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features

On the Cover

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100 Take me to the water

Aman's latest Caribbean property brings a new kind of luxury to the pristine, jungle shrouded northern shores of the Dominican Republic. Amelia Lester checks in and finds out why Amanera is the season's hottest hotel debut. Photographs By Floto+Warner

104 White Magic

Snuggled between France and Switzerland, in Italy's remote Northwest corner, the Aosta Valley is a plush secret long privy to European cognoscenti. Even if you aren't ready to ski up a storm swathed in Prada, it serves up Michelin-starred pampering, extraordinary physical challenges and an alluring après-ski scene. By Aparna Pednekar

The Guide

53 Rides & Resorts Special

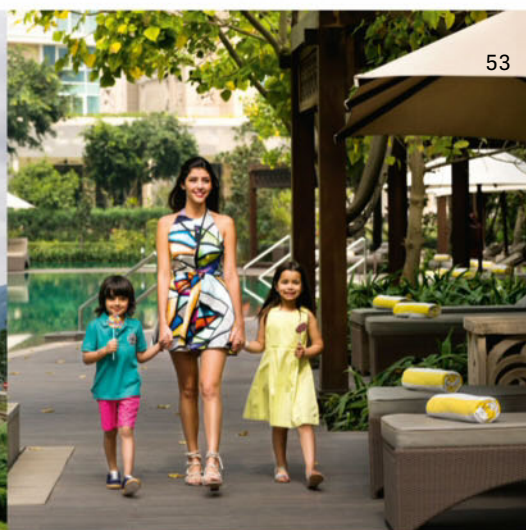
We reckon it feels good to let kids loose at an entertainment park, and watch them go nutty on the rides. For reasons best known to young parents, we've hunted down all the integrated resorts, theme and amusement parks, for times when adrenaline takes over parenthood.



100



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departments

Here & Now

15 News, Trends, Discoveries

A creative scene comes to Chippendale's once rough-and-tumble streets; Santa Monica's main street has become a gathering place for artists; a small ship that navigates remote waterways and lets guest cruise for a day; Samridhi Ganeriwalla CEO, Little West Street, likes to go deep into local culture; Sonali Bandre Behl shares her insight on a trip to Pench National Park; make-up maestro Bobbi Brown's tips on the most marvelous way to see Botswana and South Africa; the lazy person's guide to having a good time in Pune; sports, art, culture, events, and more.

Beyond

33 Spotlight

Parisian tastemakers are reinvigorating an old-fashioned corner of Normandy, adding modern flourishes to a rural French idyll. *By Rebecca Rose*
Photographs by Celine Clanet

40 Life On Wheels:

There's poetry in the rattling movement and the exquisite cameos framed liked paintings on the windows. Onboard the opulent and recently refurbished Deccan Odyssey, one revisits the historical and the modern by slowing oneself to the pace of experiential travel, finds *Kalpana Sunder*

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Roxanne Bamboat is greeted by verdant green valleys and all the world's tranquility in Coorg -- exactly what she expected. But, a coffee picking exercise later, the place presented a whole new dimension. *Photographs by Adil Jain*

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Musing over exotic islands in foreign lands is passé. Back home, our pretty little dots have claimed our next vacation dates. Here's why this might be the right time to introduce your kids to the treasures at home. *By Anwesha Sanyal*

50 Air Time

British Airways is now flying the Airbus A380 between London and Miami. Richa Wadhwa finds out what's making the upper deck the most happening place at 30,000 feet.

Upgrade

96 Border Intelligence

You have a passport—what else is there to know? From what new security concerns will mean for your next trip, to visa on arrival, here are some answers to questions you didn't know to ask.

Illustrations by Tina Berning

In Every Issue

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MY EXPERIENCE WITH TRAVELLING WITH KIDS IS LIMITED TO SHRIEKING

little monsters running down the aisle on an aircraft slapping every passenger's shoulder or elbow like they've been entrusted with some twisted way of taking a roll call. They are all, of course, *other people's* kids. I didn't have any just so I could spare all of you out there trying to get some sleep in Business, Economy and Premium Economy!

Others obviously didn't return the courtesy. So all flights I take seem to be blessed with children who are to in-flight snoozing as Donald Trump is to the American presidential campaign currently: Aggravating and successfully disruptive.

But there are moments when I'm sitting at an airport and can't help but smile on hearing some adorable observation a kid makes on a new place, or the questions they'll ask.

The thing is that travelling with children does have benefits. Getting to board the plane first, or having a legitimate reason for going to Disneyland are just a few of them. Children can be energetic, inquisitive, excited, and surprisingly brave. They will open up cultural doors for you as strangers ask them questions, storekeepers will speak to them in broken English and local children will invite them to play together. As in other aspects of your life, kids shed new light on things you might otherwise see through the dulled lenses of a jaded adult. Insights and ideas emerge in a multitude of ways: conversations in the café, people-watching on the train, and writing in journals.

But planning family vacations can be a task similar to losing those last five kilos. You know you have to (summer vacations will be here soon, and putting your kids up for adoption isn't an option), and you know you'll feel fantastic once you get there (imagine getting to finally taste Butterbeer and ride a broomstick with your kids at Warner Bros Studio Tour of Harry Potter). This issue, we've packed in over 365 vacation ideas, fantastic 'all inclusive' packages (that almost make me wish I had a couple of kids), luxury villa rentals loaded with things your kids will enjoy, some intel on which cultures and cuisines are best introduced at which age, and a totally awesome blockbuster guide on the world's most fun theme parks, integrated resorts and rides.

So go ahead, pack some miniatures of Benadryl, and hop on a flight with the kids, the world awaits its elbow slapping mid-Atlantic roll call.



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Sd Xavier Collaco Date: March 1, 2016

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1

Raul Dias

WRITER

The Cool Kids' Club

page 85

A luxury travel writer for a little over a decade, Raul Dias is a self-confessed devotee of the peripatetic way of life and a lover of all things edible. He has eaten his way through a host of top restaurants around the world, from one under water in the Maldives to a table suspended mid-air above Tokyo. A fiend for bucket lists of all kinds, he has just ticked off Mexico as the 45th country he visited as he heads to #46—Madagascar. This issue, he's got suggestions your kids will love!



2

Sonali Bendre

CONTRIBUTOR

Learning on the go

page 20

Actor Sonali Bendre's pause in career a few years ago went into gaining wisdom from parenting her son. Now a published author, her book *The Modern Gurukul: My Experiments With Parenting*, was an idea that came out of a conversation with her friends at a party. It materialized when she started documenting her thoughts and research on the lack of opportunities to involve modern fathers in rulebook parenting, and intuitive decision-making based on one-on-one mother-child relationship. For us, she writes about the importance of holidaying in destinations that are educative for children.



3

Aparna Pednekar

WRITER

White Magic

page 104

Over the years, Mumbai based travel and lifestyle writer Aparna Pednekar has written for a host of Indian fashion, food, travel, and lifestyle magazines, and is no new name in the industry. With a script for a feature film called *Dirty Little Secrets* (that was a part of The NFDC Locarno Screenwriters' Lab in 2009) to her credit, and a short film called *Fowl Men* that was screened in Italy and Chicago, Pednekar recently published her book called *Strike@36* about single people in their thirties. This issue, she pens her travel to the Aosta Valley.



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ART FROM UNLIKELY QUARTERS

Urban art in the form of streets art has really made even the most dreary neighbourhoods 'cool' and 'interesting'. We look at some interesting new artists particularly from the Middle East.
travelandleisureindia.in/art-from-unlikely-quarters/

6.02



TOP 10 SHOPPING STREETS IN THE WORLD

One doesn't necessarily have to buy anything here, but it's advisable to be armed with credit cards and swipe at will.
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MONTREAL: WHERE FRENCH MEETS ENGLISH

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THE STATS

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Playing It Cool

Sydney's inner-city neighbourhood of Chippendale gets a long-awaited upgrade.
BY EMMA SLOLEY PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN LAURIE

To most Sydneysiders, the former working-class enclave of Chippendale was a nondescript area easily overlooked in favour of the posh, beachy eastern suburbs. But just as its neighbours—Surry Hills, Redfern, and Darlinghurst—have been transformed by gentrification, so too has a creative scene come to Chippendale's once rough-and-tumble streets. >>

The rooftop pool at the Old Clare Hotel, a new arrival in Chippendale.



CLOCKWISE: Long communal tables at Automata, in the Old Clare; portraits at the cutting-edge White Rabbit Collection; a public plaza in the Central Park complex.

At the vanguard of the revival is the **Old Clare Hotel** (theoldclarehotel.com.au; doubles from US\$205), which occupies a 1915 brewery and a 1930s pub. The owners have taken great care to honour the buildings' impressive bones while incorporating contemporary global influences: Midcentury Danish furniture, light fixtures from a Lebanese design studio, organic toiletries from New Zealand brand Triumph & Disaster, a sexy rooftop pool, and tongue-in-cheek Aussie touches including black tote bags in the closets printed with phrases like **RANDOM CRAP**.

The heart of the hotel is its restored Art Deco pub, a cosy room with original tiled walls, a curved bar, frosted saloon doors, and dog-eared band posters from the likes of the White Stripes and Tori Amos. (There's no longer live music at the bar, but the stereo plays homegrown acts.) The design quirks, such as a rotary phone that plays recordings of poetry when the receiver is lifted, haven't alienated the 'Chippo' residents. On a late weekday afternoon, two burly construction workers in bright reflective vests were at the bar having an after-work schooner of beer.

The Old Clare is also home to one of the

city's boldest and most talked-about new restaurants, **Automata** (automata.com.au; tasting menus from US\$63), whose dining room has long tables and antique machinery collected from scrapyards. Chef Clayton Wells's menu includes what many are calling 'Sydney's least Instagrammable dish': a sublime and amorphous black mass of steamed hapuku over roe emulsion draped with wilted nori.

A few blocks away is the much-awarded **Ester** (ester-restaurant.com.au; entrées US\$13–US\$64), a Chippendale pioneer that serves wood-fired comfort food in a stylishly austere space. Try dishes like bone marrow with sambal or a 'sanga' (Australian for sandwich) made with blood sausage. Nearby at **LP's Quality Meats** (lpsqualitymeats.com; entrées US\$10–US\$32), the cavernous dining room has moody lighting and terrazzo floors. Sample chef Luke Powell's grilled octopus with chorizo, or the lamb belly stuffed with *merguez*—straight from the Southern Pride Smoker he had shipped from Tennessee.

The tattooed brigades congregate at **Sterling Apothecary** (sterlingapothecary.com), a barbershop offering old-fashioned straight-razor shaves (there's also a beauty

salon in the back). It will soon sell its own products, including an aftershave tonic blended with bay rum, cloves, and vanilla.

The art crowd has been flocking to the neighbourhood, too. At **White Rabbit** gallery (whiterabbitcollection.org), owner Judith Neilson shows contemporary Chinese art by leading figures like Ai Weiwei. The **Ambush** art gallery (ambushgallery.com), in the gleaming Central Park building, highlights work from local and international talent. And cementing the neighbourhood's cultural reputation is Frank Gehry's first Australian creation, the paper-bag-esque Dr Chau Chak Wing Building at the University of Technology Sydney, which opened last year. Visitors can check out the sculptural stainless-steel staircase in the lobby and the Level 2 café, with its acrylic cloud-shaped lighting. The building's slightly off-kilter charm is a perfect emblem for this neighbourhood on the verge. ➕



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Main Squeeze

Santa Monica's Main Street has been a gathering place for artists and laid-back surfers for decades. Now buzzy shops and hangouts are giving the boulevard in California a new gloss.

1 | LOST & FOUND

At this store, there's beachy clothing for all ages—you'll find lots of navy blue and white here, as well as linen and stripes. Down the block, its new sister interiors shop carries global goods like Colombian soapstone pots. *Nos. 2230 and 2000; lostandfoundshop.com*

2 | ASHLAND HILL

For lunch, order the Alaskan-cod tacos with a side of herbed Parmesan fries at this casual New American spot, then grab a table out back. *entrées US\$10–US\$25; No. 2807; ashlandhill.com*

3 | HINTERLAND

Pop singer Joe Jonas expands his horizons with this lively restaurant. On the menu are oysters, charcuterie, and a substantial grilled Niman Ranch pork chop—along with an excellent list of craft beers. *entrées US\$21–US\$29; No. 2917; hinterland.la*

4 | LOVE ADORNED

The New York City jewellery store makes its West Coast debut with a mix of statement-making vintage finds, such as yellow-gold-and-turquoise drop earrings and bracelets made of carved ebony. *No. 2923; loveadorned.com*

5 | LAZYBONES

What began as a line of sleepwear is now a full collection of floral dresses and tops, as well as patterned tablecloths, curtains, and ceramics. The brand's first shop outside Australia has a garden where you can sit among strawberries and Japanese watermelons. *No. 2929; lazybonesusa.com*

6 | BULLETPROOF COFFEE

The guy who introduced the States to the Himalayan tradition of butter in

your morning joe has opened his first café. The coffee is made with organic beans and grass-fed butter—there are mocha and vanilla versions, too—and you can add toppings like coconut whipped cream. *No. 3110; bulletproofexec.com. — BROOKE PORTER KATZ*



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All That Swiss

BESIDES CREATING STYLISH PRODUCTS FOR KIDS, **SAMRIDHI GANERIWALLA**, CEO, LITTLE WEST STREET, HAS ANOTHER PASSION—TRAVEL. SHE LIKES TO GO DEEP INTO LOCAL CULTURE AND THE BERNESE OBERLAND OFFERS HER JUST THAT AND MORE.

My First Time in Bernese Oberland

My first visit to Switzerland was in 2008. I was on a road trip around the country, and headed to Bernese Oberland to see the Swiss Alps. It was then that I decided to stay over in a little Swiss village, Wengen, and instantly fell in love with its simple lifestyle and stunning views. My love for nature and the mountains takes me back to **Bernese Oberland**.

For a local experience The only way to truly experience the Bernese Oberland is to stay in the beautiful villages of **Wengen and Mürren**. They are the best places to enjoy the simple things in life like taking a morning stroll with no cars around, breathing in fresh air, and indulging in local cuisine.

A restaurant perfect for a business lunch In Mürren, **Eiger Saal** (hoteleiger.com) is a perfect spot for cocktails and dinner. Beautiful views, great service, and gourmet food makes it a winner. Here, the fondue and the crispy potato rösti are the highlights. The terrace is ideal for evening cocktails and meaningful conversations.

The place I pick for a breakfast meeting outdoors

A 20-minute cable-car ride from Mürren is the revolving restaurant **Piz Gloria** (almost 3,000 metres high), on top of Schilthorn. Here, one can witness breathtaking views of some 200 peaks. Mornings offer the clearest views, so it's the

perfect place for breakfast or an early lunch.

My preferred check in

A family-run hotel (managed by the fourth generation now), **Hotel Eiger** (hoteleiger.com) offers warm service, delicious food, and vistas of the Jungfrau, Eiger, and Monch peaks.

My indulgences during leisure time

I love spending my days exploring the amazing network of cog-wheel trains, cable-cars, and funiculars to find new vantage points in different towns and villages. There are many hiking trails to enjoy (for every level of hiker). A moderate one is a walk from the town of Lauterbrunnen, through the beautiful valley to Trummelbach falls—a fascinating place with a series of 10 glacier waterfalls inside a mountain, accessible by a tunnel-lift.

A spot I must always visit

A little street called **Im Ussren Dorf** in Mürren is a very peaceful spot, free of tourists. It has a gorgeous vantage point where I sit on a bench or a tree stump and enjoy the stunning views of the Swiss Alps in peace.

Something I bring back every time

I often attend the chocolate-making workshop at the **Funky Chocolate Club** (funkychocolateclub.ch) in Interlaken and bring back home what I create. Another thing to pick up is the **Sprungli truffle chocolate** from the Zurich airport—a definite indulgence, but well worth the calories. ☺



CLOCKWISE: The beautiful town of Lauterbrunnen; Samridhi Ganeriwalla; Piz Gloria restaurant on Schilthorn; making chocolates at the Funky Chocolate Club; the snow-clad Swiss Alps.



CLOCKWISE: DREAMTIME; COURTESY OF SAMRIDHI GANERIWALLA; DREAMTIME; COURTESY OF FUNKY CHOCOLATE CLUB; SHUTTERSTOCK

1 | Oberoi Philae | Egypt

ROUTE After a trip to Oberoi's Sahl Hasheesh beach resort, board this plush ship (with a pool and a theatre) and wind down the Nile.

HIGHLIGHTS The Temple of Edfu and the Valley of the Kings.

MEAL PLAN Egyptian dishes like tapenade-crusted Nile perch. **DETAILS** From US\$1,644 per night for two, all-inclusive. oberoihotels.com



2 | Amandira | Indonesia

ROUTE Amanwana resort's double-masted, five-cabin sailboat takes guests to see rare Komodo dragons.

HIGHLIGHTS The dragons, and snorkelling among sharks and manta rays.

MEAL PLAN Barramundi with turmeric, basil, and rice.

DETAILS Five nights on the ship and two nights at the resort, from US\$42,850 for two, all-inclusive. aman.com



SET SAIL

Where Land Meets Sea

The hotel amenity of the moment: a small ship that navigates remote waterways and lets guests cruise for a day (or five).



3 | Naga Pelangi | Malaysia

ROUTE Datai Langkawi guests can now sail to deserted Andaman Sea islands on this stunning three-bedroom schooner powered by 65-foot red sails.

HIGHLIGHT Swimming with clown fish.

MEAL PLAN A refreshing post-swim lunch of marinated tomatoes, mint, and feta.

DETAILS Four-hour cruise from US\$127 per person, including lunch. thedatai.com

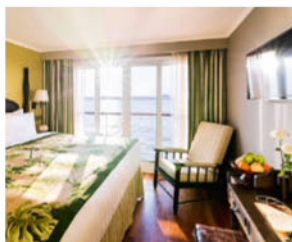
4 | The Strand Cruise | Myanmar

ROUTE The Strand Yangon's 27-cabin boat sails on the Irrawaddy River between Bagan and Mandalay.

HIGHLIGHT A morning at a Buddhist monastery.

MEAL PLAN High tea with Burmese and Western touches: tea-leaf salad and shrimp pinwheels.

DETAILS Three nights from US\$2,592 per person, all-inclusive. thestrandcruise.com—EIMEAR LYNCH



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TRAVEL DIARY

Learning on the go

Actor **SONALI BENDRE BEHL** recently turned author with the release of her first book on parenting, *The Modern Gurukul*. The doting parent believes in the concept of travelling with the family to raise a healthy, curious and compassionate child, and shares her insights on a trip to Pench National Park.

TRAVELLING WITH MY

family is all about making it a value-creating experience for my child. That's what makes it truly worthwhile, exciting and memorable, even though my son, Ranveer, sees it purely as a fun, family vacation. My homework towards planning a trip is sometimes based on his studies. If his current reading includes a historical event like the First World War, my research would centre on a significant city like Berlin. From museums to sightseeing or simply walking down the city streets, it all leads to getting up close and personal with a new culture. This way, a holiday becomes an enriching experience for him and a great opportunity for us to bond.

Holidays are important milestones in the journey of parenting. Now that Ranveer is 10 years old, we involve him in planning the trip. My husband, Goldie, and I make sure we don't travel with help, so it's all about our time and bonding with our son. It doesn't surprise me that after every holiday, Ranveer comes back a little more independent.

