditional delicacies, The Brat wurst, Schupfnudeln, latte Flambee - and Chestnuts are a definite must. For more of a sweet treat, waffles, bonnet, baked apples, roasted almonds, candied apples, donuts and Gingerbread are a delicious indulgence.

WHAT TO BUY

At the Christmas Markets, you will find an array of gifts, keepsakes and memoirs to buy, such as Christmas decorations and ornaments, homemade crafts, and confectionary. You will also find the German tradition of products made purely from honey including soaps, figurines, health products, candles and much more.

BEST OF THE BEST - GERMANY

BERLIN

The capital city offers a number of beautiful, traditional Christmas markets with delicious food and drink, and local musicians for an excellent way to get into the Christmas spirit. Top markets include the Berliner Weihnachtszeit and the WeihnachtsZauber.

DÜSSELDORF

The Christmas Markets of Düsseldorf transform the city into a magical scene of festivities, and you can also find the Dome of Lights on Königsallee as well as the ice rink on Corneliusplatz. ■*

BEST OF THE REST- EUROPEAN CITIES

BUDAPEST

The most quintessential beautiful, oldest and traditional Christmas Market in Budapest is located on Vörösmarty Square in the city centre. From handmade gifts to live music, guests will be sure to leave feeling festive.

PRAGUE

The Christmas Markets in Prague are known to be the most impressive in the whole of the Czech Republic. Opening from 1st December to 6th January; the markets bring both locals and tourists together for some festive fun.

KRAKÓW

Traditionally starting in the last week of November and lasting through to the end of December, the Christmas Markets in Kraków take place on the city's central square. Rynek Główny, in the middle of the historic Old Town district.

BRUGES

One of the most vibrant in Belgium, the entire old town of Bruges transforms into a magical winter wonderland, with fairy lights strung all over the town and Christmas trees dotted around. The Christmas Market and Ice Rink can be found on the main Market Square in the heart of the city.

For Christmas Market weekend deals visit
www.lastminute.com/deals/christmas-markets

For all Christmas Hotel deals visit
www.lastminute.com/hotels/promos/christmas-markets



EXPERIENCE EUROPE'S LEADING AIRPORT HOTEL

Hilton London Heathrow Airport located at Terminal 4 is dedicated to providing new product innovations and services to meet evolving needs of its guests. Renowned for their hospitality and providing first class personalised service, the hotel has been recognised as Europe's Leading Airport Hotel for four consecutive years. The Hilton brand has set the benchmark for hospitality around the world for almost 100 years with more than 575 Hilton Hotel properties located in the most sought-after destinations, including London, Dubai and New York. Boasting 398 guest rooms and suites as well as three restaurants, a bar, business centre and Living Well Health Club, Hilton London Heathrow Airport caters to meet the needs of guests who know that where they stay matters.

Superbly connected to Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4 via a covered walkway, the hotel offers excellent links to the capital and convenient air connections to the UK, Europe and beyond. London Paddington is just a short 30-minute train ride from Heathrow Terminal 4 via the Heathrow Express allowing easy access to explore the City of London.

Take advantage of the hotel's accessibility with a convenient on-site car park and straight-forward access to all terminals. For those taking off in the early hours of the morning or arriving late at night the hotel provides a Park and Fly service which allows guests to leave their car in the car park for the entirety of their trip, making transfers stress-free and evading lengthy walks after a long-haul flight. If flying from a different terminal the Heathrow Connect runs from Terminal 4 to reach Terminals 2 and 3, or alternatively the Heathrow Hoppa service runs daily between the hotel and Terminal 5 every 30 minutes. One-way tickets for the Heathrow Hoppa can be purchased onboard for £5pp or £9pp for a return ticket.

Guests wishing to stretch their legs after a long flight are invited to visit the hotel's Living Well Health Club which offers exclusive access to a high-tech 24-hour fitness centre and refreshing pool, sauna and steam room, open from 11am until 10pm. Fitness enthusiasts can choose from the three tranquil run-

ning routes that run through Bedfont Lake County Park, the local nature reserve and conservation site which surrounds the hotel. The routes range from 0.6 miles for beginners to 1.6 miles for avid runners, allowing everyone to benefit from the hotel's great location.

The hotel's three onsite restaurants offer a variety of specially selected menus, including Asian cuisine in Zen Oriental, Italian dishes and views over the pool terrace at Aromi, and informal international dining at Oscar's. Unwind and watch the world go by whilst enjoying a speciality beer or hand-crafted cocktail from Dancers Bar before indulging in a dish from the exquisite new sustainable food menu available exclusively at Oscar's.

After recently announcing a robust new environmental commitment, the new menu is aimed at providing a range of options to suit every taste without compromising on flavour, with dishes such as the Portobello Burger. Hilton London Heathrow Airport is the first Hilton hotel in the UK to serve up the new sandwich, designed to enhance the

meaty flavour of a classic burger whilst reducing environmental impact, the tasty new dish mixes 30% field mushrooms with 70% beef cutting CO2 emissions by 29% compared to a traditional all-beef burger, whilst enhancing the delicious taste and texture of the much-loved favourite. Accompanied by sweet potato fries the Portobello Burger is available for £15, best enjoyed with a glass of Sangiovese to enhance the warm undertones for an additional £6.50.

As leaders in accommodating business clientele, Hilton London Heathrow Airport offers a Meetings Simplified package. Simple to book, Meetings Simplified is completely flexible and provides guests with everything they require for a business meeting at great value. Guests can choose from one of the 15 newly refurbished business suites complete with an LCD projector and screen, Wi-Fi, a flipchart and free flowing, fresh food and drinks all day at an all-inclusive rate. As well as being able to cater to special dietary requirements, the selection of food available from superfoods to energisers, is rich in proteins and antioxidants promoting increased energy levels throughout the day.

With a focus on providing hassle-free travel, the team at London Hilton Heathrow Airport work hard to ensure each well-earned holiday or business trip runs smoothly from start to finish. Whether staying for business or leisure, Hilton Heathrow Airport at Terminal 4 is the perfect location for a great stay.

Room rates start from £175 per room per night, including breakfast, based on two adults sharing, subject to availability. Weekend rates start from £125. For more information or to book, please visit or call +44 (0)20 8759 7755. Or to enrol in Hilton Honors and take advantage of great deals when booking direct visit: <https://bit.ly/2wZasbn>.

Be sure to keep up to date with exclusive offers and activities at Hilton London Heathrow Airport by following them on Instagram: [@hiltonheathrowairport](https://www.instagram.com/hiltonheathrowairport), liking them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/hiltonheathrowairport and connecting with them on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/hilton-london-heathrow-airport/>.

"...visit the hotel's Living Well Health Club which offers exclusive access to a high-tech 24-hour fitness centre and refreshing pool, sauna and steam room..."

DESTINATIONS UK

I had the recent experience of visiting La Fosse in the pretty Dorset village of Cranborne. Husband and wife team, Mark and Emmanuelle, have been the welcoming proprietors of this quaint little establishment for nine years now and seem to have the place ticking over very nicely; offering six comfortable en-suite bedrooms of different sizes, a charming garden, excellent for those pre-d in net aperitifs, a cosy sitting room with open fire for those colder evenings and the dining/breakfast room.

The room I'm staying in at La Fosse has a very comfortable double bed and a collection of charming vintage furniture, a nice sofa and a coffee table. There's also a decent sized flat screen TV and a Bluetooth iPod dock and, on a little shelf in the corner, coffee and tea making facilities with fairtrade goodies. The en-suite consists of a shower and basin, and the toilet seat is the comfiest I've had the pleasure of perching on in a long time. There's a super hot towel rail to warm the lovely fluffy towels and luxury COWSHED products aplenty.

Having been to quite a few counties on the south-west coast of England, I do have to say that Dorset has become one of my favourites. The country's side is exceptionally beautiful and varied and there is so much to explore. Make the most of some rest and relaxation if this is for you or get yourself out there and fill your day with places to go, and there are plenty; If you fancy being eco friendly, and are up for a good dose of exercise, then jump on one of the bikes that are on offer, free of charge, at La Fosse.

Winner of many awards, including Winner of Taste of Dorset Best Restaurant and Best Food and Drink Business 2016, Mark has gathered his experience at some of the finest restaurants around the world. The couple met at The Chewton Glen Hotel in Hamp-

"THE WIZARDRY THAT GOES ON IN THE LA FOSSE KITCHEN IS ASTOUNDING"

shire, and then went on to Pebble Beach Restaurant in Barton-on-Sea, Le Manoir aux Quat' Sa isons in Oxford and the Blantyre Hotel, USA. With all this experience under their belts Mark and Emmanuelle then decided to start looking for an ideal property for their business, and here they have found it in picturesque Cranborne not far from where Mark was brought up in the New Forest.

Although Cranborne is a small village, there are a good selection of places to stop at for a drink or alternative dining venues. Just around the corner there is The Inn at Cranborne. Dating back to the 16th century and recently renovated, it offers local ales and an extensive gin collection along with some interesting crafted cocktails. Fresh seasonal dishes are also available.

