

THE SUNDAY TIMES

SECTION 6 | JANUARY 06, 2013

travel

Driving
INSIDE



52 WEEKENDS

Be lazy, be active, explore the city or hit the beach.
Turn to page 6 for a year's worth of inspiring short breaks

PLUS Trekking in Burma ★ Ski adventure in the Alps ★ Guide to the Stans

52 WEEKENDS

Saturdays and Sundays for 2013 sorted, whatever your idea of the perfect break away

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forehand, backhand, first and second serves and net play. A weekend in April starts at £299pp, B&B, including coaching. Airlines flying to Murcia include easyJet (0843 104 5000, easyjet.com) and Jet2 (0871 226 1737, jet2.com).

8 Mountain biking, Wales

Mud Trek (07590 923604, mudtrek.com) offers fully catered mountain-bike breaks in Carmarthenshire, combining fresh air and adrenaline with fine dining in a converted barn beside the demanding Brechfa trails. Think of it as a ski chalet for mountain bikers. Two-night weekend breaks start at £295pp, full-board, based on two sharing, dropping to £125pp for eight sharing. Bike hire costs £40 a day.

9 Terry-Thomas, West Sussex

If the idea of blatting along country lanes in a spanking little roadster with a game filly at your side is the stuff of your weekend fantasies, you should check into the Goodwood Hotel (01243 775337, goodwood.co.uk). Its two-night Classic Car Weekender includes a day's use of an Austin Healey or an E-type Jag, and costs £435, B&B, per couple. Bring your own filly.

10 Rambling in the Marches

The Three Castles Walk links the Trilateral Castles, a triangle of Norman outposts built to maintain order. And at just 24 miles, it can be accomplished in a weekend. Starting at White Castle early on Saturday morning, you amble south to Grosmont Castle, and finish at Skenfrith Castle on Sunday, overnighting in Abergavenny. It costs £185pp, B&B, including packed lunches, maps and luggage transfers, with Celtic Trails (01291 689774, celtic-trails.com).

11 Fishing in the Cotswolds

The Old Swan & Minster Mill, in Minster Lovell (01993 744441, oldswanandminstermill.com), is a gastropub and boutique guesthouse with another big attraction: the River Windrush flows past the Cotswold property, and the pub will give you two rods for the weekend for either the trout season (April 1 to September 30) or grayling season (June 6 to March 14). Two nights costs £450pp, B&B, including a picnic.

12 Commando training, Scotland

Cameron House (0871 222 4198, deveve.co.uk) is a five-star luxury resort on Loch Lomond, and home to the Commando Conditioning Boot Camp. This involves Royal Marines-inspired physical training, high-speed boat rides, military orienteering and almost definitely being shouted at and thrown in the loch. Then, to make you feel all better, you can go to the spa and have a nice massage. The two-night boot camp happens once a month and costs £487pp, B&B.

13 Humiliation by children

Amuse your children by showing them how out of shape you've become, on a Family Active break with PGL (0844 371 2424, pgl.co.uk). It has adventure centres on the Isle of Wight and in Surrey, Dorset, Wiltshire, Lincolnshire, Shropshire, Devon and Perthshire. Expect abseiling, aeroballing, archery, climbing, zip wires, biking, raft building and watersports. Two nights, with all meals and activities, starts at £145 per adult; kids aged between 6 and 18 pay £139; under-6s go free.

14 Safari, Kenya

A long weekend in Africa is possible. Hop on Kenya Airways' 7pm departure from Heathrow on Thursday, arriving in Nairobi at 6am on Friday. Then take the Safarilink flight to the Masai Mara, and by 11am you'll be in the bush. Spend three days, all-inclusive, at Kicheche Mara Camp, do the entire journey in reverse and you'll be back at your desk, all sunburnt and dusty, on Tuesday morning. Prices start at £1,750pp, full-board, including flights, with Safari Consultants (01787 888590, safari-consultants.co.uk).

CITYBREAKS

15 Skating, Amsterdam

If there's a big freeze this winter, dash to Amsterdam for a skate along its canals. Last year, the Prinsengracht, Keizersgracht and Brouwersgracht froze over, and this year there's hope that the freeze will be deep enough to allow the opening of the Elfstedentocht — the Eleven Cities Tour — a 125-mile course around the country's canal system. The boutique Amsterdam hotel the Dylan (00 31 20 530 2010, dylanamsterdam.com) has a two-night Winter Skating Package for £308pp, half-board, with skate hire, entry to the rink on the Museumplazt — in case the canals are still liquid — and an Amsterdam City Pass, giving you free public transport and museum entry. Airlines flying to Amsterdam include KLM (0871 231 0000, klm.com) and Flybe (0871 700 2000, flybe.com).

16 Secret shopper, Barcelona

Barcelona is a shopper's paradise, with the alleyways of the Goticó and the backstreets of Eixample hiding hundreds of shops, from the food store Colmado Quilez to the fashion boutique Coquette. The trick is knowing where to look, which is where the Mandarin Oriental's Friends for Life package comes in, offering a sassy personal shopper who'll score you some useful discounts. Book it with Kuoni (01306 747008, kuoni.co.uk), which has two nights at the Mandarin Oriental from £640pp, B&B, including flights and transfers.

17 London weekend

George Gilbert Scott's St Pancras Chambers is London's gothic masterpiece. Part of it is now the St Pancras Renaissance hotel, and the rest has been turned into posh apartments — none posher, or more impressive, than the Clock Tower. Bizarre, then, that this designer pad should be available to rent from only £390 a night. It sleeps six, which works out at £65pp. Book it through Onefinestay (0800 612 4377, onefinestay.com).

