


A history of modern Britain 12-page Jubilee guide

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## Travel doctor



**Q** I would like to take my wife away for her 40th birthday in February. We can only guarantee childcare from the Wednesday afternoon and need to be back in Devon by Tuesday evening. My wife is keen to be somewhere hot, wants a pool and to be pampered. She has expressed an interest in Asia or South Africa but also wants to minimise jet lag. I'd also like some advice on the wisdom of booking late in the January travel sales. We have a budget of about £4,000.  
Tony de Reya, via email

**A** I wouldn't recommend the Far East as the jet lag can be brutal, nor would I wait for the January sales because you have date limitations and that alone can make it harder to get a cheap fare. There are good flight sales in late August and September that could save £100-£150 compared to fares available now, but you shouldn't book later than that.

South Africa is better suited to a shorter break because there's only one hour's time difference. WEXAS Travel (0207 589 3315 wexas.com) could arrange a four-night stay in Cape Town at 12 Apostles, voted the top spa resort in Africa, which would cost £1,965pp based on superior sea view room or £1,659 in a mountain view room B&B, with return flights and either car hire for five days or return transfers. Alternatively, you could try Mauritius where the time difference is four hours. Four nights' B&B at the Heritage Awali Golf & Spa Resort, which has two pools, a spa offering bespoke relaxation treatments, and five restaurants, starts at £1,659pp, including flights and

transfers with holidaysplease.co.uk (0844 463 2799).

**Q** Next year we have a few milestone birthdays and I would like to arrange for a family get together in May. Could you suggest a venue where none of us will have to travel a huge distance? Our family is spread out in Cheltenham, Crawley, Harlow and Bracknell. The age range is from three to 89 and about 30 people in total. It would be good to have leisure facilities available and maybe a spa.  
Carol Smeeton, via email

**A** You could all reach Stoke Park Hotel (01753 717171, stokepark.com) in Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire in under two hours. It has 13 tennis courts, a 27-hole championship golf course, spa, gym and playroom. Assuming you'd need about 15 rooms, the hotel would charge a rate of about £265 per room B&B – and if you wanted to dine together you'd have to book a private room. Another possibility is Pennyhill Park (01276 471774, pennyhillpark.co.uk) in Bagshot in Surrey, with everything from nine-hole golf to tennis and a spa. Doubles start at £205, but if you booked private dining you would

qualify for a better rate. Or try luxury self-catering at Bruern Cottages (01993 830415, bruern-holiday-cottages.co.uk) in the Cotswolds where there's a pool and spa on site, and the biggest "cottage", Weir House, (which sleeps 10), can seat 30 for dinner. A three-night weekend would cost £1,896 in a cottage sleeping four and Weir House would cost £4,249.

**Q** My son is thinking of hiring a car in Italy for his honeymoon. Two years ago, my husband and I hired a car in Sicily and paid an extra £200 to cover excess damage. I believe it's possible to take out insurance in the UK before travelling that would be much cheaper?  
Pam Oxborrow, via email

**A** Charging for excess insurance when a car is collected is one of the ways companies bump up prices. It can cost more than £15 a day, but if you buy a policy online it is cheaper and more comprehensive. iCarhireinsurance.com sells daily cover from £2.99 and annual European policies from £39.99. Insuremycarhire.com and Insurance4carhire.com have similar deals.  
Julia Brookes is the Travel Doctor

## Don't put up with this Advertised activities not provided

**I travelled to India in January on a 21-day "textile and painting" tour run by Lorna Tresidder, of Indian Romance Tours. When booking the tour, I was particularly interested in the hands-on workshops and numerous textile techniques. The tour advertised six workshops but only three were provided, two of those lasting half a day instead of a whole day. I have written twice to seek compensation for the workshops and techniques that were not provided, but have had no response. Anna Kessling, via e-mail**

You provided plenty of evidence to show that these workshops were advertised as an integral part of the tour, but despite this Lorna Tresidder eventually said she would

not enter into any more correspondence with you. Fortunately, following my intervention, she changed her mind. "This is the first time in 22 years of running the tour that we have received any complaints. However, in recognition of the fact that a small number of the participants felt that their expectations were not met we will be offering them the sum of £200pp as a gesture of our goodwill," she said.

### 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 E98 1TT, or e-mail [traveldoctor@thetimes.co.uk](mailto: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.