The Sheaf of Arrows is another pub where the locals tend to enjoy a pint; nice friendly people and the staff pour a good pint with a smile. I decide to have dinner here on my first evening in Cranborne. What you get is generous portions of honest country fare at good value.

Just up the road is 10 Castle Street, a very cool, large country hotel that stands in the



most exquisite grounds. There is a large terrace where you can indulge in an English afternoon tea or just enjoy a glass of something and stroll around the grounds.

After a really good night's sleep and a piping hot shower at La Fosse, I make my way down to breakfast. The choice is plentiful. The side board selection consists of cereals, fruit, juices, bread (to toast or not) and always, a big slab of cheese, for which La Fosse is up in the top awards for. There are cooked breakfasts on offer too. The scrambled eggs with mushrooms are devilishly good with the mushrooms giving it an earthy flavour.

Close by there is Cranborne Manor Gar-





It looks like it could be an incredibly cosy experience and something that I would love to do on a cold winter's evening with family and friends and a few warming shots to get into the party groove, for tonight though, I am dining in the restaurant.

On the back of the menu is a list of the suppliers that are used for fresh, seasonal, free-range local produce. There are 32 suppliers in all including produce from Mark's own allotment and Mark's aunt who supplies the orange marmalade!

There are five choices for each of the courses and I start with the baked Cricket St Thomas goats cheese with baby leaves and a chilli chutney followed by the duck duo of roasted breast with confit with a stir fry and blackberry jus, and for pudding I have the banana and chocolate sundae with cocoa popping candy. I ask for the courses to be paired with wine and the choices are spot on.

The wizardry that goes on in the La Fosse kitchen is astounding. Mark Hartstone is an artist of the highest calibre and I can say in all honesty⁷ that this is one meal that I would like to be able to hang on to in my mind for ever more. This type of cuisine can only be created by someone who has passion, soul and bundles of experience and it is evident that Mark certainly ticks these boxes. What makes it all the more memorable is that the staff are really friendly and professional; this also applies to breakfast service.

La Fosse isn't trying to be anything flashy. What you get is a cosy, quirky, comfortable country⁷ restaurant with rooms, that's bang in the middle of the glorious English country⁷ side and it's definitely my cup of tea.

dens which is open to view on Wednesdays and the Cranborne Garden Centre which is open every day. Cranborne has its own small independently owned micro brewery; The Sixpenny tap, which is open to visitors. Pop into Orchard Bay Bakery; they are both located in Holwell which is about a 15 minute walk from La Fosse.

Having spent a fun filled day exploring the area, I get back for a quick shower and make my way to the patio garden to enjoy an aperitif before dinner. This is where you will find the Scandinavian BBQ hut. It's available to hire as an alternative to restaurant dining and it seats up to 12 people on a wooden circular bench covered in cushions and rugs, and in the centre is where you cook your nosh over a wood burning grate.



WHERE TO FIND THEM

WHERE TO STAY

- LA FOSSE
London House,
8-9 The Square, BH215PR
t: 01725 517604
www.la-fosse.com

La Fosse is available for Private House Parties. You can take all the bedrooms and have exclusive use of the restaurant where there is the option of the A La Carte menu or the six course 'Tasting' menu.

WHERE TO EAT

- THE RESTAURANT AT LA FOSSE
London House, 8-9 The Square,
BH215PR
t: 01725 517604
www.la-fosse.com

WHERE TO DRINK

- THE INN
5 Wimborne Street, BH215PP
t: 01725 551 249
www.theinnatcranborne.co.uk
- SHEAF OF ARROWS
4 The Square, BH215PR
t: 01725 551187
www.sheafofarrows.co.uk

- 10 CASTLE STREET
10 Castle Street, BH 215PZ
t: 01725 551133
www.10castlestreet.com

PLACES TO VISIT

- CRANBORNE MANOR GARDENS
Wimborne Street, BH21 5PP
t: 01725 517 289
www.cranborne.co.uk
- CRANBORNE GARDEN CENTRE
14 Wimborne Street, BH215PP
t: 01725 517 248 | www.cranbornegardencentre.co.uk
- SIXPENNY MICRO BREWERY
Holwell Farm, Holwell, BH215QP
t: 01725 762 006 | www.sixpenny-brewery.co.uk
- ORCHARD BAY BAKERY
Holwell Farm, BH215QP
t: 01725 777 0011 www.facebook.com/orchardbay

WHERE TO COUNTDOWN IN 2019

NEW YORK CITY:

Join the Midnight run, a Twist on the Iconic NYE

New Year's Eve comes alive in New York City with the brightest and buzziest events which revellers and onlookers flock to every year. Celebrate the arrival of 2019 and be part of the world's biggest New Year's celebration whilst counting down to the crystal ball drop in Times Square. It's a chance to catch live music and other performances before and after midnight and be part of a party the world is watching.

Alternative NYC NYE activities also include watching the night sky light up over Prospect Park during the annual New Year's Eve fireworks display or joining the New York Road Runners' annual four-mile midnight run. The event begins at 10pm with dancing until midnight when the running begins against the backdrop of the fireworks display to mark the arrival of the New Year.

www.nycgo.com



LAKE TAHOE:

Ring in the New Year on the Mountains

Why not ski into the New Year at a ski festival? Heavenly Holidays is a two-week-long festival that features fun-filled activities such as sleigh rides before a backdrop of snowy mountains and twinkling lights. Watch fire dancers, light shows, live musical performances, ice sculptors and more as well as play games and preserve memories in the festive photo booth.

The fanfare goes on until 11 Pm then at midnight, fireworks fly in Tahoe and the Tahoe Gondola Bal! drops. This Lake Tahoe annual event is a great way to conclude the holiday season in the company of family and friends.

www.visittheusa.co.uk/destination/lake-tahoe

SKI TOTAL:

Party on the Slopes of Val-d'Isère With a Group of Friends and Family

Group ski holiday specialist. Ski Total, offers high quality catered chalets and Chalet Hotels to suit couples, groups or families in 20 of the premier Alpine ski resorts. Known as the Alps' go-to high-altitude skiing destination, Val d'Isère and the legendary snows of Espace Killy ski area offer great conditions for early season skiing, with an après-ski scene as exciting as the pistes!

On New Year's Eve the resort comes alive as all the bars hold their own parties, restaurants lay on a special menu and there is live entertainment on every corner. Some bars and clubs are ticketed so it's best to plan ahead. Come midnight hordes of merry revellers head to the centre of the town for the big countdown as part of a long-held NYE tradition. On the stroke of midnight, you are advised to duck as champagne corks and fireworks are unleashed in celebration!

www.skitotal.com



FORT LAUDERDALE:

Orange Bowl Downtown Countdown

NYE visitors to the city of Fort Lauderdale, Florida should head to the Orange Bowl Downtown Countdown, the annual New Year's Eve celebration. Known as one of the largest New Year's Eve celebrations in Florida, this year's free street festival will be full of excitement for both children and adults.

Crowds will begin to gather in Downtown Fort Lauderdale on December 31 as people await with anticipation for the midnight countdown. The midnight countdown will feature Fort Lauderdale's larger-than-life illuminated anchor which will descend from 100 feet in the air above the event's main stage as the final seconds of 2018 count down and the New Year arrives.

www.heHosunny.org/

www.game.orangebowl.org/events/downtowncountdown/

SANTA MONICA:

Party Like an A-lister

Where better to ring in the new year than beachside in Santa Monica. For a super trendy evening head to The Bungalow, at the corner of Ocean Avenue in the grounds of the Fairmont Miramar Hotel. The bar is a popular hang-out for celebs in Santa Monica and complements the burgeoning West L.A. creative scene.

Inspired by the breezy Baja Californian lifestyle; rustic furniture with Mexican blankets, multiple fire pits, lush foliage and twinkling tree lanterns create a beautiful setting overlooking the beach. Arrive as the sun sets over the west coast of CA and bid farewell to 2018 dancing to a live DJ set, popping champagne, and enjoying this iconic oceanside hideaway in Santa Monica.

www.santamonica.com



LAS VEGAS:

Take to the sky for 2019

Make this New Year's Eve unforgettable with the High Roller experience at the LINQ in Las Vegas. Hit the Strip, and head up to one of the world's largest observation wheels, the High Roller, to celebrate 2019 with awesome views of the city's fireworks show and a Champagne toast at midnight.

Revellers can choose from three packages, and upgrade to include access to a VIP pre-party; unlimited drinks service, and more. When midnight strikes, enjoy a pause in the rotation to sip Champagne and watch the fireworks set the night sky ablaze. When your hour on the High Roller is up, step back onto the ground and re-join the Las Vegas NYE partygoers on the strip and beyond, the perfect city to have the ultimate New Year's Eve party.

www.visitlasvegas.com

BANGKOK:

Greet the New Year With a Bang

Even though the Thai New Year falls in April Thailand still celebrates New Year's Eve on 31 December and Bangkok is the place to be. There are numerous countdown spots throughout the capital, but the biggest and most happening is just steps away from the Amari Watgate Bangkok at the forecourt of Central World Plaza. It's Bangkok's equivalent to New York's Times Square - without the snow!