We're lucky to live in a country with such a rich culture and history, and there is so much to explore here. One of our most memorable vacations was in Madhya Pradesh when Ranveer was very young. I love safaris and planned a trip to the Pench National Park for us. Our first safari as a family turned out to be as life transforming for my husband as it was for my son. Goldie has always been a technology-oriented and city person but it was here that he

actually 'disconnected' and began to truly enjoy being outdoors. Ranveer's perspective also changed completely. He hates seeing animals caged in a zoo now, and is my 'little environmentalist.'

Ranveer didn't just see the wildlife in Pench and learn the names of the animals and trees, but he also learned to respect nature. He was responsible for his own backpack that contained a torch, magnifying glass, and an inexpensive camera. We had also taken glitter pens, feathers, and glue with us, so we gathered pebbles and leaves

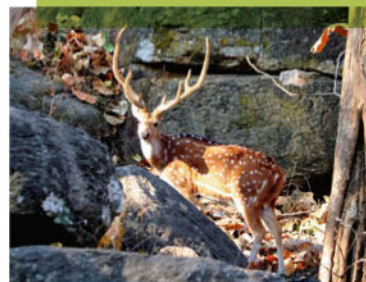


and made some interesting craft items after the trip.

There are lessons aplenty in each experience, not just for kids but for parents as well. From brushing up my general knowledge to becoming a better organiser and a more hands-on mother, holidays are my fun-filled way of nurturing my son while working on aspects of my own personality. It's a classic win-win. ☺



Sonali Bendre Behl; the city of Berlin is steeped in history; the artistic impressions on the Berlin Wall; a skittish deer at Pench National Park; safaris make for a great learning experience for kids.



COURTESY OF SONALI BENDRE BEHL; DREAMSTIME; BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES; WANDY KASIA/GETTY IMAGES; DREAMSTIME

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TRAVEL DIARY

My African Diary

Make-up maestro **BOBBI BROWN** tells us the most marvellous way to see Botswana and South Africa. In this exclusive excerpt from her journal, you'll find game reserves, views, national parks, and much more.



Bobbi Brown; a panoramic view of Cape Town; coming face-to-face with a cheetah; Robben Island museum.



I TRAVELLED TO South Africa and Botswana for a 12-day trip with my extended family. All together, we were 14 travellers including my husband and three sons. It's always been my dream to go on safari, and the one I took did not disappoint. We travelled with a company called BackRoads on a multisport adventure so every day there was a sport component to the trip—hiking, biking, etc. It was the perfect trip to stay active, catch up with my family, explore and get inspired.

Day 1

It was my first trip to South Africa so I couldn't leave without visiting my local artists. The energy and openness of each makeup artist was incredible. A couple of hours after landing, I showed up to meet my team. 'Enthusiastic, happy, and loud' is the best description I can think of for the greeting I received.

Day 2

We started the trip in Cape Town with a visit to Table Mountain that offers stunning views of a city and its surrounding landscape before hiking through a forest. While enjoying a picnic in a lush botanical garden we saw some of the most exotic flowers from the region. We spent the night at Constantia and The Cellars-Hohenorts, a historic manor house located in the vineyards of Cape Town and offering glorious views of the Table Mountain. We had a delicious dinner at the Greenhouse Restaurant that

serves a seasonal menu using local produce.

Day 3

We shuttled over to Cape Point for a walk along the cliffs. On reaching Cape Point, one of the highest sea cliffs in the world at more than 800 feet, I could feel what is said to be the freshest air—straight from Antarctica. Impressive views of the lighthouse and sea greeted us and we even spotted a couple of whales and penguins in the ocean. A biking trip in Table Mountain National Park, along a beautiful road that follows the sea, was a beautiful experience. That night we had the pleasure of dining with a man who had spent time at the Robben Island prison with Nelson Mandela.

Day 4 and 5

We travelled four hours by car to Bushmans Kloof Reserve & Retreat, a wilderness reserve in the Western Cape. The hotel was set in a desert-like plain and had great views of the river and dramatic rock formations. During the day, we went out on safari where we saw plenty of animals—elephants, leopards, and lions. I have to admit, it took me a few days to get used to having the animals right in front of me—as if they were looking straight into my eyes. It was unbelievable. We saw a cheetah catch an impala while a leopard waited patiently to steel his catch. That evening, we enjoyed a wine tasting of local wines at the hotel before dinner. The food was deliciously fresh, made from organic produce from the hotel's garden.

“WE WERE THRILLED TO SEE SO MANY INCREDIBLE ANIMALS, BUT IT WAS OUR GUIDE THEMBA WHO MADE OUR SAFARI TRULY UNFORGETTABLE.”

“We went on open-vehicle game drives, with elephants just meters away, and heard the heart-stopping sound of a lion’s roar at midnight; but it was Themba’s knowledge and passion that made this a place we can’t wait to visit again.”

ADD A LITTLE SAFARI TO YOUR VACATION.

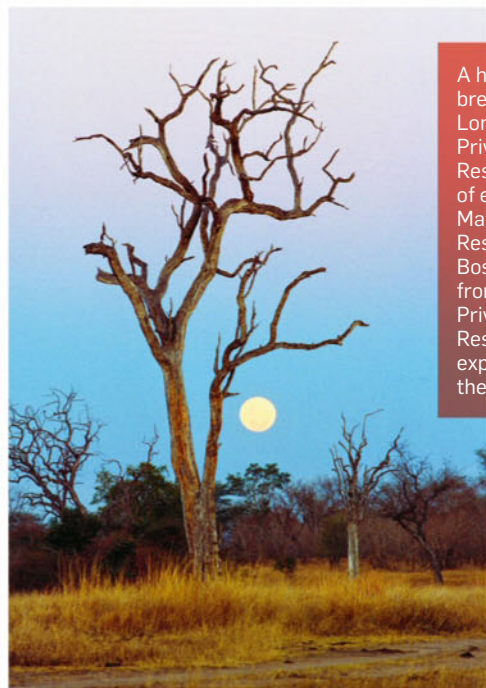
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Inspiring new ways



A hearty breakfast at Londolozi Private Game Reserve; a herd of elephants at Mashatu Game Reserve, Bostwana; view from Londolozi Private Game Reserve; a safari experience in the bush.

Day 6

We jumped on a plane to Bostwana where we checked-in to the Mashatu Game Reserve, a remote luxury camp built around a waterhole where elephant herds hang out. I was incredibly excited to arrive as I had been told that this location was great for animal sighting thanks to impressive local conservation efforts. Mashatu provides occasional refuge to more than 500 elephants and is also home to hundreds of bird species, cheetahs, and lions. We enjoyed our lunch outdoors and then took a guided game walk where we saw giraffes, cheetahs, and many more animals. That evening, we relaxed at the hotel and played board games.

Day 7

It was an adventurous day. We set out early and mountain biked along elephant paths, it was nerve wrecking. Then, after a leisurely breakfast of organic eggs and fresh local fruits, it was time to relax by the pool. Early in the evening, a Range Rover took us into the wild to look for more animals. We were guided to the perfect place to watch the sun set that we enjoyed over delicious cocktails and snacks in the middle of the bush. I felt like a character from the movie *Out of Africa*.

Day 8 and 9

We spent a couple of days at Mpumalanga, which means 'place where the sun rises' and drove a couple of hours before

arriving at our hotel—Cybele Forest Lodge & Health Spa. It is a beautiful farmhouse set amidst a lush forest and banana plantations. We enjoyed walks by a waterfall, did a guided walk to see animals, enjoy the facilities of the spa, visit the local artist community, shop for local crafts, and so much more.

Day 10 and 11

We arrived at the Londolozi Private Game Reserve in the afternoon. I didn't know then but it turned out to be my favourite part of the trip. The hotel is on an immense reserve that is privately owned and has animals that are literally at your doorstep sometimes. The staff was warm and attentive, the rooms were beautifully designed, and the food was simply amazing. But above all, what I loved most about Londolozi was that it has a strong commitment to conservation and gives back to the community. The hotel staff predominantly includes local villagers who lead many grassroots education initiatives with the Good Work Foundation and follow a digitally-powered education model. We had a chance to witness Londolozi's involvement in the community, visiting emerging schools, and community gardens where we got to spend time with locals. One day, a few members of the staff invited us into their homes where we learned about the local culture and rituals and how education helps empower them.

Day 12

After lunch, we started the long journey back to New York. On the way back, we looked at our photos and shared our favourite experiences. Back in office, I couldn't wait to share all the inspiration pieces—the camouflage jackets, the star-studded skies, the animals, the local food, etc—that made the trip so awe-inspiring. These items helped inspire the Sterling Nights Collection that launched recently. +



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CHEAT SHEET

Pune Performance Picks

A new breed of hip venues combining live music with great ambience and food is helping Pune perfect the art of having a good time. Here's where you should be heading for a night (or three) in the city. BY **SUDESHNA GHOSH**

LIVE GIGS

Day 1 | ARC ASIA In the ABC Farms complex—considered the original home of live music in Pune—Arc Asia stands out for its lovely alfresco feel. Serving Pan-Asian cuisine (with the occasional North Indian dish thrown in) alongside live performances, this is a can't-go-wrong-with kind of place. Try their Lazy Sunday Brunch, where dancing on tables, egged on by the in-house band, is de rigeur! *ABC Farms, North Main Road, Koregaon Park; 91/903-609-0132*



Day 2 | RAASTA CAFÉ Tucked away on a side street in the bustling Camp (CBD) area, this cosy restaurant has an outdoor terrace with funky street art on the walls and canopied wood tables. With Acoustic Thursday nights and live acts, the musical repertoire here is quite varied. Plus they offer creative cocktails and a good mix of Mediterranean-style nibbles. *Shantai Hotel, Off Moledina Road; 91/770-982-7677*

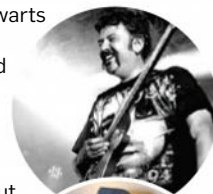


Day 3 | EURISKA A platform for the arts including dance, theatre and comedy, apart from music of course, this Greek-inspired lounge is located in the posh Koregaon park neighbourhood. Designed to resemble Santorini-style whitewashed cave architecture, with a menu to match, this luxe lounge sees everything from rock bands to EDM DJs. *Next to Koregaon Park Plaza, Koregaon Park Annexe; 91/976-522-2609*

ON THE BAND STAND

Your checklist of three Pune-based bands you need to know about:

AGNEE One of the stalwarts of rock music in India, Agnee has been around for decades. Even as they amass national awards and sign record labels, they continue to be based out of Pune, which is the hometown of founding members Koco and K Mohan. They specialise in original compositions, with an undertone of Indian classical music.



LAMBADA This ensemble act have been entertaining Pune crowds for years, with their excellent renditions of Hindi, Sufi, old-school pop rock, and fusion music. They know how to get a party started!

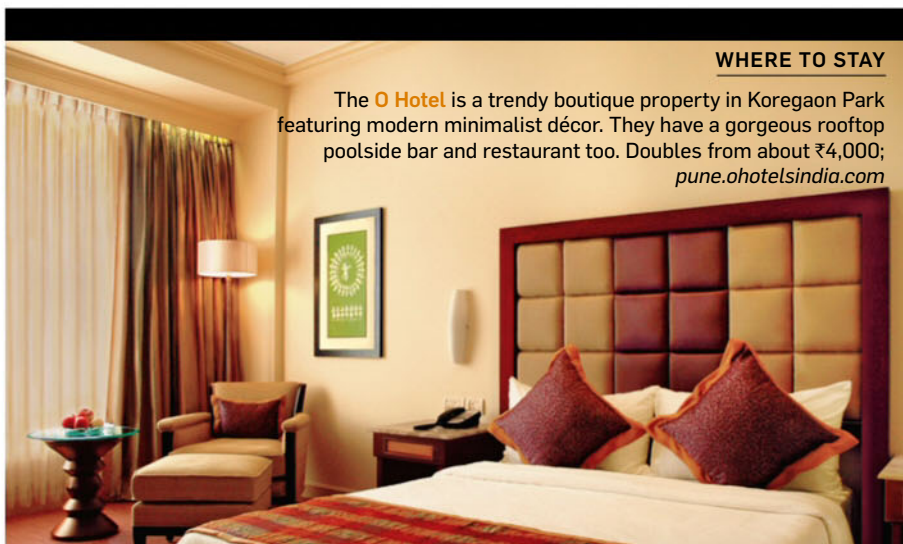
ROHIT VASUDEVAN DIARIES Based jointly out of Pune and Mumbai, the rock band, named after its founder, has already earned accolades and awards in its two-year existence, with its eclectic sound.

EXPLORE THE CITY

Pune has plenty of history waiting to be uncovered. Join one of the Pune Magic guided tours, where enthusiastic locals take you across temples, dargahs, fortresses and palaces, to trace the city's chequered history dating back hundreds of years. Pune Magic also offers culinary tours, and day trips. From ₹6,950 for two including transfers, and entry fees; punemagic.com

WHERE TO STAY

The **O Hotel** is a trendy boutique property in Koregaon Park featuring modern minimalist décor. They have a gorgeous rooftop poolside bar and restaurant too. Doubles from about ₹4,000; pune.ohotelsindia.com



CLOCKWISE: COURTESY OF ARC ASIA; COURTESY OF AGNEE (2); COURTESY OF RAASTA CAFÉ; COURTESY OF EURISKA

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'X' Marks The Date

These sports, art and culture, and music events are worth travelling for—even beyond borders.

MARCH/2016

Byron Bay Bluesfest, New South Wales | 24–28 | This Blues and Roots fest brings Tom Jones, Elle King, and Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds. bluesfest.com.au



Grand Prix, Melbourne | 17–20 | Sit tight at the Albert Park Grand Prix Circuit, and feel adrenaline pump into your blood as high-speed cars swish past you. grandprix.com.au



Ultra Music Festival, Miami | 18–20 | At Bayfront Park, the annual EDM party is on with Avicii, Tiesto, David Guetta, and more. ultramusicfestival.com

ICC World Twenty20, India | Mar 9–Apr 3 | Cricket lovers in India have something to look forward to this summer. icc-cricket.com/world-t20

Kasauli Rhythm and Blues Festival, Himachal | 25–27 | The Disparrows, The Local Train, Bollywood singer Shilpa Rao, and others will make themselves heard.

Coachella Valley Music & Arts, California | 15–17 & 22–24 | Time to set up your camps on the grounds of the Empire Polo Club. This popular event features multiple stages, a great line-up, and art installations. coachella.com



World Art Dubai, UAE | 6–9 | More than 3,000 artworks from four continents, live performances, workshops, and curated art walks. worldartdubai.com

APRIL/2016

Sunfest, Florida | Apr 27–May 1 | Think five days of music and art in downtown West Palm Beach. Founded in 1982, this annual waterfront festival also boasts of floating bars, family zones, and fireworks displays. sunfest.com

MAY/2016



Carnival of Cultures, Berlin | 13–16 | In a colourful display of cultures, it features food stalls, live performances, and arts and crafts. The closing parade with musicians, dancers, and spectators is the highlight.

71st Prague Spring International Music Festival, Czech Republic | May 12–Jun 4 | Orchestras, opera, conductors, and soloists; and 50 classical music concerts. festival.cz

Wiener Festwochen or Vienna Festival | May 13–Jun 19 | Attend theatre, concerts, opera, art exhibits, and readings. festwochen.at

Cannes Film Festival, France | 11–22 | A must-attend for movie buffs, it celebrates best of cinema and hosts exclusive parties and movie screenings. festival-cannes.com



Art Basel, Switzerland | 16–19 | This international art fair is where you will find gallery owners, artists, private collectors, and art lovers. 300 art galleries around the world exhibit here. artbasel.com



Chicago Blues Festival | 10–12 | The world's largest free blues festival pays a tribute to Otis Rush this year. chicagobluesfestival.us

JUNE/2016

Montreal Jazz Festival, Canada | Jun 29–Jul 9 | The world's largest jazz festival hosts more than 1,000 concerts (including blues, soul, reggae, rock) and most are free. montrealjazzfest.com



Isle of Wight Festival, UK | 9–12 | The music fest is celebrating 40 years of Punk this year, and the eyes will be on Queen + Adam Lambert, Iggy Pop, and Adam Ant. isleofwightfestival.com

Wimbledon, London | Jun 27–Jul 10 | The tennis championship is back this summer, and we're hoping to see David Beckham as much as Murray and Williams. wimbledon.com





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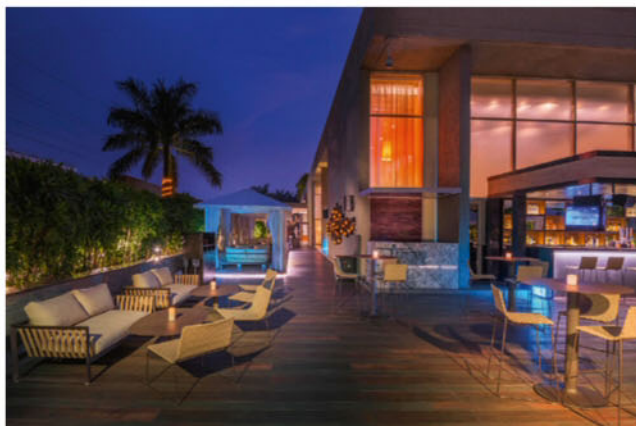
RATED NO.1 IN
JIM CORBETT



HAPPY HOURS

New Hotshots

Did you hear about these bars that opened last year? Here's a round-up of new places that you may have missed. BY APEKSHA BHATEJA



CLOCKWISE: VIP lounge at Havana Cafe and Bar; Ignite bar in Pune; al fresco style at Chi Asian Cookhouse; the stylish Pamphilos Kitchen & Bar; Breakfast Martini served at Ignite.

