

TRAVEL

A WORLD OF INSPIRING HOLIDAY IDEAS

1 JANUARY 2012

12 Travel resolutions for 2012

Wherever you go this year, make sure you get the best from your holiday. **Chris Leadbeater** has dozens of ideas

Stop eight hours. We all know that January is a bleak enough time without the spectre of a New Year Resolutions list. Denying yourself this particular enjoyable habit, doing away with the little luxury ... if the sound of rain beating against the window pane isn't enough to have you feeling downbeat, a regime of self-imposed restraint will

surely do the trick. So this year why not adopt a different set of resolutions - ones that do away with miserable mid-winter weather and cling to the bright, optimistic world of travel? Over the following pages, the best of travel in 2012 is laid out in 12 simple steps - all of them more exciting than yet another unused gym membership. Let *The Independent on Sunday* be your guide.



MICHAEL JARVIS

7 Get fit - and stay sporty

With the Olympics and football's European Championships in the offing, this will be the year of sporting endeavour. And those who want to participate rather than merely watch can hone their footballing skills in a warmer setting than Poland or Ukraine by opting for one of the training camps on offer at Buccament Bay in St Vincent (buccamentbay.com).



This Caribbean resort is staging coaching sessions throughout 2012, led by football players such as former Ireland international Steve Staunton (13-20 February) and Ronnie Whelan (8-15 April) and England's Gareth Southgate (28 October to 4 November). Tuition is aimed at adults, as well as children aged five and up. A week's break at the resort costs from £2,095 per person - with all-inclusive accommodation, transfers and flights - through Health And Fitness Travel (0845 544 1936; healthandfitnesstravel.com). If you prefer individual pursuits, the resort has a tennis academy. Pat Cash will be coaching in April, in the build-up to the 25th anniversary of his Wimbledon win.

England enter 2012 as the world's top-ranked Test cricket team and two of the players who were pivotal in ushering in this golden age are to share their expertise at the Forte Village Resort in Sardinia (fortevillageresort.com) later this year (from 14-21 April). Michael Vaughan and Matthew Hoggard - captain and bowler respectively in 2005 when England notched a first Ashes triumph over Australia in 18 years - will teach children aged five to 12 in two-hourly sessions over five days. A week's half-board for a family of four (children under 12) starts from £3,649 through Super Skills Travel (01858 545 918; superskillstravel.com), excluding flights. You can fly from Stansted to Cagliari on easyJet (0905 8210905; easyjet.com).

The route of the 2012 Tour de France (above) which runs from 30 June to 22 July has an extra emphasis on brutal climbs, including the race's first ascent of the 4,925ft Col du Grand Colombier in the Jura range (11 July). Amateurs can sign up for the "Three Alpine Stages" break operated by Sports Tours International (0161 703 8161; www.sportingtours.co.uk) - a four-day trip (10-14 July) that lets cyclists see the most dramatic part of the Tour, or ride it themselves. From £749 per person, with transfers from Geneva, breakfast and accommodation in Annecy, but excluding flights or rail travel.

Watch out for the bunker

In golf, the idea is usually to steer clear of the sand. But this may prove trickier than usual for players at Shangri-La's Viceroy resort in the Maldives (shangri-la.com/maldives). In March this luxury hideaway will open the island nation's first nine-hole golf course. A week's half-board before the end of April, with flights, costs from £3,250 a head based on two sharing, via Carier (0161 492 1358; carier.co.uk).



8 Be kind to animals

The BBC's *Frozen Planet* series has aroused plenty of interest over the past two months - and 2012 will be a year to make good on our fascination with the Arctic.

Discover the World (01737 214251; discover-the-world.co.uk) runs a "Spitsbergen to East Greenland Cruise" that visits three great northern islands (Iceland is the third) and offers the possibility of encounters with polar bears, narwhal whales and Arctic foxes.

Three of these 13-night voyages are planned during August and September and cost from £3,469 per person, full-board, excluding flights.

If you prefer spotting large mammals in warmer climes you can watch whales, notably from the Kuri Bay property that is due to open in the Kimberley region of Western Australia in April. This luxury retreat, accessible only by seaplane or helicopter, offers a perspective on the calving grounds of humpback whales. Wexas (020-7878 5892; wexas.com) has a "Kimberley Complete" itinerary that unveils this most remote of Australian regions. Prices for Kuri Bay are not yet confirmed, but this 13-day jaunt currently costs from £5,860 per person (based on two sharing), including flights.

Another isolated area will come into focus in May with the opening of the twin Odzala Camps in the Odzala-Kokoua National Park, north Congo. These tiny boltholes (Lango Camp and Ngaga Camp) have six

rooms each, and are perfect bases for tracking gorillas amid thick rainforest. Rainbow Tours (020-7666 1250; rainbowtours.co.uk) can arrange a six-night holiday that features three nights at each camp. It costs from £4,695 per person (based on two sharing), including full-board accommodation, flights and expeditions.

Although Kenya is better known, it also has its out-on-a-limb patches. Kicheche Valley Camp, in the Nabusho Conservancy (in the Maasai Mara), had a soft launch in August, and is introducing a fly-camping option for 2012 that will take guests deeper into this wildlife-rich zone. Safari Consultants (01787 888 590; safariconsultants.co.uk) offers an all-inclusive week from £2,730 per person, including flights and transfers.

9 Take time to relax

Those seeking to cast off their recessionary concerns and bask in a little

luxury will find new pockets of exclusivity in 2012 - notably Song Saa (songsaa.com), a retreat that will bring the five-star stylings of the Maldives to the Cambodian side of the Gulf of Thailand (an area where the accommodation, to date, has erred towards the rudimentary). Laid out over two inlets in the Koh Rong archipelago, the resort offers 27 villas, a spa, gourmet food and a whiff of the jet set. A week's full-board stay costs from £3,730 per person with

ABOUTAsia Travel (020-7193 8561; aboutasiatravel.com), excluding flights.

Elsewhere in South-east Asia, the Gaya Island Resort (pulaugayaresort.com) will perform a similar makeover for the west coast of Malaysian Borneo. Set on the island of Pulau Gaya, this hideaway is due to open in April amid protected mangroves and coral reefs - and will come equipped with 121 villas. An eight-night stay here costs from £1,489 per person, including breakfast, return flights from Heathrow with Malaysia Airlines and transfers. See Destinology (0800 210 0422; destinology.co.uk) for details.

On the far side of the Pacific, a more established type of luxury destination will be marking 2012. Long a fixture on Sunset Boulevard, the Los Angeles institution that is the Beverly Hills Hotel (left) will raise the flag on its centenary on 12 May (001 310 276 2251; beverlyhills.com).

Guests can check in from \$583 (£372) per double, excluding breakfast, knowing that the hotel's corridors have been stalked by Marlene Dietrich, Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, John Wayne, Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe (although not all at the same time).