Thousands gather from early evening in an open-air beer garden with snack stalls to enjoy the atmosphere before Thailand's largest and longest fireworks display at midnight. During the build-up, revellers are entertained with a series of live performances from local and international artists and a large screen shows the countdown from different cities across the world.

www.amari.com



MAURITIUS:

The Stylish Indian Ocean NYE

To see in the New Year in style why not head to Mauritius, the perfect place for a luxurious new year break. With a private catamaran tour, New Year's Eve revelers can enjoy the fireworks from the ocean with champagne in tow to toast the New Year.

Party goers can then return to the shore to enjoy the island's lively bars and nightclubs on the north and west coasts of the island. Hotels also offer lavish feasts with bands, live entertainment, and fireworks at midnight and Bar Bleu hosts a NYE party with a DJ at Outrigger Resort.

www.tourism-mauritius.mu

ILLINOIS:

See in 2019 at a Party in the Windy Gity

At the close of its bi-centennial year, Illinois will welcome in 2019 with fireworks, ball drops and parties across the state. In Chicago, head for the iconic Navy Pier to enjoy entertainment, rides and attractions before watching a kaleidoscope of fireworks soaring to music over Lake Michigan.

Alternatively, see Chicago's hottest DJs at the Drake Hotel which is voted to have the 'Best Chicago New Year's Eve Party', rick-ets for the hotel's "New Year's Eve Black Tie Party at Palm Court' start from \$135 per person (around £103).

www.enjoyillinois.com



QUEENSLAND:

A New Year's Eve Night Under the Stars

Bid bon voyage to the crowded parties and welcome in the New Year with a once-in-a-lifetime Oz experience like no other. Check yourself in for Sunlover by Starlight and enjoy a night surrounded by the stars in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Queensland. With space for a maximum of only 17 other people, visitors can enjoy the Sunlover pontoon on Moore Reef all to themselves from 3.30pm until 11am the next day for a private reef show after dark and be the only ones to witness the last sunset of 2018 and first sunrise of 2019 right from the heart of the Great Barrier Reef

Cos led up in your very own swag, sleep on the top deck of the pontoon and watch the stars as well as witness the main feeding times on the reef for a truly unique experience. Guests can start the New Year with snorkelling, diving, sunbathing, enjoying a glass bottom boat or taking a scenic helicopter ride over the reef. Prices for Sun & over by Starlight start from AUD \$499pp.

www.queensland.com

VIENNA:

New Year's Eve Trail 2018

On December 31 2018, Vienna's city centre will transform into a giant party zone, from 2pm in the afternoon to 2am the following morning, top entertainment is guaranteed by the New Year's Eve trail in the city centre, at City Hall Square and in the Prater. Along the New Year's Eve Trail, dozens of gastronomes serve punch and culinary treats while entertainment is provided by waltzes, operetta, rock, pop and DJs.

The classical area on Graben is always a popular fixture and a must! Vienna's dance schools offer crash waltz dancing courses during the afternoon and transform Graben into an idyllic open-air ballroom. The large firework display which can be viewed from City Hall Square and in the Prater at midnight, not to be missed!

www.vienna.info



"...Vienna's
dance schools
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Graben into an
idyllic open-air
ballroom..."



"To celebrate Jerusalem's dynamic food movement, its restaurants open their doors annually for the Jerusalem Open Restaurants Festival..."

Teeming with vibrant streets, busy squares and restaurants, Jerusalem's modern awakening is ever-present, marking a cultural renaissance of creative fine-dining, critically acclaimed chefs and lively market stalls with a new night-time persona.

Mahane Yehuda, 'MachneYuda' to locals, is Jerusalem's most central market and widely recognised as a symbol of the lively communities who call the city home.

Famed as a crowded tangle of colourful stalls, the market brings together a bustling, dynamic exchange between vendors, busy locals and tourists, offering a variety of spices, meats and fruits alongside juice bars, coffee stands and popular bakeries.

After hours, the city's main marketplace dramatically transforms, reinventing itself as a lively nightlife hub with bars, clubs and DJ sets. Revealing its artistic alter-ego, the market showcases a vast open air gallery of contemporary and historical figures spray painted on the shutters, creating a lively atmosphere for socialising and dining at night. Brought to life by British born Israeli artist Solomon Souza, the marketplace contributes to Jerusalem's burgeoning arts scene, fit for any hungry millennial.

Inspiring one of the city's top restaurants, MachneYuda, a delicious gastro venue bringing ideas both old and new, the market is integrated within the city's communities and is the beating heart of its food scene.

Utilising an endless supply of ground beef, pickled mango, grilled onions, dates and spices, it's no surprise MachneYuda is deemed Jerusalem's signature restaurant. Similarly, Jacko's Street makes use of the market's produce and whips it up in front of guests in their urban open style kitchen.

Those in search of the finer things must try the Rooftop restaurant on top of the Mamilla Hotel. A venue no guest forgets, the Rooftop offers a varied menu of fresh natural ingredients, from grilled meats to fish dishes with magnificent views of the Old City.

On a more intimate scale, the Eucalyptus restaurant, a mere stone's throw away from the Old City walls, also makes for a memorable visit and has been touted one of the best restaurants in Israel. Famed for its modern reinterpretations of biblical cuisine, Eucalyptus infuses spices and herbs harmoniously into its dishes, creating a real zesty Middle Eastern flavour.

The Anna restaurant is perhaps the city's most unique dining venue and not only aims to serve great Italian inspired food but looks to better the lives of young people living in the community. Whilst tucking into a delicious truffle oil infused linguine, guests can feel satisfied in their contribution to the restaurant's wider social influence.

For those in search of eye candy, the bustling Muslim Quarter boasts a delightful view of pomegranate towers and rich spices, all of which line the

food stalls in the Old City. Hummus, pita and falafel stalls are omnipresent throughout both modern and ancient compounds and remain signature delicacies to the city.

Additionally, one of the most vibrant eateries in the city is The First Station a centre for leisure, culinary, tourism and events. Renovated from an old train station, The First Station is brimming with restaurants, cafes and drink bars. Adorn remains a popular dining venue, specialising in seafood and fresh fish, with strong French and Italian influences.

In addition to its range of restaurants the complex also boasts brasseries, patisseries and ice cream parlours with many diving in for a scoop from Vaniglia's fresh counter.

To celebrate Jerusalem's dynamic food movement, its restaurants open their doors annually for the Jerusalem Open Restaurants Festival. Running from 13th - 17th November 2018, the Festival is a celebration of Israel's long standing culinary delights and talented local and international chefs.

Offering tours of the tastes and specialities of the Jerusalem table, the festival allows food lovers and visitors to explore behind the scenes, exploring street markets to the most elegant establishments. Visitors can expect food talks, meetings and tastings with some of Jerusalem's top chefs.

Whatever kind of food you are after the city of Jerusalem has it all and it continues to welcome cuisines from all over the world, making it one of the most flavourful and culturally diverse cities in the world.

"...the city's main marketplace dramatically transforms, reinventing itself as a lively nightlife hub..."

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

•MACHNEYUDA

Beit Ya'akov St 10,
Jerusalem
t: +972 2-533-3442
www.machneyuda.co.il

•JACKO'S STREET

Agripas St 74, Jerusalem
t: +972 2-581-7178
www.ral.co.il
/sites/jackos-street

* ROOFTOP (®) MANILLA HOTEL

Shlomo ha-Melekh St 11,
Jerusalem
t: +972 2-548-2222
www.manillahotel.com/
Rooftop

•THE EUCALYPTUS

Felt alley (between Hativat
Yerushalayim 14 and Dror Eliel
st), Jerusalem
t: +972-2-6244331
www.the-eucalyptus.com

•ANNA ITALIAN CAFE

HaRav Agan St 10, Jerusalem
t: +972 2-543-4144
www.annarest.co.il

•THE FIRST STATION

David Remez St 4, Jerusalem
t: +972 2-653-5239
www.firststation.co.il/en/

•ADOM

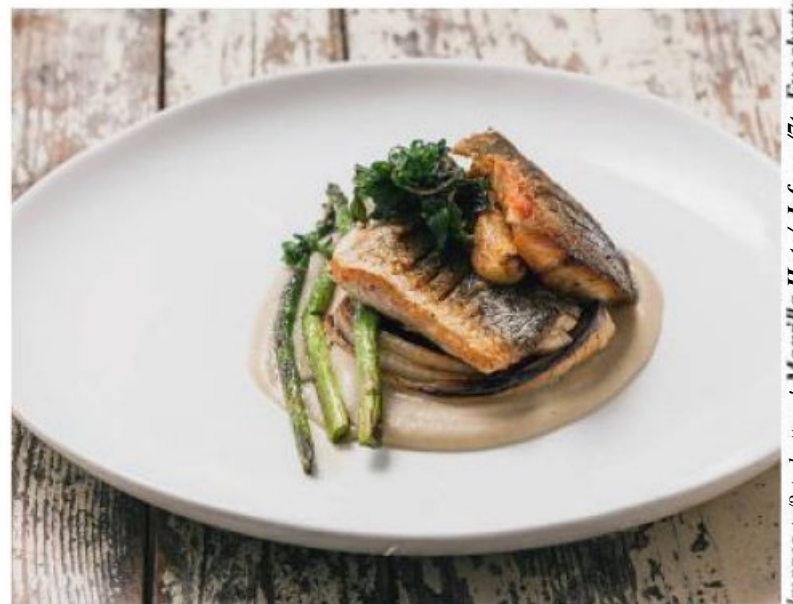
David Remez St 4, Jerusalem
t: +972 2-624-6242
www.adom.rest/en/