PAMPHILOS KITCHEN & BAR | DELHI

Cost for two: ₹2,000 approx.
Happy Hours: All day on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday; till 9 pm on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; two for the price of one on Indian liquor and three for the price of two on foreign liquor.
Great Cocktail: Chi, Spike Tea, Old Fashioned, Flaming Doctor Pepper, Death in the Afternoon.
Must-try Dishes: Hummus platter, grilled chicken peri-peri, grill polenta with vegetable steak, and chocolate flan.
Contact: 91-11/3310-5313
Cool Quotient: A hip bar, it host gigs, music nights, ladies' nights, and Sunday brunch.
facebook.com/PamphilosIndia

IGNITE AT COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT PUNE HINJEWADI | PUNE

Cost for two: ₹3,500 approx.
Happy Hours: Daily, 5 pm – 8 pm; buy one get one on IMFL.
Great Cocktail: Breakfast Martini, Spiced Mojito, Puneri Margarita, and Rejuvenate.
Must-try Dishes: Pork ribs, steak tenderloin, signature chicken wings, and beetroot galouti.
Contact: 91-20/4212-2080
Cool Quotient: An interactive live kitchen; seating includes private cabanas and community tables. The bar also hosts DJ nights on Tuesday and Thursday, and ladies' nights on two Fridays in a month.
courtyardmarriottpune.com

CHI ASIAN COOKHOUSE | DELHI

Cost for two: ₹2,000
Happy Hours: Everyday, 3.30 pm – 7.30 pm; buy one get one on domestic liquor.
Great Cocktails: Yin & Yang and Tom Yum Collins.
Must-try Dishes: Dimsums, fish with Thai curry paste, and orange teriyaki mushroom.
Contact: 91-11/4512-3244
Cool Quotient: An Asian restaurant with an open-plan design, natural lighting, and beautiful installations. The most popular dish here is Bibimbap—a Korean speciality that comes in a bowl—full of sticky rice and veggies topped with a fried egg. Also check out oil-free options on the menu.
worldofchi.com

HAVANA CAFE & BAR | MUMBAI

Cost for two: ₹2,000
Happy Hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 12 noon – 10 pm; rum at ₹99 plus taxes, cocktails at ₹199 plus taxes, and pitchers for ₹999 plus taxes.
Great Cocktails: Zombie, Freedom Fighter, Classic Mojito, Jack Sparrow, and Copa Cobana.
Must-try Dishes: Grilled paneer Cubano, ham and cheese Cubano, and multi-grain bread chicken Cubano.
Contact: 91-22/2289-4488
Cool Quotient: A Cuban-themed bar in Colaba with colonial-style décor and Caribbean feel. Don't miss their Bar Nights with guest DJs.
facebook.com/HavanaMumbai

CLOCKWISE: COURTESY OF HAVANA CAFE AND BAR; COURTESY OF COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT PUNE HINJEWADI; COURTESY OF CHI ASIAN COOKHOUSE; COURTESY OF PAMPHILOS KITCHEN & BAR; COURTESY OF COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT PUNE HINJEWADI

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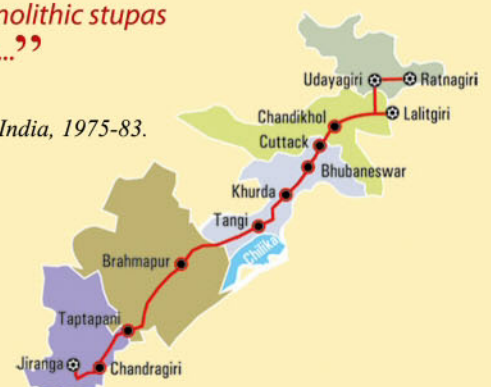
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*“Ratnagiri... here is an establishment
that can be compared with that of Nalanda.
In the overwhelming number of portable monolithic stupas
Ratnagiri can compete even with Bodh-Gaya...”*

Dr. Debala Mitra

Former Director General Archaeological Survey of India, 1975-83.



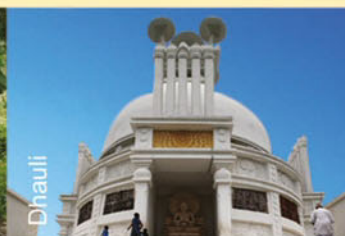
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ON RADAR THIS MONTH | LONDON | *MUSWELL HILL BROADWAY*

Up north from Central London, there's a whole other kind of Broadway that seems particularly suited to life as a local. A stroll down Muswell Hill's sloping streets is a beautiful way to slow down whilst still taking in a bit of London's magic. If the number of home stores and boutiques are anything to go by, Muswell Hill is most firmly a residential area, not particularly designed for tourists, but with its warm, village feel, proximity to Alexandra Park and all-round loveliness, it's the kind of place where a weekend may be well spent. Its many cafes seem perfectly staged as a backdrop to the Muswell Hill Bookshop, which has remained independent since 1985. Perched atop a hill with sweeping views of the rest of London, its comfortable distance from the city's bustling action feels, on occasion, just right. —ADITI DATTA

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The Stuff of Fairy Tales

Parisian tastemakers are reinvigorating an old-fashioned corner of Normandy, adding modern flourishes to a rural French idyll. BY REBECCA ROSE PHOTOGRAPHS BY CÉLINE CLANET

One of the newly built suites at Le Domaine d'Ablon.





The herb garden at Le Domaine d'Ablon.

THE SUN HAD JUST slipped down between the apple trees, silhouetting a group of Normande cows against an orange-purple sky, as I foraged around a vegetable garden on my hands and knees. Yanking out a couple of radishes to add to my pannier of organic produce—turnips, broccoli, brussels sprouts, and celeriac—I felt gratifyingly like a peasant in a Millet painting. Smoke from the chimney of La Petite Chaumière, the 16th-century thatched cottage we were staying in, mingled

with fresh scents from the herb garden, where, alongside varieties of thyme, mint, and sage, sat plants with even more-poetic-sounding labels: SARRIETTE, PIMPRENELLE, and MÉLISSE. Beyond them, a moss-flanked path led to a latched front door, behind which a crackling fireplace glowed. The only thing missing was the Three Bears.

The Three Bears, however, didn't sauté their vegetables in high-end cookware on a six-burner range, watch *The Amazing Spider-Man* on a giant flat-screen TV, or wallow in an Italian tub filled with Bulgari bubbles. Nor were they able to dial up a room-service *tarte aux pommes* and have it delivered on a tray by the cottage's owner, Christophe Delaune. This was a children's-book fantasy, with bells on.

Delaune, 46, is the effervescent creator of Le Domaine d'Ablon, a group of new luxury *demeures*, or residences, in Normandy's Pays d'Auge. This undulating region, traditionally associated with cider, Calvados, and Camembert, is home to the well-heeled seaside town of Deauville—to which Parisians have had easy access since the capital's Gare St-Lazare opened in the mid 19th century. Deauville and its equally picturesque neighbour, Honfleur, are now established tourist honeypots (the latter attracts 3.5 million visitors per year) and, as is often the case with such places, have acquired something of a reputation for resting on their laurels.

Which is why Delaune, whose ambitious project is just a short drive from both towns by car, has set out to

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reinvigorate the area with his relaxed, modern take on hospitality. Guests are often surprised to see their host carrying luggage and delivering their morning *pain au chocolat*—especially when they discover that Delaune was, until recently, the president of a multimillion-dollar firm specialising in print management for retailers. After cashing out in 2011, Delaune wanted a change from his relentless 24/7 schedule, which had not provided enough time for him to indulge his real weakness: gardening. “Gardening is a dangerous passion for me. There are no limits,” he said, with an infectious laugh. He went on to recount how when he lived in Aix-en-Provence, he spent US\$11 million on his 37-acre garden, which in turn inspired him to host a Chelsea Flower Show-style event that drew 25,000 visitors in three days.

The concept for Le Domaine d’Ablon came to Delaune gradually, partly as a result of staying in luxury hotels while travelling for business, but also out of a desire to return home to his beloved Normandy (he grew up in Le Havre). La Petite Chaumière—a traditional Norman two-bedroom farmer’s cottage that originally served as his country bolt-hole—was the obvious place to build on. So he and his wife left their penthouse in Paris’ St-Germain-des-Prés and drew up plans to construct, from scratch, two more traditional Norman houses on their five acres, adding a new home for themselves and a further two guest suites to the site of the original 16th-century building. The resulting new buildings, with their immaculately thatched roofs and oak beams, are virtually indistinguishable from the original cottage.

The idea is for guests to have their own private living space and garden—quite a departure from the typical high-end hotel experience in France, which can be formal to the point of stuffiness. “Many people staying in five-star hotels don’t like to mix with others,” Delaune said. “They don’t want to be surrounded.” With a capacity for only eight guests so far, the atmosphere is resoundingly peaceful—no chance of being snapped by an iPhone here.

Guests are encouraged to help themselves to produce from the *potager* (kitchen garden), but can also order from the property’s room-service menu, a non-dietetic repertoire of creamy Norman dishes

prepared by chef-pâtissier Jérôme Billochon. Delaune said he recently hosted a group of CEOs from Paris who delighted in picking their own vegetables and a Parisian family who foraged for their own chestnuts to roast on the fire. “The more successful and busy you are, the more you look for the simple things in life.”

Delaune has grand plans for the Domaine. He aims to build a “typical Norman village” of 12 houses, all in the local style. A village, that is, with extras: a 65-by-20-foot indoor pool is planned for 2017, followed by an orangery, a business centre, and a restaurant by 2020. It is quite a project—and a boon for this rural corner of Normandy, without doubt.

He isn’t the only one shaking things up in the area. Down in Deauville, on a drizzly off-season Thursday lunchtime, there was a buzz under the awnings of

Charlo, a newfangled butcher/roisserie that opened last summer. The *patron* is Charles Agniel, a smiley former lawyer from Paris who, like so many Parisians, has been weekendending in Deauville for years. His concept is as fresh as the free-range meat behind the counter inside: a butcher offering meat from humanely treated animals—Angus beef, chicken from Landes—combined with a roisserie restaurant, serving the same meat cooked with sides of home-cut *frites*, *gratin dauphinois*, and *ratatouille*, all made on site from fresh, seasonal ingredients.

Agniel was inspired by the market in neighbouring Trouville, where fishmongers serve customers *sur place* with oysters and a glass of chilled champagne. The ambience at Charlo is modern and

masculine—upbeat music, counter seating, and a bar and smoking room for private parties. It is a little bit of Paris, and a pleasing contrast to the region’s typical brasserie/*crêperie* fare. Agniel plans to open branches across France, and in Dubai and South America.

Just across Deauville’s central Place de Morny is another markedly modern establishment: a beautifully presented *boulangerie-pâtisserie* called Yvonne. Just as Ladurée reinvented the *macaron*, Yvonne has breathed life into that most overlooked of French pastries, the *éclair*. Under vintage, cloche-hat-style lampshades was an artful display of creations in more than a dozen different *parfums*, from white chocolate and passion fruit to salted



A bathroom in one of the Grange suites at Le Domaine d’Ablon.



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caramel. Yvonne looks like it belongs in the Seventh Arrondissement, rather than downtown Deauville.

Despite these green shoots of regeneration, it would be misleading to suggest that Normandy's pleasures are solely to be found in the new. The region has long been known as horse country, thanks to the prestigious races at Deauville, along with a number of internationally famous stud farms. The Deauville yearling auctions—the sale of thoroughbred year-old horses—always attract a glitzy crowd, and one of the activities Christophe Delaune has secured for his guests at the Domaine is a private visit to an *haras*, or stud farm—an experience usually off-limits to visitors.

Haras du Hoguenet, a family-owned farm nestled in verdant horse *terroir* 50 minutes from the Domaine, currently houses four famous stallions. We were given

require any expertise on my part. I stepped out of the stirrups invigorated, lungs filled with sea air.

Back at the Domaine that evening, I discussed the state of the nation with Delaune, in his cathedral-ceilinged library filled with thousands of books. France, he reminded me, is the most visited country in the world, with over 80 million tourists arriving each year—yet the French hotel industry, in his view, is frozen in time. Too much formality, not enough thought or creativity. He, on the other hand, is thinking big. “Imagine creating a typical village like this in each region of France, with each different cuisine, culture, and architecture,” he said. “France is sitting on a pot of gold!” If all goes according to plan, Delaune may yet find himself conveniently positioned at the end of the rainbow. ☺

FROM LEFT:
Trouville's
Villa Gypsy
coffee shop,
another
innovative
business to
open in the
area; the
lighthouse
in Trouville.



a sneaky tour by the stud manager, Anthony Baudouin, a tall, patrician Frenchman who once raced horses himself. Montmartre, a resplendent 10-year-old grey Grand Prix de Paris winner, now retired, was brought out to meet us. There was a ripple of excitement among our group as he was walked around the courtyard; not only is Montmartre a prize-winning thoroughbred but he has mated with an astonishing 186 mares this year, and fathered a total of four champion racehorses.

This exclusive equine world is usually the preserve of buyers, breeders, trainers, and racers, so it was thrilling to be taken for a ride along the vast sands of Deauville beach by a former racehorse. Not that I saddled up—I was sitting safely behind in what's known as a sulkie, an old-fashioned horse cart, driven by an expert handler. In a group of four horses and sulkies, we sped, clattering, down the two-mile sandy beach, darting in and out of the low tide, while our drivers bellowed instructions against the wind. It was an exhilarating hint at the potential of these beautiful creatures, and one that didn't

NORMANDY, FRANCE

HOTEL

Le Domaine d'Ablon This countryside property comprises two luxurious suites and a self-contained cottage; service is impressively intimate, from dial-up apple tarts to a pick-your-own vegetable garden. domainedablon.com; suites from US\$382.

WHERE TO EAT

Charlo A butcher shop and rotisserie serving Angus steaks and tasty spit-roasted free-range chicken. 29 Rue Breney, Deauville; 33-2/3188-3696; entrées US\$11–US\$33.

La Fleur de Sel Chef Vincent Guyon's chic Honfleur restaurant mixes seasonal local ingredients with a dash of the exotic. lafleurdesel-honfleur.com; prix fixe from US\$33.

La Poissonnerie Pillet-Saiter A traditional shop run by sixth-generation fishermen in Trouville's

famous market. A trip to Normandy is not complete without experiencing the *soupe de poisson*. poissonnerie-pilletsaite.fr

La Terrasse des Ammonites Watch the sun go down with small plates and a glass of something chilled at this seafront restaurant and bar. Rue des Lais de Mer, Bénerville; 33-2/3188-4033; small plates US\$10–US\$18.

Les P'tits Sucrés This year-old *salon de thé* has quickly acquired a reputation for its spectacular salted-butter-caramel crêpes. 38 Rue des Bains, Trouville; 33-2/3189-0630.

Villa Gypsy The mother-and-daughter team behind this airy little coffee shop in downtown Trouville serves delicious pastries and superb flat whites. villagypsy.fr

Yvonne Choose from more than a dozen flavours of éclair, like pistachio, *speculoos*, and lemon. Deauville; yvonne-patisserie.com

An Ineffable Experience On the Banks of Divine Kshipra



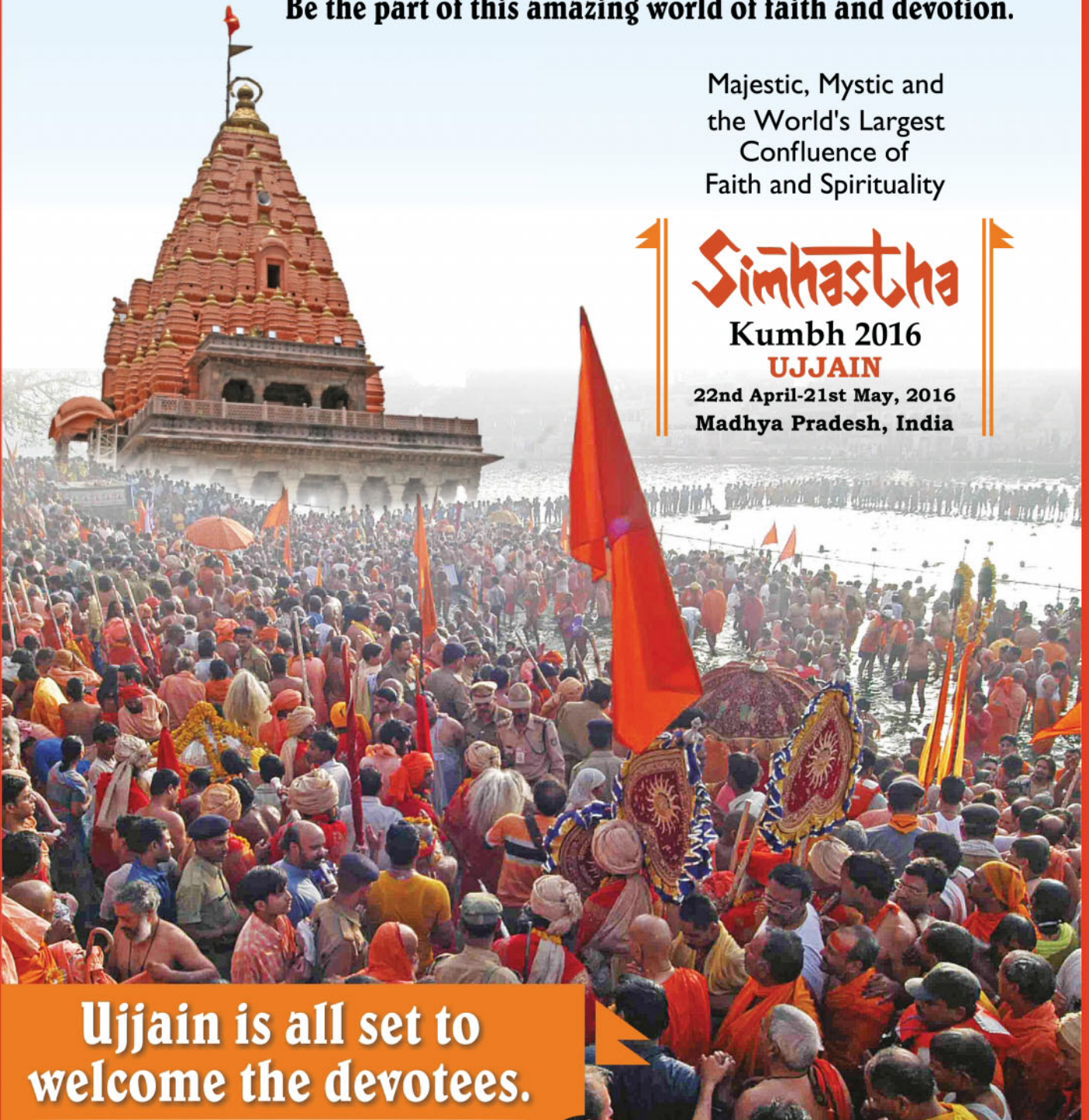
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Living the Deccan Odyssey

There's poetry in the rattling movement and the exquisite cameos framed like paintings on the windows. Onboard the opulent and recently refurbished luxury train, one revisits the historical and the modern by slowing oneself to the pace of experiential travel, finds **KALPANA SUNDER**

INSPIRED BY THE IMPERIAL CARS of the flamboyant Maharajas of yesteryears, the Deccan Odyssey (operated by *Cox and Kings*) has many experiential train journeys in South India, *Maharashtra Splendour* being its whistle-stop tour of spiritual towns like Nasik, Kolhapur, Goa, and Ratnagiri. The coaches painted in royal blue and burgundy—each named after some facet of Indian culture like *Bollywood*, *Tirth*, and *Abhang*—take you on to see the world unfurl from dawn to dusk. Green fields bursting with sugarcane, two-wheelers with milk cans strapped on their carriers, and small stations with cacophonous vendors selling sweet chai and hot *vada pav*.

It's a history and culture ride bunged together—at stations we are serenaded by pretty girls in traditional costumes and treated to local



FROM LEFT: The New Palace Museum in Kolhapur, built in the Indo-Saracenic style; Meals On Wheels; a fresh Caesar Salad; Pretty girls in local garb form the welcome committee at Ratnagiri.



dances with fancy footwork, and then guided to our air conditioned buses for an excursion.

In a world where speed is everything, a train journey has a way of slowing you down. Sitting in the *Gateway* bar with a drink in hand, I watch the world whiz past the large panoramic windows...it's alarmingly different. Besides, the personal touch is also unrivalled: my butler Stallone anticipates every need, from crack-of-dawn wake-up calls to cold towels and fruity mocktails after an excursion.

DAY 1: The staff escorts me from platform 18 of Chhatrapathi Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai, to my carriage called *Tirth*. I walk through the carpeted length of wood-panelled corridors with portraits of kings and old maps, to reach my air-conditioned twin-bed cabin, done up in pleasing shades of beige and gold, silk blinds, soft pillows and duvets, special stationary, and a small study table tucked under. En suite is a bath with shower, fluffy towels, toiletries, bath robe, and slippers. As the train trundles out of the station, I interact with

my co-passengers who are an eclectic lot from different walks of life: a boisterous stamp dealer from Britain, a young CEO from Belgium, and a retired British couple from Windsor who had learned about the train from their Indian doctor. After an early dinner, we retire to our rooms and begin to accustom ourselves to sleeping with sudden starts and whistles of a train travel.