18 Walking marathons

See Amsterdam, Barcelona, Edinburgh or Paris in a way few tourists ever accomplish, on a 26-mile, one-day walk designed to inject you beneath the skin of the city. You'll set off alone

and at your own pace, armed with a map, meeting up with your guides at random points en route. There's a rescue vehicle for when you've had enough, and you have all day Sunday to let those blisters heal. Scheduled throughout the summer, it costs £200pp for Edinburgh, £300pp for Amsterdam and Paris, including Eurostar returns, and £300pp for Barcelona — fly there with easyJet (0843 104 5000, easyjet.com) or Monarch (0871 940 5040, monarch.co.uk). You'll stay in two- or three-star hotels on a B&B basis. Book through Discover Adventure (01722 718444, discoveradventure.com).

19 Trabant tour, Berlin

The DDR may have been buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall, but wistfulness over the bad old days is endemic among former East Germans. They call it Ostalgie, and Ostpro (messen.de), a vast, twice-yearly market dealing in mementos from the DDR, feeds their yearning. The next market runs from April 12 to 14, and if you're going, you should arrive by Trabant car — the belching, two-stroke smoke machine that gave communism a bad name. Wexas Travel (020 7590 0610, wexas.com)

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has a self-drive Trabi tour from £295pp, with B&B at the four-star Kurfuerstendamm Hotel, and flights.

20 Clubbing, Stockholm

The people who run the glam Swedish hotel the Berns (00 468 566 32200, berns.se) also own the capital's hottest nightspots. So if you're staying as their guest, you get a VIP wristband allowing you to jump the queues at Gallery 2.35, Ambassadeur, Hell's Kitchen, Sturecompagniet, White Room and Spy Bar. Two nights start at £215pp, B&B. Flights are extra: get there with SAS (0871 226 7760, flysas.com) or Norwegian (020 8099 7254, norwegian.com).

21 Five-star secret, Italy

Palazzo Gorgoni is a B&B in the exuberantly baroque city of Lecce, in Puglia, but not just any B&B. A minute's walk from the Piazza Sant'Oronzo, this is an 18th-century palazzo, restored to offer a spacious, five-star feel, that costs from — wait for it — only £55 a room per night, booked through Essential Italy (01223 460100, essentialitaly.co.uk). Fly to Brindisi, 30 miles away, with Ryanair (0871 246 0000, ryanair.com).

22 Art, Zurich

You can't stay in an art gallery, but Zurich's Dolder Grand comes close enough, with a private art

collection that includes works by Dali, Pissarro, Henry Moore, Miro, Damien Hirst, Keith Haring and Andy Warhol. Go in February and you can nip out to the Chagall exhibition at the Kunsthaus Zurich (kunsthaus.ch), or catch the Munch show there in October. The Dolder Grand's art package includes tickets to the exhibition of your choice, two nights' B&B and one dinner, and costs £835pp. Airlines flying to Zurich include BA (0844 493 0787, ba.com) and Swiss (0845 601 0956, swiss.com).

23 Titanic, Belfast

Belfast is home to Europe's most exciting new museum, bringing the Titanic back to life through a combination of state-of-the-art holographics, chilling relics and documentation. The gallery where you watch the liner's final moments while reading the ever-more desperate wireless signals will chill you. See for yourself with a weekend break at the Culloden Estate and Spa (028 9042 1066, hastingshotels.com), where two nights' B&B, with a four-course dinner, costs from £125pp.

24 Carnival, Venice

On a cold February night, with candlelight reflected on the canals, and the alleyways crowded with masked revellers, you'll find Venice transformed from a crowded summer theme park to a



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city both charming and sinister. The Splendid Venice hotel has a carnival package that makes fitting in easy: as well as two nights' B&B, you get a costume and two tickets for the Grand Theatre in St Mark's Square. It costs £355pp — flights are extra. Airlines flying to Venice include easyJet (0843 104 5000, easyjet.com) and Monarch (0871 940 5040, monarch.co.uk). Tickets for the Mascheranda Grand Ball start at £320pp (venice-carnival-italy.com).

LAZY

25 Springtime, Sardinia

Empty beaches, sunny skies and the smell of rosemary make spring the best time to visit Sardinia. With few visitors around, it's a perfect opportunity to explore the back roads,



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seeking out home-made *pecorino sardo* and *agriturismi* serving up pork and beans, and egg and tomato on toast. Stay at the lovely Hotel Rocce Sarde, in the northeast of the island, with Just Sardinia (01202 484858, justsardinia.co.uk), which has two nights in May from £265pp, B&B, including flights and transfers.

26 Bus stop, Herefordshire

The Majestic Bus is a 1960s charabanc that has been converted into a weekend bolt hole for two at Penycastell, six miles north of Hay-on-Wye. There's a double bed, a kitchen, a woodburner, Cath Kidston-type frippery and wonderful views across the Welsh Marches. If you need culture, go to Hay, and if you need exercise, the

Brecon Beacons are nearby. Three nights — from Friday to Monday — cost from £310, booked through Canopy & Stars (01275 395447, canopyandstars.co.uk).

27 Spa break, Lake Garda

Fancy a shamelessly lazy weekend combining spa treatments, long lunches and messing about on Lake Garda? Then check into the Lefay Resort & Spa for two nights. The price is £820pp, B&B, including flights, transfers, two spa treatments and a boat trip, booked through Wellbeing Escapes (0845 602 6202, wellbeingescapes.co.uk).

28 Narrowboating, Cheshire

The Anderton Boat Lift, designed to lift barges the 50ft from the River Weaver up to the Trent and Mersey

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