•VANIGLIA

David Remez St 4, Jerusalem
t: +972 72-270-4444
www.vaniglia.co.il

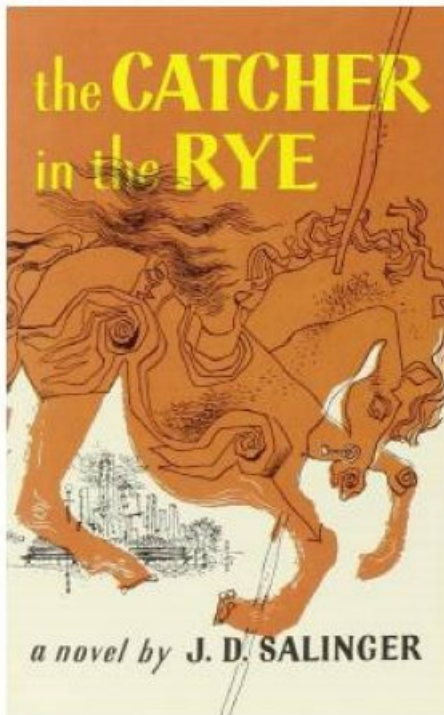
•JERUSALEM OPEN RESTAURANTS FESTIVAL

Dates: November 14-18
open-restaurants.co.il



BOOKS & AUTHORS WHO

NEW YORK: LITERARY LANDMARKS IN THE CITY THAT INSPIRED LITERARY MASTERPIECES



New York City is a haven for book lovers and is the setting for some of the world's best literary masterpieces from J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* to Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*.

The first hotel to bookmark is The Renwick Hotel New York City, which was once home to John Steinbeck and various celebrated writers and artists.

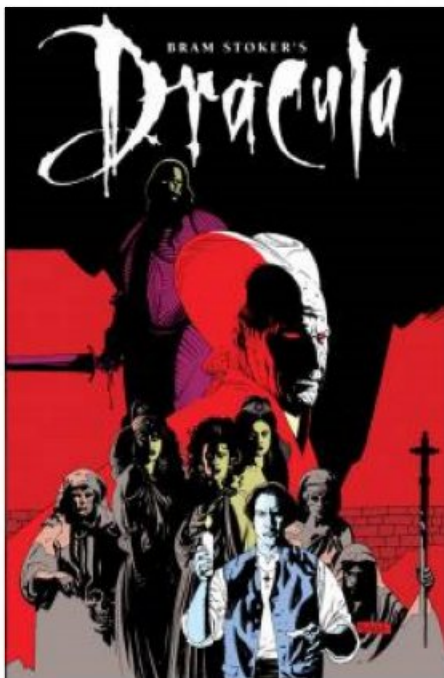
Guests staying at the Library' Hotel have access to a unique collection of literature and art where they can unwind with over 6,000 books in the reading room.

Book fans can also celebrate literary brilliance at the Round Table Room at The Algonquin Hotel where authors such as Dorothy Parker enjoyed daily lunches and renowned for inspiring the likes of E. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway.

Lastly; why not leap into the pages of *The Great Gatsby* at the Champagne Bar at the Plaza Hotel which is featured in F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous book.

www.nycgo.com

TRANSYLVANIA: VISIT THE HOME OF DRACULA ON AN ESCORTED COSMOS TOUR



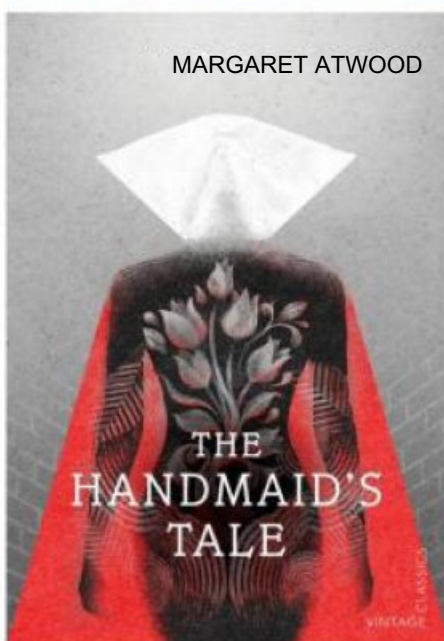
Dracula fans can sink your fangs into the 13-day Treasures of the Balkans and Transylvania classic escorted tour and visit the home of the legendary Vlad the Impaler, more commonly known as 'Count Dracula', made famous by the book of the same name by Irish author, Bram Stoker.

On this European adventure through Hungary; Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, explorers can roam the region's historical cities, connect with the locals and learn about the myths and mystery of the area.

Highlights include wandering the famous Buda Castle on a city tour and exploring the architectural styles in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia. Guests can visit the birthplace of the infamous Count Dracula in Sighisoara as well as visit the legendary castle inhabited by Count Dracula in the Old Town of Brasov.

www.cosmos.co.uk/tours/treasures-balkans-transylvania

ONTARIO: EXPLORE MARGARET ATWOOD'S ONTARIO



Born in Ottawa and raised in northern Ontario and Toronto, award-winning author Margaret Atwood has written more than forty books including *Alias Grace* and of course dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Having had two books adapted to Netflix series and one currently being adapted for HBO, there has never been a better time to follow in her footsteps in Ontario.

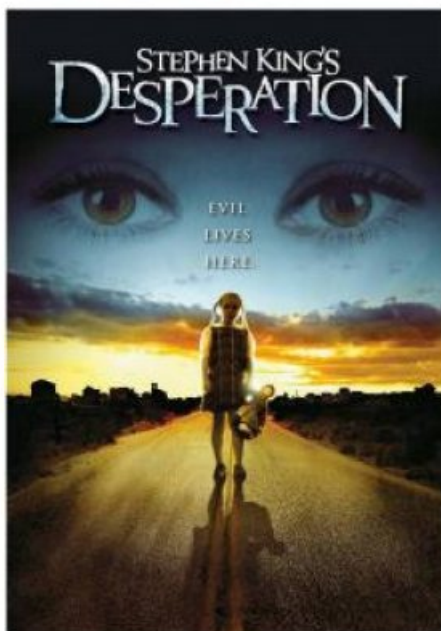
One of her most famous works, *Alias Grace*, was set in Kingston

where main character Grace Marks resided for 15 years for her murders. Visitors to Ontario can now visit Kingston Penitentiary — Canada's oldest and most notorious prison which was closed in 2013 and designated as a National Historic Site of Canada.

www.ontariotravel.net/
uk

INSPIRE US TO TRAVEL

NEVADA: FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF STEPHEN KING ALONG ROUTE 50



In 1991* celebrated author Stephen King travelled along the loneliest road in America, Route 50, and was inspired to write *Desperation* Nevada.

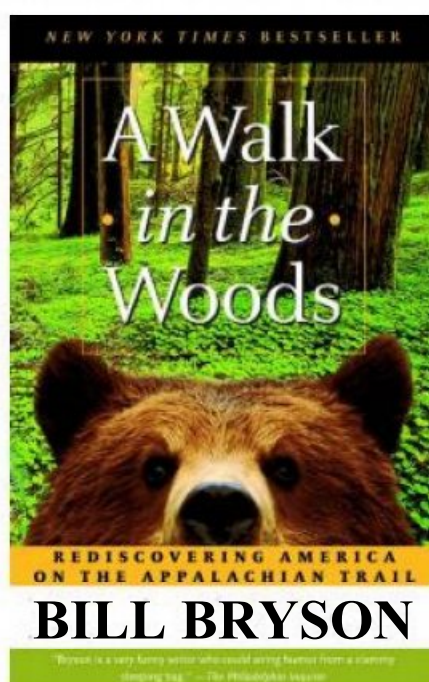
This is the ultimate off-the-beaten track experience for fans of the author, as you won't see another soul for the 287 mile stretch of road through the desert and will understand where Stephen King took his inspiration.

Apart from the tiny settlements

and ghost towns just like the town of Desperation, there are also breath-taking views of the Great Basin National Park with 18 separate mountain ranges and the Hickson Petroglyph Recreation Area home to 10,000-year-old rock carvings.

www.travelnevada.com

BRAND USA: BILL BRYSON REDISCOVERS AMERICA'S APPALACHIAN TRAIL



In The New York Times bestseller *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, Bill Bryson talks readers through his own experience of the great American wilderness.