DAY 2: After a breakfast of fluffy white egg omelettes and fresh fruits, we alight at Nasik, the holy city on the banks of Godavari, also known as the wine capital of the country today. Our guide Chitra dressed in bright shades of orange and purple, leads us along the banks of the river. Nasik means 'nose' and the city got its name from the nose of the mythical Ramayana demon called Surphanaka. Sadhus in saffron robes, hawkers selling religious paraphernalia, rock salt, herbal remedies, and mounds of local raisins, dot the banks. People bathe in the Ghats and perform religious rites, some float small baskets of flowers and *diyas* to fulfill a wish. The two-hundred-year-old homes in Panchavati with stained glass and wooden trellises carved with dragons and monkeys (home to large sprawling joint families in the past) become ageless protagonists of the moving time. We move over to the Grover Zampa vineyard where plants bursting with purple grapes drape red slopes, and have the sommelier guide us through several rounds of wine-tasting.



DAY 3: On the third day, we get off at Aurangabad and drive past cantonment areas with Gothic churches from the British era to reach the Ellora caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its larger-than-life dimension was carved into a basaltic hillside by devoted artists and monks centuries ago, and today makes for the largest monolithic structure in the world. Inside are 34 Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist caves—*chaityas* (temples) and *viharas* (monasteries). Cave 16 is the Kaliasanatha Temple; a stunning make that forms the centerpiece of the caves—designed to bring to life the abode of Lord Shiva: Mount Kailash. There are some exquisite friezes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata one can explore. We then move past the hinterland of the state as images of lush paddies, villages dotted with huts, and women tending to cooking fires zip by our windows.

DAY 4: It's Republic Day; I stand to attention at Jalgaon station with the railway staff, as they

CLOCKWISE: The UNESCO heritage listed Ellora Caves, where 34 caves from three religions share space harmoniously; puja platter with flowers, incense, and sugar balls in Panchvati, Nasik; Utsav, one of the two restaurants on the train.



hoist the flag. We drive along narrow roads to the spectacular Ajanta caves that overlook a lush gorge and the River Waghora. Here, one can see how time has whittled away the rich cave paintings in parts—the tempera so to say, which the artists first coated the walls with a mixture of clay and cow dung mixed with rice husks.

The caves are impressive: Cave 10, the first ever discovered, has octagonal pillars, a huge central stupa and a vaulted ceiling that imitates wooden architecture; the famous *Boddhisatva Padmapani* in Cave 1, holding a lotus in his right hand, with large eyes and graceful limbs, and a necklace of sapphire and pearls round his neck; the charm of Cave 4; splendid in its incompleteness with swirling lava in folds and peaks on its ceiling, harking back to a distant past.

DAY 5: We arrive at the ancient Maratha city of Kolhapur and are given flowing saffron turbans called *Phetas* to wear before we begin to explore the city to the cynosure of local eyes. Our first visit is to a workshop making Kolhapuri *chappals*, where we see funky versions of the sandals; even special *BajiRao Mastani* inspired slippers. We move on to the Indo-Saracenic palace of the Maharaja made in black stone, designed by an English architect with onion domes and stained glass windows. The interiors are filled with faded Raj glory; glass cases filled with horse racing

DETAILS

WHERE The journey starts and ends at VT Station or Chatrapathi Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai. It also operates on the Mumbai-Goa, Mumbai-Delhi route.

COST A Deluxe Cabin can be booked at ₹3,71,900, and Presidential Suite at ₹8,05,100 per person for 7 nights/8 days. This includes all meals, soft drinks, valets, and guided excursions at different stops. thedecanodyssey.com

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WHAT TO PACK Carry sunscreen and a hat for your excursions. Take plenty of reading material to pass time. The wifi on the train tends to be temperamental, and air-conditioning, powerful, so pack warm jackets and shawls for evenings in the dining carriage.



CLOCKWISE: A ceremonial welcome at Aurangabad station; Palacio Do Deao in sunny yellow, in Quepem, Goa; An intricately carved frieze at the Kailasanatha Temple in Ellora.



trophies, silver howdahs and sambar heads on walls. The highlight is the *Mardani Khel* in the courtyard of the Old Palace. This is a martial arts form indigenous to this region where players use sticks, swords, coconuts, and limes. Women, men, and children demonstrate different ways of wielding a sword or bamboo stick, or break coconuts with their heads.

DAY 6: The train chugs through emerald fields, mangroves, and coconut groves to Goa. Our first stop is Panjim where our guide Jonas takes us through Fontainhas, the old Latin Quarter. Here, narrow streets are lined with old Portuguese style homes, jutting balconies, intricate grills, and red tiled roofs. We walk past small family altars and windows made of translucent oyster shells, and make stops on the way to taste local sweets such as *Bibinca* at tiny bakeries. Very special is the visit to *Palacio Do Deao*, in Quepem, a former palace of

the Portuguese nobleman and Dean of the church, now restored to its past splendour by couple Celia and Ruben Vasco da Gama. Here at its leafy verandah, we are welcomed for high tea; wafer thin chutney sandwiches, Goan pancakes called *alle belle*, and stories of this labour of love. Antique furniture, memorabilia and old maps on the walls add to the ambiance.

DAY 7: Ratnagiri on the Konkan Coast, a small fishing village, is our last stop. This is home to the prized Alphonso mangoes and cashew nut processing factories. We drive to a mango farm owned by Amar Desai, a third generation farmer, whose grandfather was known to take crates of mangoes to sell in Karachi. Today he and his brothers own more than 200 acres and above 6,000 trees. The deserted Ratnagiri Beach overlooking the fort and lighthouse make for a tranquil walk.

On the last night, the Gateway Bar morphs into a disco, the theme is 'Indian night', and we dance to popular Bollywood tracks. As the train pulls into Mumbai on the last day, the staff lines up on the platform to bid goodbye, I feel blessed to have seen a snapshot of this state in the most pampered way. The Deccan Odyssey has served Maharashtra in bite-sized portions wrapped up like a precious gift and provided the ideal sanctuary for inspiration. As for me, the journey was every bit as enjoyable as the destination. ☺

THRILLS ON WHEELS

The Dining Car

Plates edged with gold on crisp linen in the two restaurants, Waawar and Utsav that serve Indian, Continental, and Chinese cuisine. Executive Chef Simartal Singh and his team of 15 make sure you are plied with delicacies. The set menus vary with the region that the train travels through: in Ratnagiri, there is Maharashtrian food with *kokum* coolers, in Kolhapur are tangy curries. Dinners are an

elaborate affair with soups like dal shorbas or Lobster Bisque besides vegetarian and non-vegetarian thalis, Pan seared polenta steak or duck breast. For lunch, expect watermelon and feta salad, kathi rolls, burgers, and pizzas. They make expeditions to local markets to pick up ingredients and fresh vegetables from registered suppliers. "Sometimes guests bring us some ingredients from local markets like lotus stems, and ask us to

cook it," Simar says with a smile.

Shopping

There's a small shop in the entertainment room of the train; cushion covers with the Deccan Odyssey logo; jewellery—necklaces, bangles, earrings, shawls, and stoles. During daytime excursions, pick up jaggery, saz jewellery, and *chappals* from Kolhapur, mango pickles from Ratnagiri, raisins and wine from Nasik, and sweets like *bebinca* and biscuits from Goa.



Coffee Picking in Coorg

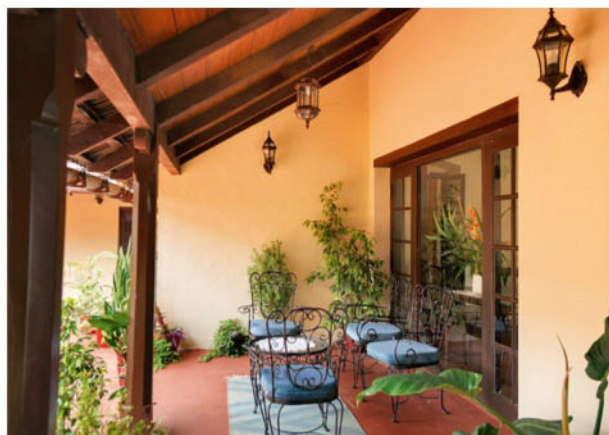
ROXANNE BAMBOAT was greeted by verdant green valleys and all the world's tranquility in Coorg—exactly what she expected. But, a coffee picking exercise later, and the place bought itself a whole new dimension. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADIL JAIN

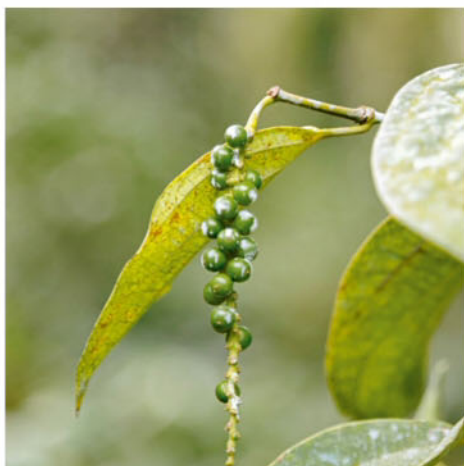
COORG IS HOME to fragrant teakwood forests, rolling hills, lush tall trees with pepper vines entwined around them, picturesque green valleys, and over all tranquility that's earned it the moniker 'the Scotland of the east.'

I woke up on a misty morning in an enormous bedroom furnished with charming old wooden furniture giving one a taste of the past, coupled with thinkable present-day creature comforts. Lush green gardens with a quaint patio to sit out at and enjoy your evening coffee or even a sunny breakfast outside the colonial-style bungalow. TATA Coffee offers a wonderful getaway in their coffee-growing estate Pollibetta where these heritage plantation bungalows are.

The days are spent relaxing in the comforts of the bungalow or taking a tour of the plantations and understanding how coffee is grown and cultivated. Not only do you get to a chance to pick beans but also interact with coffee planters and understand the finer nuances of the business.

For those not keen on coffee-picking, there are various other activities to keep you busy—an early morning bird-watching walk, a day trip to Nagarhole Forrest for a quick safari, a visit to the nearby Buddhist Monastery, or a day at the 9-hole golf course. Warm hospitality by the skilled and trained local staff of TATA coffee even includes a butler. Hearty homemade food included some Coorgi specials like Pandi (pork) curry, Koli (chicken) curry, or Kadumbuttu (rice dumplings).





CLOCKWISE: Picking beans at TATA coffee plantation in Coorg; an elephant in the woods; a meal under the sun; the guide will take you on a tour to explain how coffee is grown; fresh peppercorns. OPPOSITE: Exploring teakwood forests in Coorg; colonial-style bungalow at the plantation.

Travel Tips for Coorg

■ **WHILE OTHER** countries use machinery to pick their coffee, in Coorg all the coffee is picked by hand.

■ **WHILE THE** idea of strolling through the plantations for a brisk walk sounds appealing, it can be dangerous as you might chance upon an elephant lumbering about. You are advised to wander with a guide.

■ **HARVESTED COFFEE** needs to be dried so that there is barely any moisture in it. Once again no machines are used; instead the beans are sun-dried.

■ **THERE ARE** two varieties of coffee grown, Robusta and Arabica. The harvest months for Arabica are from April to November and Robusta are from December to March.

■ **THE EASIEST** way to get to Coorg is to drive from Bangalore which takes

approx 4-5 hours.

■ **INTERESTINGLY THE** coffee plant flowers when it matures and the blossoms look just like jasmine.

■ **THERE IS NOTHING** more exciting than picking fresh peppercorns from the estate which you can take back home and use in your cooking or even pickle.

■ **INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH**, after crude oil, coffee is the most sought-after commodity in the world. It's worth over US\$100 billion worldwide—more than even gold.

■ **WHILE MOST** people think the tall trees in Coorg are for coffee, the actual coffee plant is much smaller and resembles a big bush. The trees grow pepper which give ample shade to the coffee plant which is vital for their growth.



Indian Island Holidays

Musing over exotic islands in foreign lands is passé. Back home, our pretty little dots have claimed our next vacation dates. Here's why this might be the right time to introduce your kids to the treasures at home. BY **ANWESHA SANYAL**



Munroe Island Kerala

HOW OFTEN do we book into a glamorous island resort far away for a family vacay; Canary or the Caribbean, there is always that perfect celebratory travel plan pulling us away from that which is our very own. As 'exotic' gets crowded, turn to your own islands for a holiday inspiration.

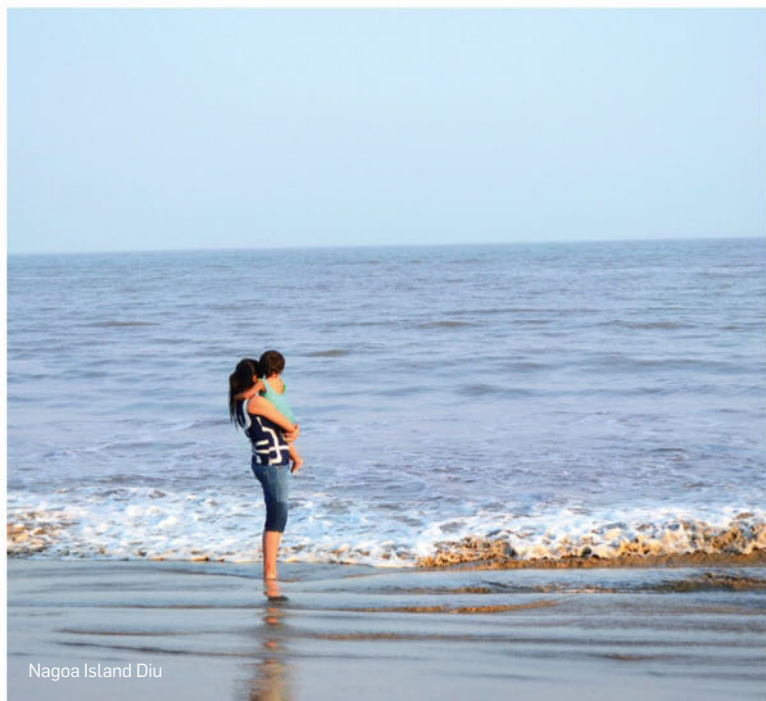
Munroe Island KERALA

Houseboats have never been prettier. Nor have the mangroves. Only 27 kms from Kollam, the backwaters of Ashtamudi Lake and Kallada River take you on a canal cruise to the island named after Colonel Munroe, the British President of erstwhile Travancore. The slow life of the Munroe isles is a sharp contrast to the buzz of the city—watch fishermen take boats out early in the morning, ladies of the village make ropes with coconut fibre, an abundance of coconut trees lining the riverside, orange sunsets on the backwaters, and migratory birds flying into the horizon.

WHAT TO DO Book a deluxe houseboat on Queen Ashtamudi (queenashdamudi.blogspot.in) that takes you from Kollam to Munroe. The journey is as beautiful as the destination—introduce your kids to Keralite cuisine that is served onboard on a banana leaf.

Diu GUJARAT

This little corner in India has a coastal length of only 21kms but has amassed greatly from its Portuguese history—the architecture and cultural identity—while being influenced by the Gujarati culture. The Diu Fort is its most famous



Nagoa Island Diu

FROM LEFT: ANDERS BLOMQUIST/GETTYIMAGES; ANAND PURHIT/GETTYIMAGES



Majuli Assam

attraction, but a visit to the Naida Caves behind it, the Church of St Francis of Assissi (the oldest church in Diu), and the secluded Gomptimata Beach for its serene stretch of white sand, is a must. Just beyond Gujarat, the union territory is also a major getaway from the state if you're looking for a nightclub that serves liquor.

WHAT TO DO If Goa is not your ideal destination with the little ones, this less-crowded doppelganger has pretty beaches like Nagoa, Ghoghla, Jallandhar, Simbor among others where they can engage in water sports (banana boating, jet skiing, speed boating) or parasailing, and get an aerial view of the island from a hot air balloon.

Majuli ASSAM

If you care for breathtaking scenery, sublime sunsets, picturesque photographs, and to be on an island before it sinks (which it is), pay a visit to the largest river island in the world, situated between the Brahmaputra and Kherkutia Xuti tributaries in Assam. One of the least commercialised places in the country, Majuli is a harbinger of the 16th century Assamese civilisation for its festivals and prayer ceremonies. This is where you can learn a thing or two about the neo-Vaishnavite philosophy—22 Vaishnava Satras are located on this island. The local cuisine is unique in its Khar, Laksa, Tenga, and Pitha.

WHAT TO DO Time your vacation with one of the popular festivals like Raas Purnima which is not only a crowd puller, but because cultural dance troupes from all over Assam come to the island to showcase performances to depict Lord Krishna's life. The other festivals to look out for are Paal Naam and Bathow Puja.

Netrani Island KARNATAKA

Who knew this little island off the Karnatic coast could be the visiting waters for whale sharks, turtles, cobias, string rays, stonefish, the Napoleon Wrasse, and the Great Barracuda!

SHUTTERSTOCK



PROMOTION

HEAVENLY INTERLUDE

The snow-clad TITLIS offers highest Alpine views and a range of activities, how you get there is another fascinating story—welcome to the TITLIS Xpress.

Don't forget your sunglasses onboard the TITLIS Xpress; the sweeping view of the snow-clad Mt TITLIS from Switzerland's new cable car, has a fantastic sparkle. Launched in December last year, this 8-seater marks another masterpiece of Swiss engineering, taking you from the base station in Engelberg valley to the glacial world of TITLIS in a pleasant 30-minute ride. You may choose to go to the Trübsee or Stand stations, without any transfer, to enjoy various snow activities. As a treat to every mountain lover, the Xpress train is only part of the journey. From Stand station, you can take a five-minute ride on the TITLIS ROTAIR, a revolving cable car (also the world's first) to climb higher and reach the TITLIS summit, the highest reachable point at 3,030 metres above sea level.

Activities are aplenty on the glacier and one will be spoilt for choice. Make a 150-step **Cliff Walk** at a height of 3,041 metres on a narrow suspension bridge to reach the **Ice Flyer**, a chair car. If you feel inspired, walk further to reach the vantage point at Stotzig Egg, or hop on to the chair car for a pulsating view atop the glacier valley—heaven, is right here. In summer, the Ice Flyer takes you directly from the base station to the **TITLIS Glacier Park** where you find your inner child as you pursue numerous snow activities—snake gliss, mini bob or snow-tubing. When you want to get off the snow, embark on hiking, mountain biking, or rowing trips near Trübsee, with a picnic in tow.

Winters are equally engaging; skiing, snow-boarding, tobogganing, winter walking are popular with families, with an après ski meal in one of the mountain restaurants after a hectic day on the snow. Couples with toddlers can take a leisurely walk to the **Igloo Village** and the **Glacier Cave** as well.



For more information, www.titlis.ch



Havelock Island Andamans



Sea Fan with scuba diver in background off Havelock Island in the Andaman Islands archipelago

Scuba diving here (the deepest being at 18 metres which requires an Advanced Level certification) opens the Arabian Sea up in 'fishy' ways, and you needn't even go as far as the Lakshwadeep for an underwater experience. Accessible through a boat ride from Murudeshwara (on the mainland), Netrani Island is a popular daytrip for locals and tourists. **WHAT TO DO** Introduce your children to the wondrous milieu of coral reefs. Scuba diving is appropriate for all ages, and there are numerous diving companies such as Adventure Nation (₹15,000 per person; adventurenation.com) and Barracuda Diving India (₹18,000 per person; barracudadiving.com) offer amateur and professional diving expeditions.

