



How to get an Olympic body by Matt Roberts
PLUS The wildflowers at the Olympic Park

Weekend

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Travel doctor



Q My husband and I hope to go on a trip of a lifetime to Canada. Our budget is about £10,000 and we would like to include a train journey through the Rockies, Vancouver, Vancouver Island and its famous gardens, a cruise to Alaska, and seeing polar bears, whales and bears. Is there a company that can organise all this or do we need to book each separately?

Anna Crawford, via e-mail

A The problem with this itinerary, according to Canadian specialist Prestige Holidays (01502 567222,

prestige-holidays.co.uk) is that polar bear viewing is in Manitoba and while it is possible in summer the most popular time is October or November and Alaska cruises finish in late September. It would also bump up the price of the holiday well beyond your budget. Try flying into Calgary, then visiting Banff and Jasper, before taking the Rocky Mountaineer train to Vancouver. This would be followed by a coach and a ferry to Vancouver Island for a two-night stay in Victoria with time to visit Butchart Gardens. After that, you would return to Vancouver for one night before embarking on a seven-night Alaska cruise. The trip would cost about £11,500 for 17 nights.

Alternatively, WEXAS Travel (020-7838 5892, wexas.com) has an 18-day Canada Wildlife and Alaska cruise itinerary which starts from £4,749pp and includes the Rocky Mountaineer train, whale and bear watching excursions, car hire, ferry crossings and the seaplane service between Campbell River and Knight Inlet, a seven-night Alaska cruise and return flights from the UK.

Q My husband and I both inadvertently bought two sets of flight-only tickets to Gran Canaria for the same two weeks in November, neither of which is refundable. Can I legally sell the tickets and if so am I responsible for changing the name on them?

Judy Wilcox, via e-mail

A Look carefully at the terms and conditions on your tickets to see if they are transferable. You will be responsible for changing the names and will need to factor this into the price — the difference between what was paid for the flight and what it is selling for at the time a name change is made may also be payable. Try a site on which registered users can offer their transferable flight tickets for sale such as JumpFlight (jumpflight.com), which is free if you want to handle the transaction yourself, or charges 10 per cent of the ticket price if you'd prefer to use its mediation service.

Q I would like to give my daughter an Italian cookery course for her 30th birthday next summer. I would like it to last five to seven days and involve the chance to visit local markets to choose ingredients, make pasta and, of course, eat what we make. If at all

possible I would like to be able to fly from Exeter or Bristol as we live in Cornwall.

Anne Betteridge, via e-mail

A Flavours (01313 432500, flavoursholidays.co.uk) has cookery holidays lasting between three and seven nights in Sicily, Puglia, Tuscany and Umbria. You'd be based in a villa (with a pool), groups are small and lessons with local chefs are relaxed and hands on. A week in Tuscany, for example, would include an afternoon visit to Lucca or San Gimignano with dinner in a local restaurant, a day exploring either Florence or Siena and a wine tasting. It costs £1,599pp, which includes £100 towards a flight; Pisa is the nearest airport. Tasting Places (020-8964 5333, www.tastingplaces.com) also has a good selection of Italian destinations. The six-night holiday based at Villa Casagrande in the village of Cison di Valmarino, in the foothills of the Dolomites includes a day in Venice plus a trip to the Rialto markets returning with produce to use in classes and costs £2,150pp. You can fly to seven Italian airports from Bristol, including Pisa, Rome and Venice.

Julia Brookes is the Travel Doctor

Don't put up with this Sickness insurance claim refused

We took an Inntavel cycling holiday in Spain in May but during the trip my husband was taken ill with a urine infection and septicaemia. He spent several days in hospital and was advised by doctors to return home for further tests. We returned home with easyJet and he needed a wheelchair. Inntavel was amazing but although we have travel insurance with Saga it refused to help on the basis that as he was discharged from hospital he was capable of continuing with the cycling holiday. No assistance was offered and our claim for costs, including hotels, changed flights and taxis has been rejected. All we have received is £50 in compensation from Saga, which we have rejected. Can you help?
Theresa Wynne-Powell,
Soberton Heath, Hampshire

Saga told me that the medical certificate initially supplied to FirstAssist, the underwriters, by your GP mentioned only the urine infection, not septicaemia, and stated there was no reason to curtail the holiday, so the claim was declined. You maintain that it was fully informed but fortunately, after seeing a further letter from the GP confirming that returning home was a sensible decision, FirstAssist has agreed to pay the claim. That does not excuse its unsympathetic response to your plight during the holiday but full marks to Inntavel.

Contact us...

If you have a gripe, suggestion or question about holiday travel, write to Travel Doctor, The Times Travel Desk, 3 Thomas More Square, London E9 8JTT, or e-mail traveldoctor@thetimes.co.uk. Please include contact details. If you have a dispute with a travel company, try to resolve it before contacting us. Do not send us original documents. Unfortunately we cannot reply to every inquiry.