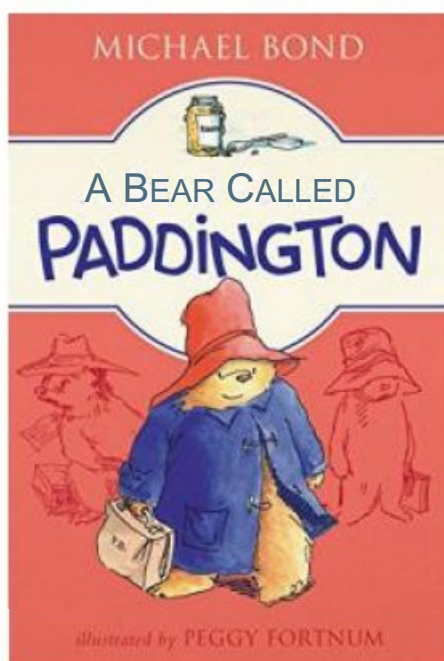
Bryson starts out one March morning in north Georgia, intending to walk the entire 2,200 miles of remote natural beauty to the trail's end atop Maine's Mount Katahdin.

The Appalachian trail or the AT,

as it is commonly called, is the best-known hiking trail in the United States and the longest continuous hiking trail in the world which crosses through 14 different

www.visittheusa.co.uk

PERU: CELEBRATE THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF PADDINGTON BEAR



This year marks the 60th anniversary of Michael Bond's original storybook, *A Bear Called Paddington*. The book, now translated into 40 languages, originally brought Paddington Bear to life in 1958 and depicts a story of a spectacled bear from Darkest Peru who arrives in London's Paddington station where he is found by Mr and Mrs Brown.

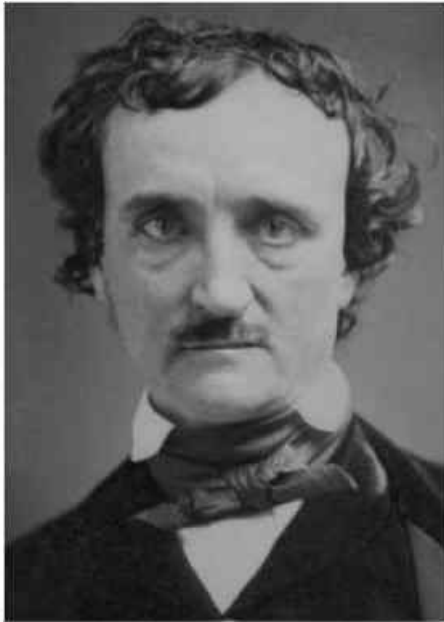
This anniversary, along with the Paddington 2 film release in late 2017, has put Peru's spectacled bears into the spotlight, as the country continues to protect its native spectacled bear population

through conservation efforts. The Andean or spectacled bear is the last remaining short-faced bear species in the world and only surviving species of bear native to South America.

The country's Spectacled Bear Conservation Society works collaboratively with private land owners and rural communities to protect Peru's spectacled bears through science, education and research and travellers to Peru can visit a spectacled bear rescue centre to see these beautiful animals first-hand.

BOOKS & AUTHORS WHO

BALTIMORE: HOME SWEET HOME FOR EDGAR ALLAN POE



In a tiny brick house on Baltimore's North Amity Street between 1833-1835, Edgar Allan Poe wrote some of the early stories that would go on to make him the father of the modern short story; and create and define the modern genres of mystery; horror and science fiction. His spirit and legacy lives on throughout Baltimore city, inspiring authors, poets, playwrights and even sports teams.

In celebration of his life, work and contribution to literature, visitors to Baltimore can take the self-guided tour of the Poe house, the only remaining home he ever

resided in, which includes exhibits on Poe's foster parents, his life and death in Baltimore and poems and short stories written in Baltimore. It also features significant artefacts including Poe's chair, lap desk and telescope.

For those keen to digest his literary work. The George Peabody Library in Mount Vernon Square houses many rare Poe books, writings and a number of original letters he wrote to novelist and politician John P. Kennedy.

www.baltimore.org

MONTREAL: DISCOVER THE HOME OF NOVELIST POET AND SONGWRITER LEONARD COHEN



Leonard Cohen Photo taken in Montreal in 1966 by Rocco Caratello

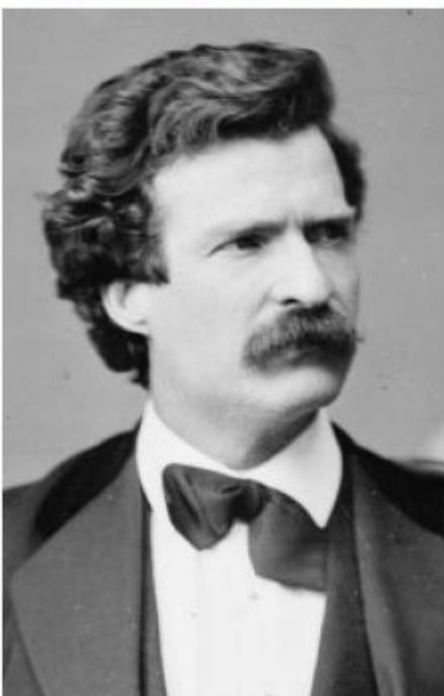
Montreal is not only the cultural centre of the Québec province, but was the home city of talented poet, novelist and singer-songwriter, Leonard Cohen. Through his talent and creativity, Cohen became internationally renowned and an icon of the vibrant city of Montreal.

Before his successful music career, Cohen was a novelist and poet who produced a series of works such as *The Favorite Game* and *The Book of Longing*, but it was *Beautiful Losers* that became Cohen's most critically acclaimed literary work and is recognised as one of the

best-known experimental novels of the 1960s. Following his death in 2016, Montreal's Musée d'art Contemporain (MAC) hosted the Leonard Cohen: 'A Crack in Everything' exhibition, attracting almost 300,000 visitors, which the museum is now in discussion to tour internationally.

www.quebecoriginal.com/en-gb

MAURITIUS: ESCAPE TO MARK TWAIN'S 'HEAVEN' ON EARTH



Mark Twain famously said 'Mauritius was made first, and then heaven, and heaven was copied after Mauritius.' With white sand beaches to sapphire Blue Ocean to lush tropical rainforest, it is easy to see why the celebrated author drew the comparison.

Mark Twain, who wrote literary greats such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, visited Mauritius on his 'Following the Equator' lecture tour between 1895-1896. Whilst there, he was overwhelmed by how stunning

the island was and his quote has gone down in history as capturing the true beauty of Mauritius.

www.tourism-mauritius.mu

INSPIRE US TO TRAVEL

THE PALM BEACHES: DISCOVER RARE SIGNED FIRST EDITIONS AT RAPTIS RARE BOOKS



Specialising in rare, signed and inscribed first editions, this antiquarian book gallery; nestled in the heart of picturesque Worth Avenue, opened its doors in Palm Beach in 2016. Founded by Matthew and Adrienne Raptis, Raptis Rare Books has built some of the finest collections in the world including fine first editions, signed and inscribed books and landmark books in all fields. Distinguishing themselves as the best in their field, Raptis Rare Books handles unique and important books that are in exceptional condition.

Currently, the most valuable book in the exceptional collection of landmark books and documents is John Locke's Two Treatises on Government, listed at £187,600. Other highlights include a rare finely bound first edition of Shakespeare's Fourth Folio at £75,000, a first edition of Casino Royale inscribed by Ian Fleming to his secretary at £120,000, and a first edition of The Cat in the Hat signed by Dr Seuss at £10,500.

www.thepalmbeaches.com

beaches,

JERUSALEM: HOME TO THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS. THE OLDEST BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS



Famed as one of the most historical cities in the world, it's no surprise Jerusalem houses one of the most sacred and fundamental texts in the history of literature, the Book of Books. Housed in the Israel

Museum, one of the top ten museums in the world, The Shrine of the Book Complex sits at the museum entrance and represents a journey through time. Built as a repository for the first

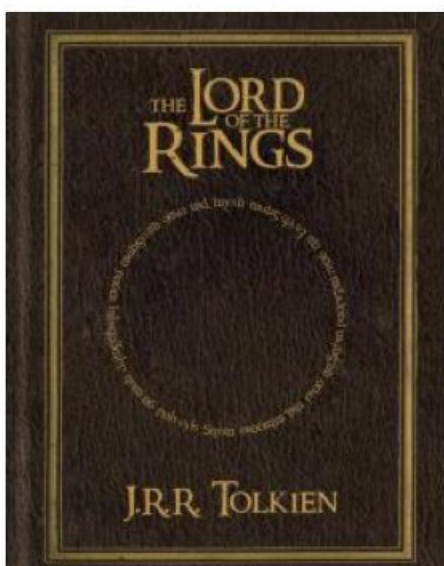
seven scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1947, the unique white dome holds the lids of the jars in which the first scrolls were found, this symbolic building, a form of sanctuary, intended to express profound spiritual meaning, is considered an international landmark of modern architecture.

ians living at Qumran, who attempted to translate the biblical ideals in these texts into a way of life. Approximately two thousand years old, the scrolls document a pivotal moment in history, influencing the closest text of the printed Hebrew Bibles used today.

www.itraveljerusalem.com/

The exhibition at the Shrine of the Book takes visitors on a journey, from the extant biblical manuscripts which were discovered in the Judean Desert, through the story of the sectarian-

BRECON BEACONS: DISCOVER JRR TOLKIEN'S REAL LIFE 'SHIRE'



film Brecon Beacons National Park, in South Wales, spans over 500 square miles of serene and secluded countryside. Inspiring JRR Tolkien's 'The Shire' in The Lord of the Rings, there are numerous similarities between the Welsh landscapes and the settings in his books, such as the hobbit settlement named Crickhollow; after Crickhowell, just nine miles from Talybont-on-Isk.