Havelock Island RITCHIE'S ARCHIPELAGO

Go beyond the Greater Andamans and stumble upon this white sand paradise. A rich coral reef floating beneath the waters and a lush green forest proliferating beyond the beach, Havelock Island is one of the most popular islands in the Andamans, located about 39 kms from Port Blair, accessible by boat.

WHAT TO DO This stretch of the Bay of Bengal has a fascinating marine life, drawing travellers from around the world, especially between mid-January and mid-May. Some of the best diving sites are at the Lighthouse, The Wall, the Pilot Reef, and the Dixon's Pinnacle, and getting there is easy on a speedboat; the beaches are lined with guides. When on shore, forest trekking routes claim your daylight hours. Book into the luxurious Wild Orchid Resort (wildorchidandaman.com), or Silver Sand (silversandhavelock.com)

Khanderi and Underi Islands MAHARASHTRA

Old Portuguese forts surrounded by a shrubby terrain, Khanderi in Thal, seven kilometres from the Alibaug district of Maharashtra, and Underi near the mouth of Mumbai's harbour, near Prong's Lighthouse, are two fort islands whose histories date back to the 1600s. These forts have seen the Maratha and the British rule as well, and but they aren't very talked about. Although, history buffs often find themselves walking around the walls of these forts.

WHAT TO DO Trekking the fort islands is taking that Alibaug weekend drive a bit further. Explore the drawings on the cave walls in Underi, visit the temple of Vetil, the tomb of Daud Pir, and the British-made lighthouse. The island is also accessible by a ferry. ➤



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The luxurious Club World of British Airways Airbus A380. Below: The aircraft rolls out of the hangar.

Flying First Class

British Airways is now flying the Airbus A380 between London and Miami. **RICHA WADHERA** finds out what's making the upper deck the most happening place at 30,000 feet.



IF THE DREAM IS TO TRAVEL far and wide, you can be sure you will, time and again, find yourself on a long haul flight. I found myself on one quite recently, but with added promise of an uber comfortable journey.

British Airways' addition to its fleet, the Airbus A380, was making its inaugural voyage to the city of Miami, and I had scored myself a Club World seat, on the much talked about upper deck.

The only commercial aircraft with two full-length, and rather wide-bodied decks, BA offers First, World Traveller Plus and World Traveller cabins, apart from Club World, aka, Business class.

I'm big on keeping to myself, and I got more than I had hoped for. The seats on the upper deck come in a 2:3:2 configuration, and I had the middle seat, with access to the aisle from both sides. The seat faces the back of the aircraft, with a semi circular, almost all encompassing headrest for added privacy. Getting around was a little tricky, given that I had to jump over the footrest of the passenger next to me to make it to the aisle. Regardless, I have to say I enjoyed this seat arrangement. There's a rather convenient screen between seats; one that either passenger can pull up, for maximum privacy. Needless to say, the middle

seat literally offers the most privacy. The only time I was forced to face the world was during food and beverage service, which was fine by me!

The seat comes with a folded footrest, with a blanket and pillow tucked inside it. Just pull it down and put your feet up. Being short, I had to slide into comfortable television-watching position to reach the footrest, but I didn't mind. There's an easy to use panel with different seat settings, and the seat even slides down to join the footrest, to make a 6 foot, flat bed.

The TV pulls out right over the tray table. I guessed the TV was about 12 inches wide (12.1, as I later read), but it takes some adjusting to get the

angle you're sitting at right, in order to be looking at the screen head on. The cabin in itself was quite silent; turns out the A380 is known to offer the quietest cabin of any existing passenger aircraft. I guess you just hope your co-passengers also believe in silence.

There's a reasonable-sized storage drawer on the side panel of the seat, enough to stash an ipod, phone, magazines, and passport—the usual paraphernalia. I also had to myself two USB sockets, and a personal in-seat power socket, which easily fit EU/ UK and US plugs.

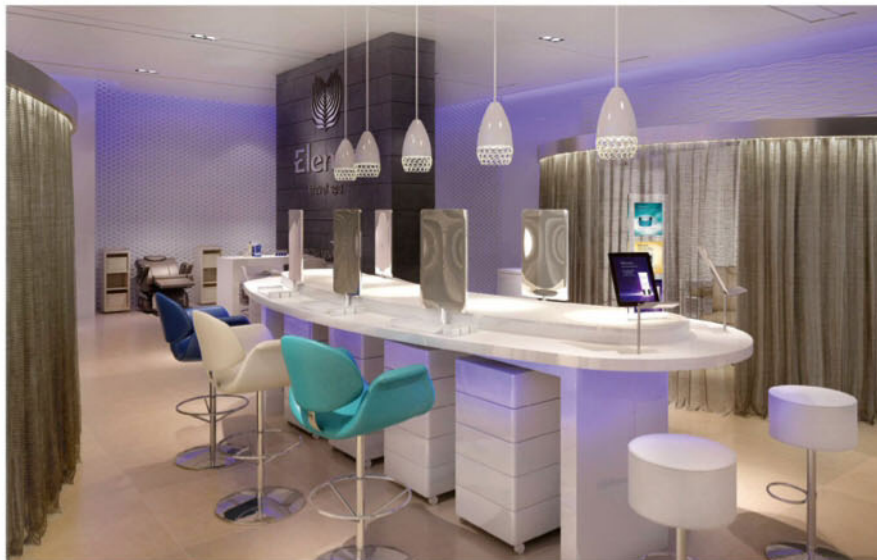
The toiletries kit I was handed came with an array of scented products from Elemis, along with socks and the essentials. I'd already indulged in 15 minutes in the massage chair at the Elemis Spa at Heathrow before I boarded. BA actually offers this complimentary service for First and Club World passengers, as well as Gold card Executive Club members when travelling long haul in any cabin. I was happy to add the contents of my kit to the samples I'd received at the spa.

The next surprise came when I opened the door to the restroom to put the kit to use. The restroom is massive; meaning I actually had to take a few steps to get to the mirror!

The crew on board was all smiles and soft voices; the perfect mix of hospitable and privacy-conscious. A lovely gentleman even used the pin on his name badge to help me change the sim card on my iPhone. Props to you for that one, sir!

Club World always offers a choice of two starters, four main courses, and dessert or cheese, and the menus change every month. My co-passenger didn't seem particularly impressed with the steak, but I enjoyed a lovely meal of salmon and greens, and even helped myself to the open snack bar between meals.

To arrive in Miami having achieved a couple of hours of solid sleep, with a handbag full of travel-size quick fixes for my face and hands, I can safely say I lost track of just how long that journey was. +



MID-FLIGHT MUNCHIES

4 snacks you can help yourself to between meals

- Fresh Fruit
- Ice cream
- Teoni's handmade shortbread
- Cadbury's chocolate

STAY ENTERTAINED!

- Watch one of 130 Hollywood films, or one of 650 TV shows from around the world
- Choose from 550 audio albums, 225 radio shows, and audio books
- You can connect your own equipment with the display screen, using the Video RCA connection (beneath the USB socket)
- Dedicated Baby Channels to keep kids engrossed
- Shortcut navigations, and hotkey and quickfind functions make navigation easy
- Play games using the user-friendly handset

ELEMIS PRODUCTS IN MY AMENITY KIT

Limited Edition Pro-Collagen Marine Cream (7ml)

Apparently Elemis' best-selling anti-ageing moisturizer, it's perfect to hydrate the skin.

Soothing Apricot Facial Wipe Scented and super refreshing, especially after a few hours of sleep.

Ultra-Conditioning Lip Balm (4g) Beeswax lip balm; cause you can never have enough of those!

Pro-Collagen Hand & Nail Cream (5ml) Advanced anti-ageing hand and nail cream; perfect to keep in your purse.

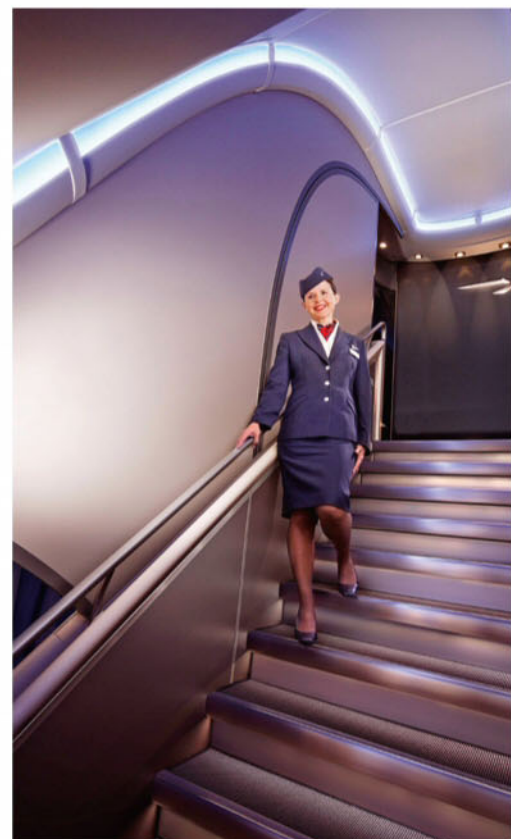
FROM TOP: Elemis Spa at Heathrow's BA lounge; Club World seats allow you to put your feet up; stairway inside the aircraft leading to the upper deck.

FUN FACT

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the guide

Holy Mamma! One-Price Mega Summer Deals

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A HOLIDAY WHERE NO ONE ASKS FOR YOUR SIGNATURE ON A CHEQUE? YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE OUT YOUR WALLET FOR EVERY MEAL AND ACTIVITY. YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT "WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO WITH THE KIDS?" YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE THEN. COMPILED BY **APEKSHA BHATEJA**

Enjoy family time
at Trident Agra.

COURTESY OF TRIDENT HOTELS





Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa SINGAPORE

COST From US\$400 per night; till October 31; shangri-la.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Deluxe Pool View Room and Deluxe Garden Room; two children under 12 stay in parents' room for free; buffet breakfast and dinner; Toots Club's full-day programme with lunch and dinner for kids above 5; complimentary access to the Mini Toots Club to toddlers below the age of 5 under parental or guardian supervision; 15 per cent off on spa; one-hour free use of selected water sports facilities daily; three free swings on The Flying Trapeze per room, per stay; complimentary internet access; free entry to Sentosa Island and Sentosa Express tickets.

BEST FOR Couples who want to some time together while their kids enjoy activities at the club.



The Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa MAURITIUS

COST From US\$660 per night; till July 31; westinturtlebaymauritius.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation for two adults and two kids below 12 or one teen under 18 in a Deluxe Family Room; all meals included; variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages; complimentary amenities for children on arrival such as travel journal, a box of colouring pencil, and a local activity guide; access to the Westin Family club; water sport activities including scuba diving, glass bottom boat, water-skiing, sailing, pedal boats, and snorkelling.

BEST FOR A peaceful wellness holiday away from the city and its hustle and bustle.



Ashford Castle IRELAND

COST From US\$1,510 for two nights; lhw.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Deluxe family room for two adults and two children under the age of 12 years; inclusive of breakfast; estate activities including golf, cycling, billiards, horse riding, tennis, zip wiring; access to the cinema room; one five-course dinner at George V; one three-course dinner at The Dungeon; access to Solarium, sauna and indoor swimming pool.

BEST FOR Those who want to stay in a castle reminding them of Celtic fantasies and Irish ghost stories. For a countryside experience, meet Irish Wolfhounds when they come to visit the hotel or take your kids to hawk flying. Babysitting services are also available.

Aww...

A little boy's stuffed animal was accidentally sent to the laundry by the housekeeping staff. It was found and returned to the boy in his room with a Hotel Bel-Air stuffed swan and a note that read, "I've returned from my trip to laundry land and brought a friend!" —HOTEL BEL-AIR LOS ANGELES



Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort in Chiang Rai THAILAND

COST From THB 75,200 per night; April 1 - October 31; goldentriangle.anantara.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in a family suite; daily breakfast, lunch, and dinner and in-room dining; one activity per day including elephant camp, cooking classes, the Golden Triangle Discovery Excursion, and Spa Discovery package; roundtrip transfers from Chiang Rai Airport; beverages; complimentary internet access; in-room mini bar; visit to the Opium Museum.

BEST FOR An outdoor experience of staying in the wild.



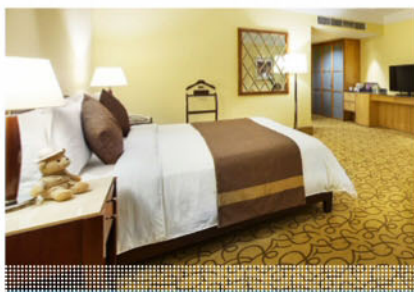
Resort World Sentosa

SINGAPORE

COST From US\$339 per person for four days and three nights; till November 30; rwsentosa.com.

INCLUSIONS One-night stay in Hard Rock Hotel Singapore or Festive Hotel; two-night stay in Genting Hotel Jurong; free accommodation for one kid; daily breakfast; passes for Universal Studios Singapore and S.E.A. Aquarium.

BEST FOR Fun with family in Singapore's favourite integrated resort where you can never run out of things to do.



The Fullerton Hotel SINGAPORE

COST From US\$353 per room per night; till December 30; fullertonhotel.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Heritage Room for two adults and two children under 12; daily American buffet breakfast; Singapore Standard Jubilee Pass; a complimentary Fullerton Bear; access to internet; complimentary heritage tours; kids' amenities including crayons and colouring book, an ice cream pass for one scoop of ice cream daily at Town Restaurant, cookies, and a Kodomo amenities set including baby wipes, baby powder, baby lotion, and shampoo.

BEST FOR A different experience in Singapore. This luxury heritage hotel has a story tucked in each corner. Besides, the location puts you in the heart of the city with a myriad of dining and entertainment options around.

A family staying with the hotel requested for distilled water for ladies to bathe with. It took 300 bottles of mineral water to fill the tub. Another time, we got a special request from a family from Kuwait who wanted their berries for breakfast to all be of the same size

—ANIL SAREEN AND AJITH VASU Les Clefs d'or Concierge, THE TAJ MAHAL HOTEL, NEW DELHI

HUH?



Gstaad Palace SWITZERLAND

COST From US\$4,635 for five nights; June 19 – September 11; lhw.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in two interconnecting rooms for two adults and two kids; inclusive of breakfast and lunch/dinner; chocolate workshop at Maison Cailler and a tour of the chocolate factory with return train tickets; visit to a local mountain farm; access to the spa.

BEST FOR Spending a chocolatey summer in Switzerland.



Shangri-La's Villingili Resort & Spa MALDIVES

COST From US\$1,061 per night; till December 21; shangri-la.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in villas and suites; free stay for children up to 12 years in parent's room; daily breakfast for two adults and two adults; a private family barbecue; a daily 90-minute CHI treatment; a romantic candlelit dinner for two and babysitting and room service dinner for children the same night; access to Cool Zone kids club and Tropical Safari Handbook; non-motorised water sports; a bottle of Tattinger Brut welcome Champagne; unlimited soft drinks for the young ones; a tropical fruit basket replenished daily; children welcome amenities; and scenic arrival and departure experiences for the family.

BEST FOR Families with younger kids who want to experience nature, water sports, and island culture. The resort also has a golf course, health club, pool, tennis courts, and spa.

HUH?

A foreign national family was once staying with us and insisted on trying local mangoes with a straw. The Concierge tried to convince them that it is a natural fruit and that we would not be able to help with this request. Since they were persistent, we offered them a packaged mango drink, which they politely refused.

—SACHIN SINGH

Head Concierge SOFTEL MUMBAI BKC



The Montcalm London Marble Arch LONDON

COST From US\$858 per night; through the year; montcalm.co.uk.

INCLUSIONS Luxury overnight accommodation in a suite for two adults and two kids; full English breakfast; mineral water, juice and homemade cookies; in-room movies with ice-cream; complimentary access to the internet and fitness and wellness centre; Bath Butler service; complimentary use of iPad; surprise gift for kids.

BEST FOR A short break in London.



Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay BALI

COST US\$5,685 for three nights; till December 20; fourseasons.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in the two-bedroom Family Premier Ocean Villa; daily breakfast for two adults and two children below 18; free meals for children under 12 years; babysitting service for five hours in the evening (once per stay); 50 per cent discount on second villa for children under 18.

BEST FOR Experiencing Balinese culture—take your kids to see shadow puppetry and Ramayana ballet, visit temples and villages, and indulge in local cuisine.

Moreover, the oceanfront resort has a pool, tennis courts, fitness centre and spa, kids' club, cooking academy, and water sports.



The Martinhal Beach Resort & Hotel ALGARVE PORTUGAL

COST From US\$1,007 for four nights; till October 31; martinhal.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in a Beach room or one-bedroom Garden House for two adults and a baby up to 2 years; inclusive of breakfast; baby welcome pack upon arrival (nappies, baby wipes, diaper cream); bottle warmer and steriliser, changing mat in room; Steiff goody bag with one Fynn teddy bear, bath glove and towel; two hour childcare at Raposinhos Crèche per day for babies between 6 and 24 months; first water experience for baby and parent; a spa treatment for two; a three-course romantic dinner and two hour babysitting service.

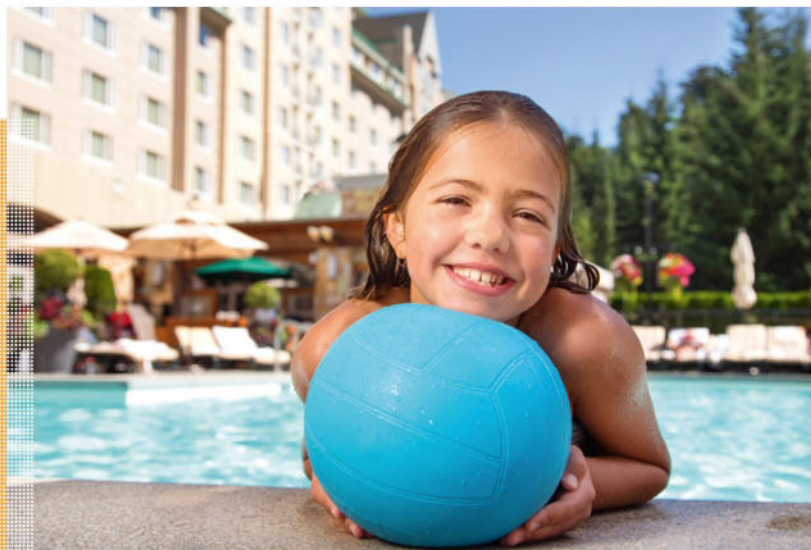
BEST FOR Your first holiday with your baby.

Fairmont Château Whistler CANADA

COST From US\$473 per room, per night; till April 17; fairmont.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Fairmont room for two adults and two kids up to 12; two adult Whistler Blackcomb lift passes; two 'child under 5' Whistler Blackcomb lift passes; breakfast for two adults and two children under 12 in The Wildflower Restaurant.

BEST FOR A skiing holiday in Canada with your troops in tow.



Marriott Executive Apartments Yeouido Park Centre SEOUL

COST US\$492 per night; through the year; marriott.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in two-bedroom suite with living room and kitchen for two adults and two children below the age of 12; inclusive of breakfast; access to internet; kid's bathrobe, slippers, and bath amenities; access to swimming pool, sauna, and kids' room; entrance ticket to 63 Sky Art; set-up of an Indian tent in room; VIP voucher for duty-free shop.

BEST FOR An urbane getaway for an art-loving family. Expose your kids to a new culture in Seoul.

Oops!

The mother of a family approached the guest services team in great panic one day after spotting an alligator near the outdoor pool. The team rushed over to the pool with her and she pointed them to the bushes. After the team approached the area cautiously and pushed the leaves away with a stick, they saw a small house lizard on the wall. After catching the lizard and taking it away, the team explained to the guest that house lizard is a common sight in Singapore, and in the tropical regions. The guest was thankful for the help and for the introduction to Singapore's most commonly spotted reptile.

—PATRICK FIAT General Manager 8 ON CLAYMORE SERVICED RESIDENCES (a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts)



Novotel Imagica Khopoli MUMBAI

COST From ₹13,500 per night; till May 31;

novotel.com.

INCLUSIONS

Accommodation for two adults and one child; breakfast; tickets to Imagica; tickets to Aquamagica; access to the gaming area which has activities such as foosball, pool, darts, carom, chess, and table tennis; interactive sessions of storytelling, swimming classes, craft, colouring, painting, and clay art at kids' corner.

BEST FOR A staycation for families who don't want to travel too far in search of an adventure park.

Modern Family

You need all the help you can get when kids are around. Here are some smartphone apps to make travel (relatively) less stressful.



SitOrSquat

A major concern when you're travelling with

kids is them announcing, "I need to go right now!" This app will get you out of the muddle by finding bathrooms near you, and let you know if they are worthy of a 'squat' or a 'sit.' Available on iOS and Android.



FirstCamera

This camera app saves pictures on the app, not

in the gallery, so you can let your kids click as many windows and trees as they want without it all clogging your album. Paints, stickers, and filters are happy extras. Available on iOS.



Trail Wallet

You may not be able to control all expenses while

travelling with family, but you can track them. Set a budget at the beginning of your trip, and keep adding expenses as you go. The app will show you if you're under- or over-budget, convert it in your home currency, and make pie charts. Available on iOS.



GateGuru

The app provides information about 204 airports

around the world—flight delays, airport security wait, maps, airport amenities are at your fingertips now. It especially comes in handy when you're strolling your baby through the maze of an airport, looking for a place to eat. Available on Android and iOS.



Bingo Road Trip

Road trips will be more enjoyable if your kids are busy

playing Bingo on the backseat, spotting street signs and vehicles. Available on Android; iOS has its own Bingo app.

Oops!

A Russian guest bought a watch in the avenues. He had an argument with his wife and she threw it outside the balcony. It went straight down to the Ambassador Lagoon as their suite (Terrace Club) has a view of the lagoon. The guest came to the concierge to ask assistance and the divers looked for it for hours. It was finally found, and the guest then told us it is worth US\$100K. He tipped a thousand dollars each to the concierge and the diver.

—RITCHIE PLAZA

Head Concierge ATLANTIS THE PALM



Trident AGRA

COST From ₹16,800 for two nights and three days; till March 31; tridenthotels.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in a Deluxe Garden View Room for two; two kids below 8 years can stay with parents for free; additional room for two children up to 12 years at 50 per cent of the offer price; meals for kids up to six are complimentary; children up to 12 receive 50 per cent discount on buffet meals; Trident Breakfast and one major meal for two; Happy Hours between 6 - 7pm; access to the Trident Kids' Club and special activities.

BEST FOR A glimpse into India's great heritage. Give them a historic tour of the city as you take them to see Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, and Fatehpur Sikri.



Sanya Marriott Yalong Bay Resort & Spa CHINA

COST From US\$639 for three nights; through the year; marriotthotels.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Garden View room; 30 per cent discount for guests booking a second room for parents above 55 years old; welcome drink on arrival; daily breakfast for two adults at Marriott Café; children under 12 stay free with breakfast and extra bed; children under six order free from the kids' menu; RMB 500 dining credit; one kid's cup for free flow soft drinks at any outlet and a beach ball; four hours free use of facilities in the Kids Club; complimentary activities for children and adults; complimentary use of a DVD Player with a wide selection of DVDs; a complimentary pizza; late check-out; round-trip airport transfers.

BEST FOR A kid-centric holiday. This family-friendly resort has a Kids Ambassador who helps plan all activities exclusively for kids. For newborns, the resort provides a complimentary baby cot, baby bath, and a milk sterilisation set. Wait, there's more—robe and mini slippers for kids, Kids Club, kids' pool with waterslide, outdoor adventure play area, a bean bag movie theatre, and an indoor play area.



Four Seasons Explorer in the MALDIVES

COST From US\$2,250 per person for a three-night cruise; till December 24; fourseasons.com.

INCLUSIONS All meals and beverages; windsurfing, kayaking, water skiing and fishing; fish talks and snorkelling excursions with onboard Marine Biologist; island hopping and cultural presentations; scheduled dives including full equipment; fresh fruit in room daily; transfers.

BEST FOR A cruise-tripping family.

HUH?

A guest got stuck on the highway due to traffic and called our front office, asking to connect with the traffic control. When we explained that it's not in our control, he suggested that we should have a tie-up with the traffic police to sort out such situations.

— ANURAG BATRA General Manager NIRAMAYA RETREATS SURYA SAMUDRA

Hotel Le K2 FRANCE

COST From US\$3,398 per night for a family of four; till March 19; lhw.com.

INCLUSIONS Get one night's stay free when you book for four nights; accommodation in a Family Prestige room; complimentary breakfast and lunch/dinner; access to internet; access to The Goji Spa, the Children's World with racing arcade games, simulators, and an interactive dance floor, and fitness room.

BEST FOR A luxurious and private French holiday in the mountains.



Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge SOUTH AFRICA

COST From US\$722 per adult per night, US\$189 per child per night for 4-7 year olds and US\$283 per child per night for 8-12 year olds; through the year; sabisabi.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Luxury Suite; all meals, pre-safari refreshments, a house selection of beverages; morning and evening open-vehicle safaris, environmental awareness walking safari; activities at the Elefun Children's Centre.

BEST FOR Spotting the Big 5 on a family-friendly private game reserve that has a special play area for kids.



Mövenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket THAILAND

COST From US\$347 per night; through the year; movenpick.com.

INCLUSIONS Three nights' stay for two adults and two kids in Residence and two-bedroom family suites; complimentary breakfast; daily chocolate hour; access to internet; kids up to six years eat free from Power Bites Kid's menu (50 per cent off for 7-12 year olds); round-trip transfers; late check-out; one-time resort credit of THB 5,000.

BEST FOR A tropical family holiday on the beach. The property has kids' activities and a play zone, so they won't get bored of sitting in the room.

Anantara Si Kao Resort THAILAND

COST From US\$160 for two nights; all-inclusive dining US\$61 extra per adult per day; minimum two nights' stay; till December 16; sikao.anantara.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation for two adults and three kids under 12 in a Deluxe room; breakfast; welcome gifts for kids; complimentary activities at Kids' Club; a choice of one resort activity from tennis, mini golf, and cycling. All-inclusive dining includes lunch, dinner, afternoon snacks, free dining for kids under 12, 20 per cent discount on spa treatments, 10 per cent discount on excursions, and selected range of beverages.

BEST FOR A kid-friendly resort with a romantic location—win-win for the whole family. Kids club, pool, children's menu, and babysitting services available.



HUH?

A guest called and said, "My parents need to hear a lullaby because that it's not easy for them to fall asleep in new surroundings. Can you send someone?" —MONICA SURI General Manager LE MERIDIEN KOCHI



Belmond Napasai Koh Samui THAILAND

COST From US\$92 per person per day and from US\$46 for kids between 4-12; minimum three nights' stay required; through the year; napasai.com.

INCLUSIONS Applicable on all rooms; daily breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, and dinner; complimentary beverages; in-villa mini-bar with daily replenishment; laundry service; choice of one activity per person per day from scuba diving and snorkelling to yoga and tennis.

BEST FOR Children who are into sports. The resort has on-site facilities including tennis courts, pool, Thai boxing, windsurfing, snorkelling, and scuba diving. Cooking classes, language lessons, yoga, and countryside tours can also be organised. Use their babysitting service and spend some time together.



The St Regis Rome ITALY

COST From US\$1,270 per night; minimum two nights' stay required; through the year; starwoodhotels.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation for two adults and two kids in Junior Suite with personal butler service; late check-out till 4pm; a daily credit of Euro 50 for Vivendo Restaurant, Le Grand Bar and Family Experiences.

BEST FOR A historic and cultural tour of Rome—tour famous attractions in the city and attend workshops at children's museum Explore.



Niraamaya Retreats Cardamom Club Thekkady

KERALA

COST From ₹34,479 for two nights and three days; till September 30; niraamaya.in.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in a deluxe cottage for the family; kids stay free in their own cottage; inclusive of meals and evening canapes; guided plantation tour; bird watching trek to Mount Miracle; jeep safari or picnic with an Asian elephant; boating or bamboo rafting; nature walk; tea factory visit; spa sessions.

BEST FOR A luxury retreat on a plantation.

AWW...

We had a young couple from Spain staying with us with their 8-month-old daughter.

They asked me to get Opera tickets at the last minute for a sold-out performance. I managed to get them two tickets. Thirty minutes before the Opera started (the Sacher is just opposite of the Opera House), the clients came down to the concierge desk and handed over their little girl to me—they had forgotten to arrange a babysitter for her. So for almost two hours, I was carrying the baby and trying to do my job at the same time. I enjoyed it, being a father of two daughters, but I was glad it was not a Wagner Opera as they can last for at least 5 hours!

—WOLFGANG BUCHMANN,

Chief Concierge HOTEL SACHER VIENNA



Ranbanka Palace JODHPUR

COST ₹19,599 for two nights for two adults and two children below six; ₹9,800 for kids above six for two nights; till March 31; ranbankahotels.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation; all meals; welcome drink on arrival; one couple's massage; city tour of Mehrangarh Fort, museum, local market, Jaswant Thada, and Mandore Garden; access to the swimming pool, games, and steam room; cultural evening performance; round-trip transfers; 15 per cent discount on spa and restaurant.

BEST FOR A royal tour of the Blue City.



Amari Hua Hin THAILAND

COST From US\$201 per night; minimum stay for three days; through the year; amari.com/huahin.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in the two-bedroom Family Suite Hillside View and Family Suite Poolside View; breakfast, seasonal fresh fruits basket, and complimentary seafood platter at Reef Deli & Wine Lounge; free access to the Kids Club for creative activities including Amari Hua Hin's popular doll painting activity; 20 per cent discount on all treatments at Breeze Spa.

BEST FOR A laidback holiday that doesn't require much planning.



Fairmont Southampton BERMUDA

COST From US\$499; through the year; fairmont.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Luxury room for two adults; 50 per cent discount on second room for kids from May 1 - August 31 and second room free from for stays through April 30, 2016 and September 1-December 31, 2016; welcome amenity for kids; complimentary access to Explorer's Kids Camp; kids 12 and under eat free from the children's menu; children 18 or under receive 50 per cent off the adult menu.

BEST FOR A dreamy holiday in Bermuda where you can enjoy the privacy of your room while kids stay in an interconnecting room.



The Plaza Hotel NEW YORK

COST US\$2,043 per night; through the year; fairmont.com.

INCLUSIONS: Accommodation in the Eloise Suite; Eloise's Afternoon Tea; an Eloise robe; an Eloise key chain; a copy of the book Eloise at The Plaza; US\$100 Gift Card for the Eloise Shop at The Plaza; an Eloise puzzle; and an Eloise canvas tote.

BEST FOR Young fans of Eloise for whom the suite is decorated in the palette of pink and black with custom-designed bedding depicting images of Eloise, a pink headboard, and a tea set and Eloise and Weenie dolls, Eloise robes and towels.



Six Senses Laamu MALDIVES

COST US\$12,550 for seven nights including domestic flights and taxes; sixsenses.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Beach Family Villa with pool for two adults and two kids; daily breakfast and dinner; complimentary access to the children's club; non-motorized water sports.

BEST FOR Your kids' first taste of barefoot luxury.

Oops!

A family brought their pet rabbit to the hotel and mentioned nothing. The accommodation assistant saw it running around while cleaning the room!

—CATHERINE KENNY

Rooms Division Manager ASHFORD CASTLE

JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa THAILAND

COST From US\$210 per room per night; valid till June 30; jwmarriottphuketresort.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in deluxe family terrace room; daily breakfast for two adults and two kids; complimentary meal for kids from kids' menu; special turndown service for kids; access to the Kid's Pavilion; 30 per cent discount on à la carte spa menu for adults and 10 per cent discount on kids' spa packages.

BEST FOR Families who want it all. This beach-front property features gardens, swimming pool, spa, kids' play area, activities for children and adults, sightseeing, health club, 11 restaurants and bars, shopping gallery, cooking school, tennis courts, business centre, and banquet rooms.



Oops!

While having dinner, some teenagers playing with a Champagne bottle hit another guest right under his eye with the cork! The guest fell off the chair with the impact, but thankfully did not get hurt —ASEEM KAPOOR Area VP North West India & GM HYATT REGENCY DELHI

Aww...

Recently, a young guest took the leather compendium home with her in her suitcase. A week or so later, a parcel arrived with the compendium enclosed and an apology letter, hand written from our young guest. This was very sweet and touched everyone at the castle.

—CATHERINE KENNY

Rooms Division Manager ASHFORD CASTLE

The Park Vizag ANDHRA PRADESH

COST ₹22,999 upwards for two adults and kids below 8 years; April 1 - September 30; theparkhotels.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation for three nights and four days; welcome drink; breakfast and dinner; sightseeing tour of Vizag—Vizag Port, Yarada beach, Submarine Museum, Rishikonda Beach, Rama Naidu Studios, and more; access to internet, swimming pool, tennis, and gym; complimentary vouchers for mocktails/cocktails; 20 per cent discount on laundry, massages, food and beverages, and all purchases at The Box; transfers.

BEST FOR Travellers in South India looking for a quick getaway.



Aww...

An Arabic family participated in the Dolphin interaction programme and we sent their photographs of it to their rooms. However, the family reported to the concierge that they had not received them. They also sent a letter of complaint. Our record showed that we had delivered it to the suite. Later, it was learned that their twin boys purposely hid the photos as they both wanted to return to Atlantis for another session.

—RITCHIE PLAZA Head Concierge ATLANTIS THE PALM



Fairmont The Palm DUBAI

COST From US\$160 per room per night; till August 31; fairmont.com/palm.

INCLUSIONS 10 per cent off the best available room rate; accommodation in rooms and suites for two adults and up to two kids; complimentary breakfast buffet; a choice of complimentary lunch buffet or dinner buffet at Flow Kitchen restaurant; kids under 5 dine for free; 6-12 year olds get 50 per cent off on meals; complimentary daily access to Fairmont Falcons' Kids Club; complimentary shuttle to shopping malls in Dubai.

BEST FOR A shopping expedition in Dubai.



Four Seasons Serengeti TANZANIA

COST From US\$2,1360 per night; minimum stay of four nights; through the year; fourseasons.com.

INCLUSIONS Accommodation in Terrace Suite for two adults and two children (age two and above); daily breakfast, lunch, dinner, beverages; free meals for kids under 11; kids aged 11-17 get 50 per cent discount on adult rates; round-trip transfers between Seronera Airstrip and the Safari Lodge; a hot-air balloon safari; two half-day game drives; a family cooking class; standard Internet access; and laundry credit.

BEST FOR Your kids' first safari experience in Africa.

101

Benefits For The FAMILY

When the little ones aren't giving you trouble on the field, they are unassumingly getting you benefits and special offers at hotels, in airports, or access to museums to help you take better care of them. We crack the scene. BY SHIBANI BAWA

1 Antarctic Journey

Only 90 minutes from Melbourne, Victoria's wildlife island features the Antarctic Journey at the Nobbies Centre on Phillip Island. Enter the Antarctic **Chill Zone**, take a virtual journey, compare your thermal image with an Emperor penguin, check out a sea spider under a microscope, stand on an ice floe and pat a penguin, stroke a seal or marvel at a whale within arm's

reach. Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children) is US\$35.00 penguins.org.au

2 Changi Airport

Shop at Changi Airport to redeem tickets for The **Slide@T3**—the world's tallest slide in an airport. Kids and grown ups of heights 1.3 metres and over can enjoy whooshing down at speed. Redeem one ride for

every US\$10 spent at Changi on a single receipt. Freebie: Try the one-and-a-half storey tall slide at Basement 2 for free. Between 12 noon-10.30 pm daily. changiairport.com

3 A Maze'N Things

A Maze'N Things also on Phillip Island, is a magical world of illusions, puzzles, mazes, and mini golf. Downsize in the **Shrinking Room**, lose your way in one of their mazes or fall down the **Look Out** slide. Brave hearts can take up the challenge of the high rope courses in **SkyTrail**. Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children) is US\$80 amazenthings.com.au

5 Gardens By The Bay

Gardens by the Bay portrays the essence of Singapore as a tropical Garden City through seasonal and perennial displays inside the two glass biomes. If you're heading there, one child enters free with every two adult tickets priced at US\$20. When you're done walking through, your kids can run free at the dedicated **Children's Garden**. gardensbythebay.com.sg

6 Harry Potter

Harry Potter fans can step on to authentic sets and stroll down Diagon Alley, check out Dumbledore's office and peek into the Gryffindor common room.