Visitors can spot the resemblances whilst hiking up the 451m peak Table Mountain (Crug Hywel).

The walk starts from Crickhowell, with its ruined Norman castle and 16th century 13-arched bridge, before crossing the river Usk, passing fields, woodlands and an Iron Age Hill Fort.

www.breconbeacons.org/

TOP 10 LUXURY HOTELS



KEMPINSKI HOTEL SOMABAY EGYPT

Soma bay is an exclusive Red Sea resort in Egypt. Just a 4 hours flight from Central Europe, with year round sunshine and mild temperatures, Somabay offers vacationers an ideal Red Sea holiday.

Here you can take advantage of the hotel's ideal beachfront location and enjoy panoramic views of the white sandy beaches and crystal clear turquoise water. Couples can also treat themselves to the Romantic Delights package which includes a private sunset boat trip, in-room breakfast and a romantic dinner under the stars.

For those looking for a fun escape with friends, the recently revamped Cascades Golf Resort, Spa and Thalasso, is the perfect option. Overlooking the lush green fairways of the Championship Golf Course, the hotel is a golfer's paradise and is also home to the largest spa in Africa, The Cascades Spa & Thalasso, so guests can relax to the max and leave the woes of day to day life behind.

Soma bay is home to some of the best kite-surfing and wind-surfing conditions in the world and is a firm favourite with beginners and professionals alike. Tick snorkelling or diving off the bucket list and explore the wonders of one of the most beautiful coral reefs in the world.

www.somabay.com

"...golfer's paradise
and is also home
to the largest
spa in Africa, The
Cascades Spa &
Thalasso..."



WHY HOUSE BOUTIQUE HOTEL SRI LANKA

Why House is a stunning, luxurious but informal, boutique hotel with 10 rooms near Galle, Sri Lanka. It is located a short walk or tuk-tuk ride away from the spectacular Dalawella Beach, where safe swimming is possible throughout the year. It is also just 15 minutes drive from the extraordinary UNESCO world heritage Gallo Fort and 2 hours 20 minutes drive from Colombo airport.

All the stylish rooms are individually designed with en suites and have private terraces overlooking the pool or tropical gardens. For couples there are spacious suites and for those looking for peace and privacy, cabanas, overlooking the paddy fields. For families and groups there are suites with an ante-room where children can sleep and interconnecting rooms in the garden villa and garden bungalow.

Why House offers Sri Lankan cooking demonstrations: cultural shows with music, dancers, traditional costumes, fire breathers, tumblers and and more; massages in the pavilion and yoga in the shala (studio). Delicious Sri Lankan, Western and Asian dishes are prepared with locally sourced ingredients by the in-house team.

www.whyhousesrilanka.com

"...Rooms and suites, all with stunning views of the Burj Al Arab elicit the calmness and serenity of the Arabian Gulf..."



JUMEIRAH BEACH HOTEL DUBAI

Jumeirah Beach Hotel is a jewel that must be seen and experienced. From the beach cabanas, kids club, outdoor and indoor dining, the beautiful lobby and arrival, through to the guest rooms with the best views of the Burj Al Arab anywhere in the city.

From the moment guests arrive into the light and airy lobby atrium, offering alluring views of the iconic Burj Al Arab, the interior design evokes moments of the sea.

Rooms and suites, all with stunning views of the Burj Al Arab elicit the calmness and serenity of the Arabian Gulf laid back yet both sophisticated and functional. Guests will wake up beautifully following a rejuvenating night's sleep in HYPNOS beds that come with the seal of approval of Her Majesty, The Queen of England.

The main family leisure pool continues to take centre stage with an expanded swim-up bar. Children can enjoy the new Kids Club inspired by the underwater world, and all guests have unlimited access to Wild Wadi Waterpark.

www.jumeirah.com/Dubai/Beach-Hotel



CAN LLUC IBIZA

Mere minutes from Sant Antoni, Santa Eulària and Ibiza Town, Can Lluç's one-in-a-million location means visitors needn't choose between world-famous DJs and the tranquility of a countryside sanctuary; Proprietors of Can Lluç, Tina Soriano and Lucas Prats, say it's all about giving guests and visitors "the luxury of Ibiza at its most authentic—tranquility, peace and quiet, nature, and the sort of Mediterranean setting that's nearly impossible to find elsewhere".

"We want to be that haven of peace, quiet and intimacy that, at the end of the day, we all yearn for on our holidays, but is still so hard to find", For Prats, it's all about "giving guests Ibiza at its most authentic, a paradise of beauty and tranquility like no other". In fact, he says, "Many of Can Lluç's guests are high-profile celebrities looking to disconnect. What they find at Can Lluç Hotel Boutique & Villas is the discretion and genuine luxury that everyone is dreams about".

There are many reasons the Ibizan retreat has captured the hearts of the island's holidaymakers—its green consciousness, world-class gastronomy, sustainable facilities management, friendly customer service and, above all, a passion for well-being. A true wonder, Can Lluç is one of a kind and immensely different from the rest of the island's retreats. It is the ideal place to relax and take in the Ibizan outdoors, long walks through the retreat's sprawling gardens and woods, massages and spa treatments and personalised yoga sessions.

www.canlluc.com/en



SIX SENSES ULUWATU, BALI

Six Senses has opened an alt-suite and villa resort perched the Uluwatu clifftops with spectacular views of the Indian Ocean. This coastline is also one of the top places on the island to bear witness to spectacular sunsets with sweeping panoramas out to the Indian Ocean.

"The resort is set atop a rugged cliff, sharing spectacular ocean views with the island's famed Uluwatu Temple. Drawing upon the renowned Six Senses commitment of providing top-tier facilities wedded to environmental responsibility, the resort and spa has been brilliantly designed.

Six Senses Uluwatu is home to 28 Sky Suites, 62 one-bedroom villas and seven two-bed room villas that draw upon the local culture, embrace nature, and offer every creature comfort. The ultimate in Six Senses accommodations is the expansive and beautifully-appointed Retreat Villa which sits on a prominent knoll with sweeping views of the ocean and resort beyond. There are also two restaurants, a pool bar, a restaurant with a Chef's Table and cooking school, and an extensive organic garden is also planned.

"The spa features locally-inspired specialty treatments together with an extensive menu of signature therapies. There is something for everyone, from multi-day wellness programmes to rejuvenation therapies and detox, as well as a selection of activities and complimentary morning yoga. In addition to the Six Senses Spa, on-site facilities include a vast central pool and a state-of-the-art gym.

www.sixsenses.com



850, LOS ANGELES

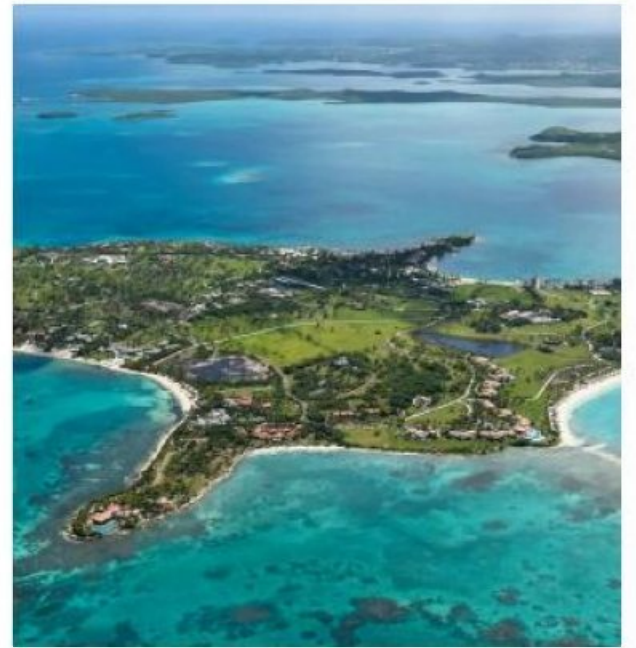
"This chic new 23 room boutique hotel, situated in the heart of West Hollywood and created by Jeff Klein's JK Hotel Group and designed by Rita König, feels more like a home-from-home with distinct interiors by British designer Rita König.