4 GOLD COAST THEME PARK

GOLD COAST THEME PARK HAS A FAMILY PASS FOR 2 ADULTS AND 2 CHILDREN (3 TO 13 YEARS) THAT OFFERS UNLIMITED ENTRY TO THE DREAMWORLD, WHITEWATER WORLD & SKYPOINT FOR 21 DAYS FOR US\$256. GOLD-COAST-AUSTRALIA-TRAVEL-TIPS.COM



13 KIDZANIA LONDON

Kidzania offers hours of fun with more than 60 real-life role-play adventures for four to year olds. **KidZania London offers special discounts for Family Late Afternoon Tickets priced at US\$33 for the age bracket, US\$14.33 for 15 years and above, and for one- to three-year-olds. Infants under 1 go in for free.** london.kidzania.com

Learn a host of visual and special effect techniques at the **Warner Bros. Studio Tour** in London, see the real entrance to the Chamber of Secrets and discover how the Great Hall's magical ceiling was created. Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children aged 5-15) is US\$153. tickets.wbstudiotour.co.uk

7 Swiss Travel Pass

The Swiss Travel Pass buys you ticket-free travel on trains, buses, and boats throughout Switzerland. The free **Family Card** (on request) allows children under 16 to travel free of charge when accompanied by at least one parent. Children under age six do not require a ticket. swisstravelsystem.com

8 Panny's Amazing World

On Phillip Island, **Panny's Amazing World of Chocolate** is an educational, interactive, artistic, and imaginative experience for kids. Learn everything about chocolate-making, from the bean to the bar, and watch delicious chocolates cruise along a conveyor belt. Use the fancy machines to produce your

very own chocolate bar with your favourite ingredients. Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children) is US\$32. phillipislandchocolatefactory.com.au

9 Boston Massachusetts

Interested in catching an **NBA** game in Boston Massachusetts? Watch the 17-time world champions, Boston Celtics, with a **Family Pack** (starting at US\$119). It includes four balcony tickets, two Club Green Kids gifts, **Meet & Greet with Lucky** and US\$20 worth of credit towards concessions or merchandise at TD Garden. nba.com

10 Treasure Hunt

Learn French history through a **treasure hunt** in Paris. There are different options and areas to pick from—taking pictures with art pieces or affront monuments with silly poses in teams of two to four people as you work your way through the clues, earns you points. Prices start at US\$22-US\$34 per team. Kid Pack starts at US\$16. thatlou.com

11 Lufthansa Family Service

The Lufthansa Family Service provides a personal guide to help families navigate the **Frankfurt** and **Munich airports**, helping them to gates, and with baggage claims, hotels, rental cars, and restaurants. lufthansa.com

12 Eurostar

The **Eurostar** offers free travel for kids under four. The train departs from St Pancras station in London, goes through the Chunnel, and arrives at Gare du Nord station in Paris. Other connections include London to Brussels, London to Disneyland

Paris, London to Avignon, London to the French Alps (Moutiers, Aime-la-Plagne, or Bourg-St-Maurice). eurostar.com

14 San Francisco International Airport

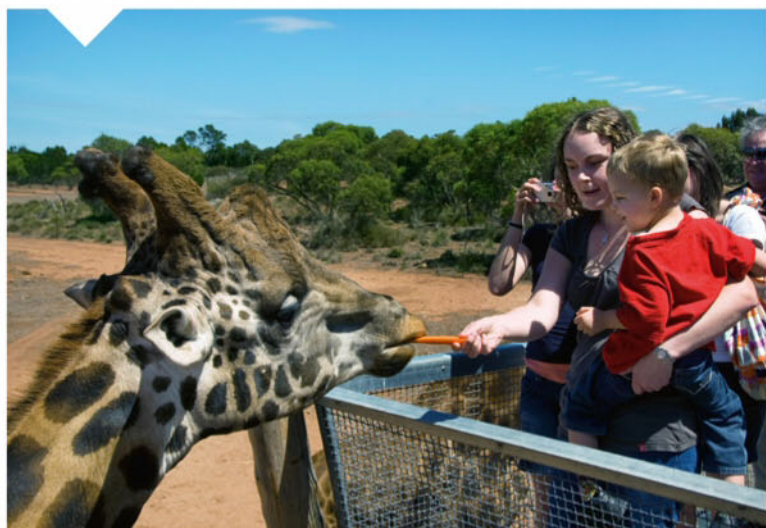
San Francisco International Airport offers the **Kids Spot**, a play space with an aquarium, an aviation museum, and a self-guided tour that comes with a prize at the end. flysfo.com

15 BritRail

BritRail offers a family discount throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. Purchase any select adult or senior **BritRail Pass** and one accompanying child (aged 5-15) receives a pass of the same type and duration for free. Additional children get 50 per cent off the adult fare. The **BritRail Family Discount** is available in both first and Standard Class passengers. shop.britrail.net

16 ADELAIDE ZOO

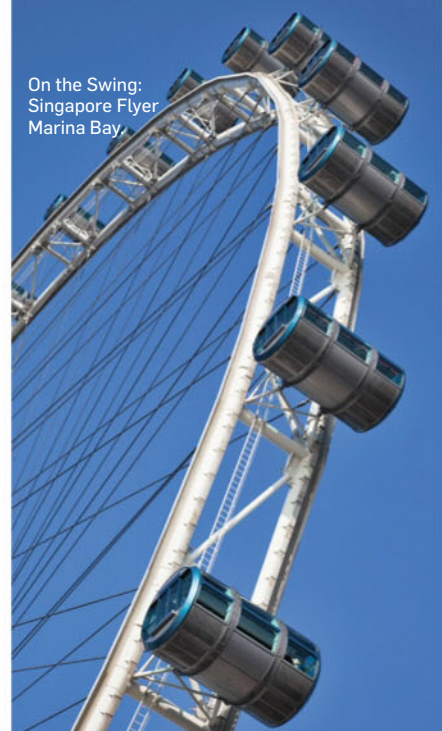
THE ADELAIDE ZOO IS AUSTRALIA'S SECOND OLDEST ZOO. FROM GIANT PANDAS TO SEA LIONS, PENGUINS AND PELICANS TO LIONS AND TIGERS, YOUR YOUNG ONES WILL BE ENTHRALLED WITH THE VARIETY OF EXOTIC AND NATIVE ANIMALS IN EIGHT HECTARES OF BEAUTIFUL BOTANIC SURROUNDINGS. ONE DAY FAMILY PASS IS PRICED AT US\$62.25. ADELAIDEZOO.COM.AU



Panny's Amazing World of Chocolate



Pet a parrot at the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.



On the Swing: Singapore Flyer Marina Bay.

17 V-Room

If you're flying Virgin and are at **London Gatwick** or **Manchester Airport**, find the V-room: The airport lounges set up especially for families. It features kid-only zones with TV, video games, activities, and snacks. Infants are well catered for with bassinets, diapers, bottles, baby food, and changing tables. virgin-atlantic.com

18 Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary

At the **Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary** in Gold Coast, have your photo taken with a koala, get up close with crocodiles, hand-feed the many friendly kangaroos and stay around for

the daily Rainbow Lorikeet feeding. The Pass for Family US\$138. cws.org.au

20 Gladiator School

In Rome, your kids can go to **Gladiator School**! Each two-hour session includes an introduction to Roman History (in the **Gladiator Museum**), a description of life as a Gladiator, and the basic techniques of gladiatorial sword-fighting. At the end of the lesson, participants will be given a certificate of achievement. Tickets start at US\$62. viator.com

21 Maui, Hawaii

Snorkel in the **Molokini Crater** in Maui, Hawaii. Over 1,50,000

years old, it overflows with an abundance of ocean life. Yellow tang, parrot fish, bluefin trevally, and moray eels are just a few of the gorgeous creatures they'll get to see. Book the 5½-hour snorkel trip online, priced at US\$90 per adult and US\$60 per child aged 6-12. Breakfast, BBQ lunch, and educational island narration are part of the package. quicksilvermaui.com

22 British Airways

British Airways has a **Feed Families First** policy to make sure kids get their meals on priority. Kids' meals are nutritionally balanced and packed with plenty of fruits and vegetables, served in

ways that even fussy eaters will savour. britishairways.com

23 Singapore Flyer

The Singapore Flyer, the world's second-tallest observation wheel, has an offer for young couples with kids. For every two adults who buy the full priced Signature Cocktail Flight (US\$49 per person), one child enjoys the ride and a free mocktail (valued at US\$21). The package includes a cocktail (for adults), one rotation of 30 minutes, exclusive check-in at the VIP-themed capsule and entry into **Journey of Dreams**. singaporeflyer.com

24 China Airlines

China Airlines offers family couches in Economy on long-haul flights. This way, families can enjoy the comfort of a flat bed. They come with a mattress, pillows, blankets, and specially designed seatbelts. Either at the time of ticketing or during airport check-in, a family of three with one child under 12 can purchase the **Family**

19 Smithsonian

Visiting the Smithsonian with kids? There are special exhibitions for the little ones. Experience the excitement of state-of-the-art motion simulation at American History, enjoy the hands-on space for children aged 6-12 at Spark! Lab to create, explore, experiment, and invent. The Smithsonian American Art Museum offers a variety of programmes for families and children of all ages to participate in fun activities. Check the online calendar for activity schedules. si.edu





25 VIRGIN TRAINS

Travel in the UK on Virgin Trains along the West Coast Mainline and get one bargain fixed-price family ticket for a family of any size (minimum of 1 adult and 1 child, up to a maximum of 2 adults and 4 children), as long as you're travelling to/from London Euston.

Price depends upon the length of the sector that you choose to travel. virgintrains.co.uk

Couch seats for US\$200 in addition to airfare. china-airlines.com

26 Air France

Air France has specially equipped lounges for minors at Paris-Orly and Paris-Charles de Gaulle airports. Especially for kids flying solo, and with layovers of more than two hours, children are well taken care of with free wifi, Sony Playstation PS4 consoles, and PS Vitas, cartoons, board games, foosball (table soccer), and books. airfrance.co.za

27 Etihad Nanny

Etihad's in-flight child assistance programme includes **Nanny on Board** for all travellers on long-haul flights, regardless of which class they are flying in. The Flying Nannies are trained in child psychology and sociology at the Norland College in England. Every Flying Nanny will be equipped with a goody bag of games and activities to help keep the kids occupied. etihad.com

28 Highlands Unbridled

Pony trekking and ride outs in the Highlands of Scotland for tiny tots to all-day picnic rides for older kids. Suitable for families, **Highlands Unbridled** have safe, sensible ponies for beginners and

forward-going horses for more experienced riders. If there are beginners on a ride, there will be at least one ride assistant on foot. Half hour private lesson US\$28.64; one hour private lesson US\$43. highlandsunbridled.co.uk

29 Sound of Music Tour

One of the nicest movie tours, it comprises a wonderful ride with breathtaking views of the gorgeous Austrian landscape in Salzburg and beyond. Follow the von Trapp family. The tour also includes historical and architectural landmarks in the city as well as the Lake District area. US\$44.47 for 2 adults, US\$22.23 for 2 children aged 4-12. panoramatours.com

30 Ocean Park, Hong Kong

Let your kids be an **honorary panda keeper** for a day at Ocean Park, Hong Kong. They'll get to wear a special uniform and learn about their habitat and conservation, and how to prepare toys and meals for the animals while watching experts in action. US\$177.48 per adult and child, after purchasing the admission ticket to Ocean Park. At least seven-day advance reservation is required. oceanpark.com.hk

31 Hobbit Set

Fans of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit Trilogies can experience the real Middle-Earth with a visit to **Hobbiton**. Start your two-hour tour with a drive through the picturesque 1,250 acre sheep farm with panoramic views across to the Kaimai Ranges. Listen to fascinating details of how the set was created while you see the Hobbit holes and Green Dragon Inn, Mill. Children below eight can enter free with full paying adults. hobbiton.centamanapac01.net

32 Moscow Zoo

Moscow Zoo, Russia's oldest, opened back in the 19th century. Today it houses more than 8,000 animals and over 1,000 species including polar bears, lynxes, panthers, and snow leopards. As a special treat for children between two and 10 years, you can book a pony or a carriage ride; in winter carriages are replaced with a sledge. US\$5 for adults, free admission for children. zoo.ru/moscow

33 Pink Dolphins

The **ShaChau and Lung KwuChau Marine Park** in Hong Kong offer a unique opportunity to view Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, more commonly known as Pink Dolphins. If you don't see a dolphin on the tour, you can simply join again for free on any other scheduled trip. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 8:50 am. US\$54 for adults, US\$27 for children aged 3-11. discoverhongkong.com

34 Neuschwanstein Castle

The 19th century **Neuschwanstein Castle** in Germany is best known to kids as the one that inspired the castle in Disney's Sleeping Beauty. It's worth the daytrip from Munich. The walk up the hill through the woods to the castle takes about half an hour. You could also take a horse-drawn carriage for a complete fairy tale experience. The castle tour isn't suited for toddlers because the stairs make strollers unmanageable. Priced at US\$17, kids under 18 enter free. neuschwanstein.com

35 SENTOSA LUGE

LOCATED ON THE BEAUTIFUL SENTOSA ISLAND, THE SENTOSA LUGE OFFERS 1.2 KM OF LUGING TRAIL. TAKE YOUR PICK FROM THE DRAGON TRAIL, JUNGLE TRAIL, AND EVEN A MYSTICAL NIGHT LUGE EXPERIENCE. A FAMILY PASS INCLUDES LUGE RIDES AND SKYRIDES TO BE SHARED AMONGST FAMILY MEMBERS, AND AT LEAST ONE FAMILY MEMBER MUST BE AGED 15 YEARS OR YOUNGER. FOUR RIDE FAMILY PASS FOR SHARING FOUR LUGE RIDES AND FOUR SKYRIDES STARTS FROM US\$32. SKYLINELUGE.COM



36 Pony Rides

Pony rides, puppet shows, and enchanted river rides make Paris fun for your little ones. With options such as riding a camel, an acrobatic obstacle course, a tour of the aviary with over 200 birds, or a farm with livestock from Normandy, the Jardin is a hit with kids. There are also many workshops. The Discover ticket for US\$6.67 includes access to three attractions—the Little Train, Enchanted River, and Butterflies Alice. Children below three enter free. jardindacclimatation.fr



37 Ryze, Hong Kong

It's a jumping field with over 7,000 square feet of connected, world-class trampolines. Jump over 40 trampolines, including the famous angled wall trampolines and launching decks. On Monday nights, families can have an hour's access to Ryze for US\$51.43. Every day from 9 to 10 am, there is a discount for parents and children. ryzehongkong.com

38 Walking Tours in Madrid

Tour the Prado, Sorolla, and Galdiano museums with art historian Dr Almudena Cros. She has designed three family-friendly walking tours in Madrid and produces her own visual material to teach children at the Prado or the Archaeological Museum. Parents and kids can learn about Spanish kings and queens, local legends and family traditions, and the cuisine. US\$72 per adult, US\$57.27 per child. acrossmadrid.com

39 Adventure Park at Long Island

Spend a day zip-lining on Long Island. Over 140 platforms are installed in the trees offering 10 trails in total, for ages seven onwards, with beginner to expert challenge levels. Tickets for ages 12 and older is US\$54; for ages 10 and 11 at US\$47; ages seven to nine at US\$39. longislandadventurepark.org

40 High Ropes Adventure

Enjoy extreme aerial adventure with your family in the heart of the city. The High Ropes Adventure course at Trafford Centre in Manchester offers zip-lining slides as high as 27 feet.

Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children under 16 or 1 adult and 3 children under 16) is less by 20 per cent on regular ticket prices. Regular prices for adults is US\$41.52, and US\$34.36 for children. aerialextreme.co.uk

41 Escape Surf School

At Escape Surf School in Cornwall, children eight years and above can learn to surf as long as they can swim at least 50 metres. **Private Family Surf Lesson** costs US\$172 (2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children). Equipment included are wetsuits, surfboards, and even boots and gloves in winters. escapesurfschool.co.uk

42 Singapore Zoo

Friends of the Zoo membership at Singapore Zoo gets you unlimited entry and free tram rides on weekdays. Other privileges include freebies, discounts at the park's restaurants and eateries, and free parking. Annual membership for a family (2 adults and 1 child) starts from US\$134. zoo.com.sg

43 Mini Snowmobiles for Kids

Squaw Valley, Lake Tahoe, is one of the largest ski areas in the United States with 4,000 acres of skiable terrain. Besides other family-friendly activities, **SnoVentures Activity Zone** here offers mini snowmobiles for kids between six to 12. A 15-minute ride starts from US\$29. squawalpine.com

44 The Unicorn

UK's leading theatre for young audiences, **The Unicorn**, is just a short walk from the London Bridge station. Avail a 20 per cent discount when you buy four

tickets (must include at least one under-18 ticket and one adult ticket). unicorntheatre.com

45 BMW Welt and Museum

This museum in Munich offers a compact tour behind the scenes, interactive displays of car parts, and racing gear. In addition to the museum, kids aged seven and older can tour the **BMW Factory** to see the manufacturing process firsthand. Family ticket at US\$23.38. bmw-welt.com

46 Kauai Surf School

Located in sunny Poipu Beach on the 'Garden Isle' of Kauai, Hawaii, the **Kauai Surf School** is ideal for your tots and tweens to learn surfing. Choose from 1½-hour-long private and semi-private lessons for kids. Kids' private lessons are for US\$200 and semi-private lessons for 2 kids are for US\$300. kauaisurfschool.com

47 Paris Museum Pass

The Louvre, Versailles, Musée d'Orsay, and Sainte Chapelle, all offer free entry to children under



48 FRENCH COOKING CLASSES

French cooking classes taught in English in the heart of Paris. For chefs, aged 13 and over, La Cuisine Paris offers two- to four-hour cooking classes for croissants, pastries, or even an entire meal. You can even take a market class where you'll shop for your ingredients at a local outdoor food market before heading back to the school to prepare a meal.

Private classes are easily available on request for families with younger children. lacuisineparis.com

18. With the **Paris Museum Pass** you can even skip the lines at these museums and monuments. en.parismuseumpass.com

49 Adventuredome

An indoor theme park at **Circus Circus** in Las Vegas, it offers a range of rides from the **Canyon Blaster** roller coaster to the stomach-churning **Inverter**. Some rides are well suited for little kids—a carousel and a mini roller coaster. With the **All Day Ride Pass**, kids under 48 inches can ride all day for US\$17.95 and those taller for US\$31.95. adventuredome.com

50 Trentham Monkey Forest

In Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, UK, the Trentham Monkey Forest is home to monkeys who live in total freedom while you walk amongst them as they swing from the trees and carry on with their daily routine. You can enjoy a visit to the **Trentham Gardens** and the **Trentham Monkey Forest** for one great price for the family (2 adults and up to 3 children between 5 to 15 years) for US\$36.52. trentham.co.uk

51 Madurodam

Madurodam is a miniature park in The Hague, Netherlands. It has a range of model replicas of famous Dutch landmarks, historical cities, and modern developments. The **Family & Friends** ticket is for US\$55.04 per day. For every three people comes one extra ticket. madurodam.nl

52 Walt Disney Concert Hall

Share your love for classical music with your kids at the **Walt Disney Concert Hall** at LA Philharmonic. Concert tickets for



The Louvre, in Paris.

kids age between 10 and 17 are free with purchase of a full-price adult ticket. You and your child will also be invited to enjoy a complimentary pizza party and an introduction to the music by KUSC's Alan Chapman before the concert. laphil.com

54 Bioluminescent Kayak Tour

During the warm summer months, try a Bioluminescent Kayak Tour at **Haulover Canal Launch, Florida's Indian River**, and **Mosquito Lagoon**. Every movement in the water causes Bioluminescence.