The hotel's facade is in the style of a historical bungalow, tucked away in a residential neighbourhood surrounded by must-see hotspots — including Sunset Boulevard, Melrose Avenue and Runyon Canyon - coffee shops and restaurants.

This chic home offers a sanctuary from the hectic city. All spaces are for hotel guests only, allowing them to connect on a more personal level while enjoying a communal experience. The intimacy of the hotel creates a unique communal experience among guests. The lobby lounge, which sits at the heart of the hotel, doubles up as a bar serving an extensive menu of premium wines, spirits and cocktails, carefully curated by Klein and his team.

A series of revolving Chefs from across LA have been invited to cook dinner for guests showcasing local delicacies and international cuisine. The beautiful rooftop terrace offers spectacular views of the city which guests can enjoy, accompanied by wine and mezze.

www.number850.com



JUMBY BAY ISLAND, ANTIGUA

Set in one of the most beautiful, untouched locations in the world, Jumby Bay Island is a 300-acre private island of simple pleasures in the Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda. Ringed with coral reefs, and easily accessed by a short private boat transfer from mainland Antigua with not a car in sight, this secluded isle of white-powdered beaches and winding bicycle paths is a one-of-a-kind hideaway.

Among discerning travellers, Jumby Bay Island is known as 'the jewel in the crown of Caribbean resorts', encapsulating everything about a far-flung hideaway — with secluded sun-kissed beaches lapped by pristine turquoise waters; private sand-side picnics; and barefoot walks across Jumby's long golden sand bar that gives the illusion that it is floating in the open sea.

Now part of the prestigious Oetker Collection, Jumby Bay Island has emerged from a meticulous refurbishment with a fresh Caribbean Ocean-inspired look and feel and design by Patricia Anastassiadis, who comments: "Delicacy, beauty, exclusivity' and luxury are some of the adjectives that define Jumby Bay. A pearl in the middle of the Caribbean Sea, a small portion of land surrounded by fine white sand."

www.oetkercollection.com

"The resort is set atop a rugged cliff, sharing spectacular ocean views with the island's famed Uluwatu Temple"



BARNETT HILL UK

Barnett Hill is a historic Queen-Anne style country house, dating back to 1905. The elegant mansion, set within 26 acres of lovingly maintained gardens and woodland, is now a luxury four-star boutique hotel offering award-winning dining and breath-taking views of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty⁷. Situated in a peaceful rural setting just 30 minutes from London, Barnett Hill is the ideal destination for weddings, corporate events and romantic getaways.

Barnett Hill, a luxury four-star hotel, was purchased by the Alexander Hotels group in September 2016 and has recently completed an extensive two-year renovation, which has seen it transform into an indulgent getaway and luxury wedding venue. Alexander Hotels now consists of Alexander House, Langshott Manor, Row Hill Grange and Barnett Hill.

Peter Hinchcliff, co-owner of Barnett Hill, said: "Now⁷ we're looking forward to welcoming guests into our newly revamped venue, while also progressing with our plans to redevelop the bar to better reflect our renewed focus on luxury and indulgence."

www.alexanderhotels.co.uk/barnett-hill

"...luxury four-star boutique hotel offering award-winning dining and breath-taking views of the Surrey Hills..."



GOATFELL SRI LANKA

Perched amongst tea bushes amidst the Concordia Estate, Goatfell is a former superintendent's residence on an astonishing 100m-of-the-world elevation above Netware Eliya. Goatfell is home to just four ensuite bedrooms in the main house, with living and dining rooms.

"The intimate experience follows through at every point of guests' stay - from butler service to the restaurant's menu, which draws on seasonal vegetables grown by the hotel's neighbour, translated into a combination of Sri Lankan and Western dishes, the interiors of the former bungalow resonate with the warmth and country charm of a bygone era, offering log-fired sitting rooms and panoramic tea field views from the swimming pool.

To design the property; Teardrop Hotels used the same architects who renovated the award-winning Port Bazaar - Philip Wieraratne Architects - to offer a contemporary⁷ take on a traditional planter's bungalow⁷. Almost all of the furniture has been made in Sri Lanka by Only & Co Creative, with some characterful antique pieces included to retain an old-meets-new interior."

www.teardrop-hotels.com/goatfell



MILAIIDHOO, MALDIVES

A small, elegant island in Baa Atoll's beautiful UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Milaidhoo has 50 spacious thatched-roof villas each with a private pool as well as three top-class restaurants, a fitness center, spa, incredible house reef and spectacular diving.

Milaidhoo can be easily reached via a 30-minute seaplane from the international airport in Male or a 15-minute domestic flight to Uthmaniyar or a 15-minute speedboat to Milaidhoo Island.

Guests at the hotel can opt to spend the night as castaways under the stars on their very own private sandbank, transformed with the luxury facilities of a Milaidhoo Villa, the sandbank comes with a canopied four-poster bed draped in muslin and a private yacht anchored nearby, complete with a dressing room and bathroom with all the amenities guests would expect to find back at the hotel.

"The castaway experience kicks off with a sunset dolphin cruise aboard either a luxury yacht or a traditional Maldivian sailing boat. Guests will be served champagne and canapés by a private butler as dolphins swim around them and the sun begins to set and after arriving at the secluded sandbank, cocktails are served followed by a four-course dinner specially created for the guests.

After dinner, as the crew sail away, guests are left to enjoy post dinner drinks by the fire before heading off to sleep under the stars surrounded by candles and lanterns that have been scattered across the sandbank. A phone is provided with direct access to the personal butler should guests need anything throughout the night.

As the sun rises, guests can kick-start the day with the Milaidhoo Yogi who will take them through a sunrise yoga session before the butler arrives to serve a freshly prepared breakfast.

www.milaidhoo.com

WEEKENDS AWAY

Arriving on the south Devon coast on a hot and sunny afternoon, I'm offered a glass of chilled wine and a home baked chocolate brownie (bang goes my diet). Relaxing out on the little terrace at the front of this delightful Edwardian sea side villa surrounded by lovely pots of petunias I sip my wine and recover from my drive from London.

I'm now feeling refreshed and back in the zone, so Andy shows me up to my room (The Torre Suite) and it certainly has the wow factor!

The theme is zebras; wide striped black and white wall paper, a faux zebra head on the wall (that will be 'Frank') wearing funky sunglasses aid, upon the super king sized bedroom. I see bright yellow scatter cushions and matching bed throw.

It's no wonder that Andy and Julian are continuously being summoned to the hotel industries awards ceremonies. The place is awash with creativity and artistic flare. If these two were to ever want a career change I'm sure that all the top stores would be clambering over one another to get their hands on the sassiest window dressers in the business.

When Andy and Julian were doing the renovations, comfort and space for the guests was key, even though it meant reducing the amount of rooms, from both the guests' and the hosts' perspective, this was a great decision as there are rooms to suit all requirements.

You may prefer to have a suite with separate bedroom and sitting room areas, great if you're staying several nights and don't want to spend the evening watching TV in your bedroom. The overall feeling is of a fun, quirky, colourful B&B with in-room high technology (flat screen TV whilst you shower, iPad including a magazine app, free movies on demand on the Smart TV, air con and mood lighting).

If you're partial to a bit of glitz, why not book the Broad-sands room with its purple sparkly walls, crystal chandelier knobs and luxurious slipper bath, it doesn't get more glam than that.

Each room has a Nespresso coffee maker, a great selection of teas, Andy's home baked daily treat (diet really not going well at all now) and a jar of old fashioned sweets with flavours that will whisk you back to yesteryear. No worries

if you've inadvertently left your toiletries behind because these great hosts have made sure to provide complimentary goodies such as toothbrush kits, razors, slippers and, to ensure you get your 8 hours, eye masks and earplugs. Little touches like this make it a unique and special experience.

Indulge yourself with the Elemis products in the bathroom. Lovely soft towels and robes are also provided. Don't worry about missing your favourite film or soap whilst taking a shower; there's a flat screen TV on the wall with a waterproof remote controller; such opulence, such fun.

What a treat to have a walk-in wardrobe/dressing room with a dressing table and well lit mirror. Comfortable enough to get ready at my leisure whilst watching another of the 3 flat screen TVs in the room.

Another perk is that there is high speed Wi-Fi available in all rooms. You would think that in this day and age this would be standard, but there are still a lot of hotels where it's either impossible to connect or, just as frustrating, painfully slow, but not here.

BREAKFAST AT THE 25 BOUTIQUE B&B

Boasting even more awards (AA Breakfast Award 2015-2018 and Aviko Great British Breakfast Award 2016) the

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breakfast room has a fresh, quaint feel about it with its pale butter yellow chintzy walls.

There's plenty of choice on the sideboard; healthy smoothie shots, homemade granola, fruit juice, fresh fruit salad, yoghurt and a variety of cereals. There's also a good selection of cooked breakfast options on the menu, all of which are to a standard that has earned the reputation that it so rightly deserves.

WHAT TO DO IN TORQUAY

So what has Torquay got to offer? Just a couple of minutes walking distance, and you can explore the Abbey which dates back to 1196. Learn about its early years, initially a monastery and then home to the Cary family who resided in the Abbey for hundreds of years.

Horatio Nelson once attended a dinner here and this is recreated in the Dining Room. Now a gallery and museum, there are over 600 incredible works of art from the 18th century to the present day and the grounds are pretty and peaceful.

Walk down through the Abbey Leisure Park where there is a bowling green, tennis courts and golfing and make your way to the Abbey Sands, a glorious stretch of beach on the English Riviera. A 10 minute walk along the attractive promenade will get you to Torquay Harbour and the town centre where you will find a good choice of shops, cafes and restaurants.

Tilt your head for heights and get a bird's-eye view of Torquay harbour and town centre on the English Riviera Wheel at 60 metres high in Pavilion Gardens.

Get close to nature and visit Living Coasts, this is an amazing zoo that houses many species of coastal birds and aquatic wildlife. Watch the comical penguins, check out the otters at feeding time and say hello to the seals. There are panoramic underwater viewing areas and a cafe with stunning sea views overlooking the bay.

Afidi and Julian will give you loads of helpful information about where to go and what to do and will even supply you with a print out of places to go and eat, in and outside of Torquay, that have all been tried and tested by themselves, there is also very helpful information about places to go and things to do on their website too.

If you want to explore further afield and are without a car, fear not. Torquay and Torre railway stations are about half a mile away, and there are local buses and ferries to get you to places too.

What can I say about my stay at 'The 25'? The awards really speak for themselves but as a customer, I have gone away feeling that I have experienced the best of English coastal B&B. The standard is above and beyond the norm, the service is faultless and would I want to come and stay again? Without a doubt, most definitely.

"...the breakfast room has a fresh, quaint feel about it with its pale butter yellow chintzy walls..."

The 25 Boutique B&B
25 Avenue Road,
Torquay
TQ2 5LB

t: 01803 297 517) www.the25.uk

Viestra Magazine recommends booking direct - you are guaranteed best prices.



Antwerp is not typically recognised as a mind blowing holiday destination. But that is part of its appeal. It has managed to avoid the tourist traps of other Belgian hotspots like the quaint Ghent and moneyed Brussels.

However, you might still need some convincing on its allure, for a start, you will have to expect unpredictable weather! Nestled between Germany, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, summer time is prone to days of rain, followed by weeks of sunshine, but when it's hot it gets hot!

Even the food (waffles, chocolate, frites and beer) might make you feel a little sluggish, but thankfully it is easy to find healthier food too. And if you choose to eat out alone no one will bat an eye; It might take you a few days to understand that although the plates are fairly small, the portions are pretty big, so no need to over order or think you're being ripped off.

Mostly, Antwerp politely simmers away on the periphery of underground, unless you know any thing about fashion! the DNA of Belgian fashion is best described as surreal and avant-garde, and Antwerp in particular is famous for it's fashion Academy and talents terrible "Antwerp Six" who wreaked havoc in the eighties. Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester, Dirk Van Saene, Walter Van Beirendonck, Dirk Bikkembergs and Marina Yee changed the international fashion scene, and have set the precedent for grad school designers ever since. Their innovative approach to design at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts has transformed Antwerp into a reputable destination in the fashion world. Alas, the Mode Museum (MoMu) is closed until 2020 for a complete renovation, but expect it to bounce back with an inspiring range of dynamic exhibits when it does.

In fact, in a non shouty way, Antwerp is rich in cultural heritage. Look beyond the fashion design, there are plenty of museums and galleries to keep you occupied on a long weekend visit.

The picturesque city is easy to get around. Public transport is regular, and you can get a travel card for the duration of your stay. But it is just as easy to walk or hire a bike. With a flat terrain, walking was my preferred mode, and it made sense as the buildings were spectacularly beautiful.

I would recommend regularly looking up so you can take in the pretty properties. Reminding me of New York's brownstone architecture, the wrought iron balconies and beautiful brickwork on tree lined streets would make living here a pleasure. Hardly any traffic, and alfresco dining on pretty much every corner, cements Antwerp as a European city. The bonus being you won't be suffocated with car fumes as you are enjoying your latte, brunch or date night

Indeed, this is what the locals seem to spend their time doing. Every night as I ventured out on a new sidewalk, the restaurants and bars were littered with softly spoken groups of well behaved locals. If there is a more raucous nightlife, I didn't find it. But I was assured that I could dance the night away in a converted church (Café d'Anvers) if I had the urge for techno! Ideally, my recommendation would be to head to Antwerp for a romantic break, The candle lit tables, cobbled streets, and fairy light alleys are perfect for courting.

The bridge over River Scheldt shouldn't be missed for the stunning sunset vistas of the city skyline and late night meandering. Get serenaded by buskers or just get relax on a bench whilst enjoying the view. But if you get on really well with your partner you might be tempted to check out Antwerp's famous diamond district. Housed in the centre of town, you can find thousands of diamond traders, cutters and polishers who are happy for customers to browse. There are more than 1,800 shops over 2km, so it won't be a quick visit!

from historical baroque galleries to modern art and cuisine, there is plenty to keep fidgeters entertained for a long weekend. It's an architecture lover's dream with everything from baroque, neoclassical modernist, brutalist to art deco consisting in harmony; The Flemish Renaissance architecture is typified

"...brownstone architecture, the wrought iron balconies and beautiful brickwork on tree lined streets would make living here a pleasure,"

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by the Grote Markt, a central square in the old town. At the 17th-century Rubens House, period rooms display works by the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens. You also won't be able to miss the city's tallest building, towering at 123 metres - the Cathedral of our Lady or Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal which is the largest Gothic structure in the Benelux! It took 169 years (completed in 1521) to finish and it is listed as one of the World's Heritage Sites.

You won't have to completely overload on culture though as there are plenty of interesting shopping streets to satisfy your retail therapy. Contemporary furniture and homeware being super popular, and mostly found in the Zuid District. Interior design stores, spacious showrooms and contemporary galleries are also in this neighbourhood. Along with emerging fashion designers - don't be put off by the cool exteriors, the staff welcome browsers!

There are also countless vintage arcades lining the tree strewn boulevards and ancient artefacts, whether that be turn of the century' teaspoons, clocks, larger items of furniture and bring a brae spill over onto the street in the Grote Markt area. However Sunday's are when the locals come out in force for the weekly flea sale at the mouth of the Sint-Annatunnel: perfect for rummaging and picking up interesting old jewellery', vintage gloves, classic books or crockery.

Vintage clothes fans are not forgotten either, as there is quite a buzz around the amount of retro stores. Not particularly cheap, but there are several which are worth a visit and have a showroom of high end designers in mint condition (try Rosier 41). But if you prefer something box fresh head to Antwerp's version of Bond Street, Nationalestraat, for a wide range of luxe, designer led concept stores.

Being Europe, Antwerp also has an established Christmas market throughout the festive season. From December 5th - January 6th you can enjoy a cup of hot chocolate or glass of Glühwein whilst perusing over 100 stalls selling homemade gifts, toys, decorations and more. Located next to the main station around Groenplaats through to the Market Square, this will definitely get you in the mood for the big man. And if you are feeling particularly cheery, you can show off some moves on the ice rink or sit on Santa's knee!

So come with a partner, space in your suitcase, and some comfortable walking shoes, and Antwerp is your oyster.

GETTING THERE

Fly to Antwerp or take the Eurostar to Brussels and a short local train ride to see the impressive Antwerp station.

PLACES MENTIONED

* Cafe Danvers

Antwerp nightclub.
Verversrui 15, 2000.
www.cafedanvers.com

* The Diamond District

Hoveniersstraat 53, 2018

* Grote Markt

Centro Historico, 2800

* Rubenshuis (Rubens house)

Former home and studio of Peter Paul Rubens, turned museum.
Wapper 9-11, 2000.
www.rubenshuis.be

* Cathedral of our Lady (Frauenkirche)

Tallest steeple in the city.
www.dekathedraal.be

* Sunday Flea Market

Antiques market.
Sint-jansvliet 19, 2000.

* Rosier 41

Luxury used fashion store.
Rosier 41, 2000.
www.rosier41.be

* Nationalestraat

Shopping zone fashion district.
Nationalestraat, 2000.

OTHER PLACES WORTH MENTIONING

* Hotel Pilar

Located in the city's trendy Zuid district.
Leopold de Waelplaats 34, 2000.
www.hotelpilar.be

* Muziekcafe De Kroeg

Real Belgian beers.
Woistraat, 46, 2000.

* Museum of Contemporary Art

Antwerp (MHKA),
Leuvenstraat 32, 2000.
www.muhka.be

* Fotomuseum Antwerp (FOMLI) museum of photography

Walsekaai 47, 2000.
www.fotomuseum.be

* DIVA - diamond museum

Suikerrui 17/19, 2000.
www.divaantwerp.be

* De Koninck Brewery

City Brewery for local beers.
Mechelsesteenweg 291 2018.
www.dekoninck.be