Even the slow moving manatee or sting ray shows up in blue-green light. The tour lasts 1½ to two hours at US\$36.95 for adults (12 years and over) and US\$26.95 for children between five and 11. adventurecentral.com

55 Museum of Modern Art

At the **Museum of Modern Art** (MoMA), New York City, kids 16 and under are admitted free and kept involved via free print-friendly guides with activities, questions, and ideas for looking at works of art in MoMA's collection, audio guides, and even gallery games included. moma.org

56 Household Cavalry Museum

Horse lovers will enjoy visiting the Household Cavalry Museum in central London. Dating from 1750, it is still the headquarters of the Household Cavalry that performs the **Queen's Life Guard** in a daily ceremony that has remained broadly unchanged for over 350 years. See troopers working with horses in the original 18th century stables, hear their personal stories, and learn about

their rigorous training. Family tickets from US\$25.66 for two adults aged 17 and over and two to three children between five to 16. householdcavalrymuseum.co.uk

57 Nobel Peace Center

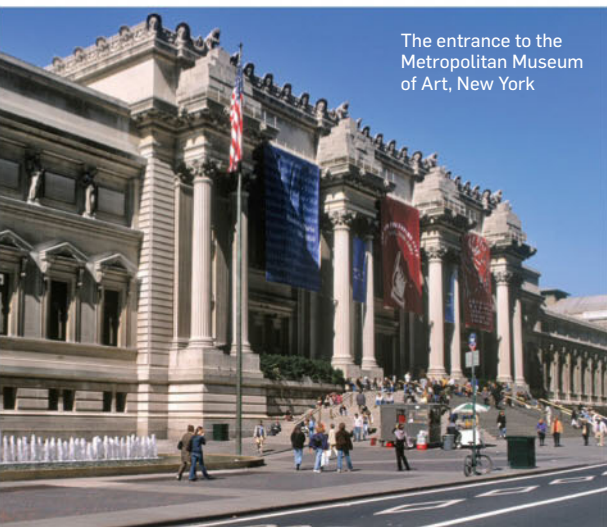
The **Nobel Peace Center** is at the old train station, in the heart of Oslo. It is a great museum that's filled with stories about people who have done amazing things for peace. Kids get an activity booklet with fun things to do around the museum. Family ticket from US\$21. Children under 16 enter free. nobelpeacecenter.org

58 Holmenkollen Ski Museum

The **Holmenkollen Ski Museum** in Oslo is the oldest of its kind in the world. The museum presents over 4,000 years of skiing history, Norwegian polar exploration artifacts and an exhibition on snowboarding and modern skiing. The observation deck on top of the jump tower offers panoramic views of Oslo. Also interesting is the ski simulator that lets kids experience racing downhill against the world's best skiers. Family ticket for US\$37. visitoslo.com

53 HOT AIR BALLOON FRANCE

FLY OVER THE LOIRE VALLEY AND CHER TO SEE CASTLES, VINEYARDS, AND FORESTS, AND DISCOVER THE GORGEOUS GARDEN OF FRANCE FROM A HOT AIR BALLOON. US\$194.50 IS THE PREFERENTIAL RATE ON AN ORDER OF FOUR TICKETS. IT'S A ONE-HOUR FLIGHT, BUT ALL THE ACTIVITIES BEFORE AND AFTER GET YOU ALMOST THREE HOURS OF ADVENTURE THE TRADITIONAL TOAST TO THE AERONAUTS AND RIDES IN 4X4 VEHICLES. BALLOONREVOLUTION.COM



The entrance to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



At the Story Book Garden



The beautiful landscape as seen from an Irish Rail train in Dublin.

59 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has kid-friendly family maps or audio guides ideal for children aged 6-12 years. Plus, they have select concerts throughout the year that offer special US\$1 tickets for kids (aged 7-16) accompanied by an adult purchasing a full-price ticket (maximum three children's tickets per paying adult). metmuseum.org

60 ArtScience Museum

ArtScience Museum in Singapore showcases art, science, design, media, architecture, and technology. Every Friday, up to four children under 12 can enter for free with every adult ticket purchased. The admission ticket allows a one-time entry to the exhibition, same day re-entry, and complimentary access to the permanent ArtScience exhibit.

Special prices for family (2 adults and 2 children) for US\$27.72. marinabaysands.com

62 Storybook Gardens

One of Australia's premier wine growing regions, Hunter Valley, in New South Wales, is popular among family travellers owing to its **Storybook Gardens**, a nursery rhyme themed park built for children. Enter the Storybook Garden through a giant storybook being 'read' by topiary giraffes! Join Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill as they tumble down the hill, Alice in Wonderland at the Mad Hatters Tea Party, Little Bo Peep and many more characters. Special price for family (2 adults and 1 child) is for US\$44.76 huntervalleygardens.com.au

63 Specialist Travel Agency

Family Twist is a specialist travel

agency in Paris and London. They offer treasure hunts round the city's world famous museums and guided walking tours in the atmospheric medieval quarters. You can also choose from their workshops on bread-making or Impressionist art classes. family-twist.com

64 Alcatraz Island

Once home to some of America's most notorious criminals, the Alcatraz Island now houses rare flowers and plants, marine wildlife, and thousands of roosting and nesting sea birds. The **Family Ticket** for two adults two children (ages 5-11) costs US\$94.25 for a round trip tour of the island. alcatrazcruises.com

65 Vienna Card

The **Vienna Card** offers more than 210 discounts at museums and sights, theatres and concerts, shops, cafés, restaurants, and free travel on the city's public transport system for 48 or 72 hours for US\$21 and US\$24.27 respectively. The card also entitles one child up to the age of 15 to travel free with you on production of ID card on Vienna public transportation that includes underground rail, tram, and bus. wien.info

66 Boston Harbour Cruise

Boston Harbour Cruise's hi-speed catamaran takes you to **Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary**, a rich feeding ground for whales, dolphins, sea birds and more. This includes

humpbacks finbacks, and the critically endangered right whales. Whale sightings are guaranteed, so if there are none on your trip, you'll receive a free ticket for a future whale watch. A 'Family 4' ticket is for US\$140. bostonharborcruises.com

67 Irish Rail

They have special family fares for travel to/from Dublin. Take your pick from Cork, Galway, Limerick, and more for a family of one or two adults and up to four children. Or simply ride the electric rail within Dublin along the coast of the Irish Sea from Malahide or Howth in north County Dublin, southwards, as far as Greystones, Co Wicklow. Family tickets offer unlimited travel by DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) or Suburban Rail for a day at US\$22. irishrail.ie

68 Ridged Inflatable Boat

The **Ridged Inflatable Boat (RIB)** offers a thrilling, high-speed ride on the Thames. The tour starts at London Eye Millennium Pier where you get a waterproof jacket, a life jacket, and goggle-style visors. Once the boat gets past Tower Bridge, it really speeds up, going at almost 30 knots. Making the regular river cruises staid. US\$56.42 for adults, US\$37 for children below 14 years. londonribvoyages.com

79 Prague Card

Prague Card gets you free public transport, airport express, bus tour, river cruise,

61 VENETIAN MASK

INSTEAD OF TAKING HOME ONE OF THE MASS-PRODUCED MASKS FROM VENICE, YOUR KIDS AND YOU CAN GET TO MAKE AUTHENTIC ONES YOURSELVES. SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN SIX YEARS AND OVER, THE 1½-HOUR HANDS-ON WORKSHOP COSTS US\$150 PER PERSON (FOR A GROUP OF THREE TO NINE PEOPLE). LEARN THE CRAFT FROM A REAL MASCARER, AND BE GUIDED ON PAINTING AND DECORATING YOUR MASKS WITH GLITTER, FEATHERS, SEQUINS AND RIBBONS. SELECTITALY.COM



77 DUCKTOURS

Jump on board a remodelled WWII Vietnamese war craft and explore Singapore on land and sea with DUCKtours. Both a touring system and a transportation mode, this amphibious craft is quite an experience. **One child gets a free ticket with every two adult tickets (Sing\$37 per person) purchased. ducktours.com.sg**

and 50 attractions including the Prague Castle, Jewish Museum, Old Town Hall, and upto 50 per cent discounts on shows, concerts, and restaurants. Two-day card for adults US\$51; for children between six and 16 is US\$36.58. Children under six go free. praguecard.com

70 Zipline

Zipline over the **Mojave Desert** taking in the scenic Californian desert landscape and open blue skies. With four different zip lines, you will cover over 8,000 feet at speeds up to 60 miles/hr down the Red Mountains in Boulder City, Nevada. The whole experience typically lasts three hours. Be prepared for some moderate hiking in the beginning to get to the first zip line. US\$135 for adults, and US\$99 for children. flightlinezbootleg.rezdy.com

71 Shark Cage Diving

Go shark cage diving at **Kleinbaai**, 160 kms from Cape Town. Children as young as seven can jump in the cage and get a certificate of participation. The duration of the trip depends on the weather and sea conditions, but the average trip is between four and five hours. However, seeing great white sharks from the boat is equally good. US\$103 for adults, US\$75 for children under 12. gosharkdiving.com

72 Britain's Blue Planet Aquarium

Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester are all in easy reach of Britain's Blue Planet Aquarium. Here kids can dive with sharks too. If you buy an **Annual Pass** you can visit the aquarium for free for a whole year plus enjoy a host of benefits, including discounts for friends and family admission and member

discounts in the shop and restaurant. An Annual Family Pass for 2 adults and 2 children up to 12 years is US\$240. blueplanetaquarium.com

73 San Diego's Trampoline Park

Jump around at San Diego's largest trampoline park and indoor jumping facility spread over 12,000 square feet of connected trampolines. There is also a dedicated **Kids Korner** that features trampolines for toddlers and is specially allocated for kids below five years. Group special for four starts at US\$72. jumparoundnow.com

74 Luxembourg Card

The **Luxembourg Card** admits you to more than 70 tourist attractions and all public transport is free. One-day pass for two to five people starts at US\$31. The Luxembourg Card is sent to you by postal mail from Luxembourg, so do consider enough time between your order and your departure. visitluxembourg.com

75 TGV

The TGV railcard gets you discounted train tickets for the whole family. **TGV Family** card for an adult and child under 12 ensures a 50 per cent discount. Children under four travel for free. tgv.en.voyages-sncf.com

76 Vegas Indoor Skydiving

Up to five participants can sky-dive together in the flight chamber at **Vegas Indoor Skydiving**. The package starts at US\$325 includes training, necessary equipment, and 15 minutes of flight time. vegasindoorskydiving.com

78 Aeroexpress

Aeroexpress provides rail services between the capital and all of the major Moscow airports, as well as the town of Lobnya. The **Family Card** for US\$11.09 is valid for two adults (over 18 years) and up to three children below 14 years. The ticket is

issued in the presence of the child, with documented proof of age provided. aeroexpress.ru

79 Skywalk at Grand Canyon West

Walk on the glass bridge over the Grand Canyon. The Gold Package is for US\$80.94 per head

80 OLYMPIC TOWER

WITH AN ELEVATION OF 291,28 METERS THE OLYMPIC TOWER IS MUNICH'S HIGHEST BUILDING THE VIEWING PLATFORM ON AN ALTITUDE OF 190 METERS ABOVE GROUND PROVIDES THE WIDEST AND MOST SPECTACULAR PANORAMIC VIEW OVER THE CITY AND BEYOND ITS BORDERS. THE EXHIBITION ROCKMUSEUM IN THE TOWER CONSISTS OF TICKETS, PICTURES, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND ALSO STAGE OUTFIT AND INSTRUMENTS OF STARS LIKE FREDDIE MERCURY, PINK FLOYD OR THE ROLLING STONES. FAMILY TICKET PRICED AT € 18. BIRTHDAY CHILDREN GO FREE! OLYMPIAPARK.DE



and includes a hop-on hop-off shuttle to all three viewpoints: Eagle Point, Guano Point, and Hualapai Ranch, with a meal at the viewpoint of your choice, and photo opportunities with Hualapai members. The entire activity can take between three and four hours. grandcanyon.com

81 Berlin WelcomeCard

The **Berlin WelcomeCard** gives you free rides on the city's buses and trains as well as discounts of up to 50 per cent at some 200

partners. Starting from US\$21 covers one adult and up to three children under 15 years. Up to three children aged 6 to 14 may travel with an adult with a Berlin WelcomeCard at no extra charge. visitberlin.de

82 Spring Overnight Paddle

Try the **Spring Overnight Paddle** in Devon, near Kingsbridge. Canoe down river Dart, before camping on the banks. You get all the canoeing equipment and taught all the necessary skills. No experience required but participants must be able to swim. US\$122 for adults, and up to two kids can go free. Meals are included, plus experiencing campfire, and nocturnal wildlife. wildwise.co.uk

83 London's Canary Wharf

The **ice rink** at London's Canary Wharf is one of the largest in the city and features London's only skate path. Special prices for family (2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children) at US\$60. Valid for a one-hour session and includes skate hire. icerinkcanarywharf.co.uk

84 CityPASS

The **New York CityPASS** comes with a validity for nine days and includes admission to the Empire State Building Experience, American Museum of Natural History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the Guggenheim, and lots more. US\$116 for an adult and US\$92 for children between 6 and 17. citypass.com

85 Life Science Centre

At Life Science Centre in Newcastle, carry out practical experiments, enjoy the 4D



86 FOTA WILDLIFE PARK

Fota Wildlife Park is a 75-acre wildlife park located on Fota Island, near Carrigtwohill, County Cork, Ireland. It is home to nearly 30 mammal and 50 bird species from all over the world. Enjoy seeing the antics of kangaroos and gibbons, European bison, and Brazilian Tapir, and much more. **Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children) is US\$51.** fotawildlife.ie

If you're in the USA and your kid's into science.

Denver COLORADO

Visit the Denver Museum of Nature & Science for an educative tour through time from prehistoric fossils to an exploration of the outer space.

Houston TEXAS

The NASA Space Center Houston houses the world's most famous aerospace institution that is still responsible for large missions—spaceship replicas, training centre for astronauts, and a moon rock that's billions of years old are on display.

Atlanta GEORGIA

The Georgia Aquarium is the largest aquarium in the world with interactive areas that fascinate kids with interest in sea-life. Learn about the multitude of different species of water life together.

Philadelphia PENNSYLVANIA

The Academy of Natural Sciences is a 200-year-old museum that has on display, the world's first mounted dinosaur collection. It has a petting zoo on the ground floor, an interactive live

Mauna Kea Observatory

HAWAII, USA

Somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, 13,796 feet above sea-level, the observatories at Mauna Kea on Hawaii's Big Island offer 'stargazing and star tours' with telescopes available for kids who keep interest in astronomy. The fantastic experience comes for free.

Motion Ride, get access to the Planetarium, check out the Young Explorers' Zone, get up close to famous robots, and more. Special prices for family (2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children) at US\$40. life.org.uk

87 Insectarium and Garden

The **Insectarium and Garden** in Montreal houses insects with gorgeous colours, interesting behaviour, unique functions, and inimitable songs. Explore the 10 greenhouses and around thirty thematic gardens! Special price for family (2 adults and up to 3

children aged 5-17) is US\$40. Entry for children under five is free. espacepourlavie.ca

88 Royal Observatory Greenwich

At the Royal Observatory Greenwich you can stand on the historic Prime Meridian of the World, the Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), and explore London's only planetarium. Discover life on board the legendary sailing ship CuttyShark, the fastest ship of her time. Special price for family (1 adult and up to 2 children aged 5-15) is US\$2.18 and (2 adults and 2 children) is US\$28.62. rmg.co.uk



90 Rock Observation Deck

Top of the Rock Observation Deck at the Rockefeller Center offers New York's most breathtaking view. You may purchase a timed ticket to avoid lines or purchase an unscheduled ticket and redeem the time of your choice. **US\$32 for adult, US\$26 for children aged 6-12.** secure.topoftherocknyc.com

89 Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium

Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium in New Orleans is North America's largest museum devoted to insects. Amble through a mysterious Louisiana swamp; enjoy an awards show for bugs, by bugs; and be amazed by thousands of butterflies in an Asian garden. US\$19.95 for adults, US\$14.95 for children aged 2-12. auduboninstitute.org

91 Dolphin Planet

At Dolphin Planet, Dubai, take your pick from poolside interactions and deep-water adventures with the cutest dolphins. Suitable for children aged five and over, the activities are limited to eight guests per session and is priced at US\$122 per head. If you don't want to get too close, the **Dolphin & Seal Show** is worth a watch. tickets.dubaidolphinarium.ae

92 Whistler

At Whistler, Blackcomb, you can learn skiing in customised **Family Private** lessons. Start off as a group, then the adults can ski on their own while the kids can continue to learn new skills. Half-day private lessons start at US\$559 for a family of four. whistlerblackcomb.com

93 Sea World

Interact with a dolphin and trainer together as a family, in a fun and educational shallow water encounter at Sea World, Australia. The **Dolphin Family Adventure** programme (minimum of 1 adult and 1 child aged 5-13) is for US\$461.75 (online only price) per group with. Price includes one souvenir photograph. seaworld.com.au



On the snow at Whistler.

95 Swim And Snorkel With Whale Sharks

Coral Bay is one of the very few places in the world where you can swim and snorkel with whale sharks. You are likely to see turtles, reef sharks, dugongs, rays, hundreds of fish species, and coral. Minimum age to swim with whale sharks is six years. The tour is approximately between eight and 10 hours. US\$846 for a family. coralbayecotours.com.au

96 City Travel

All-day travel for up to two adults and up to three children

on **Edinburgh Trams** (City Zone only) and on **Lothian Buses** (day services) is for US\$12.16 if you buy a **Family DAY** ticket. edinburghtrams.com

97 FastPasses

Experience the best of **San Francisco's cable cars**, the city's only moving historic landmark with FastPasses that allow monthly unlimited rides for cable cars, streetcars, and buses. US\$60 for adults; US\$15 for children aged 5-17. sf.cablecar.com

98 San Francisco CityPASS

Another way to see the best attractions in the City by the Bay is through the **San Francisco CityPASS**. Valid for nine days, it gets you admission to the California Academy of Sciences, Aquarium of the Bay, Exploratorium and much more. US\$94 for ages 12 and over; US\$69 for children aged 5-11. citypass.com

99 Not! London

With over 700 exhibits, such as the Harry Potter Hungarian Horntail made from recycled

bike parts, Tower Bridge made up of matchsticks and a transformer, **Ripley's Believe It or Not! London** makes for an ideal family day out. Special price for family (2 adults and 2 children, or 1 adult and 3 children) starts from US\$85. ripleylondon.com

100 York Dungeon

The **York Dungeon** is a 75-minute journey into more than 2000 years of York's horrifying history. With a cast of theatrical actors, special effects, stages, and scenes in a unique walkthrough experience, you see, hear, smell, and feel. Family saver ticket from US\$50. thedungeons.com

101 Ghost Tour

29 East Fourth Street was home not only to the eight Tredwell children, but also to two young granddaughters and is considered to be Manhattan's Most Haunted House. Ideal for children eight to 12 years old, the **ghost tour**, Dark Days of Winter Candlelight, offers a special interactive tour for families. Price: US\$15 for one adult, one child; US\$20 for adults and two children. merchantshouse.org

94 MÜTTER MUSEUM

THE MÜTTER MUSEUM HELPS REVEAL SOME OF THE MYSTERIES AND BEAUTY OF THE HUMAN BODY AND APPRECIATE THE HISTORY OF DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF DISEASE. SOME EXHIBITS ARE ENTHRALLINGLY GRUESOME FOR OLDER KIDS TO SEE, SUCH AS EINSTEIN'S BRAIN AND A SKELETON OF A GIANT. US\$16 FOR ADULTS, US\$11 FOR CHILDREN AGED 6-17, AGES FIVE AND UNDER ENTER FREE. MUTTERMUSEUM.ORG

Homes You Want To Take Home

The best family-friendly villas get booked up months in advance. Our top picks have style, charm and enough facilities and activities to keep the kids engaged and amused. And they're still available for this summer. At least, for now.



FRANCE

Chateau Seiguier, Loire Valley

A 17th C chateau that combines historic charm with modern comforts. The location is brilliant: There are five golf courses (including two of Europe's best) between 15 mins and an hour's drive away and some of Loire Valley's prestigious vineyards. Guests have access to the village's tennis courts and horseback riding school. The chateau has a private pond where you can fish, picnic, and swim. It also has private access to a swimming pool set amidst a lovely 2.5 acre garden. And did we mention that one of the beds in the house was owned by Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle?

Sleeps 12 and prices start at €1,651 per week.

Chateau Gaillac, Midi-Pyrenees

A late Napoleonic, belle époque style chateau with a Tuscan atmosphere near Toulouse. Wake up to wild roe deer drinking from the fountain outside your window; or be serenaded by nightingales while you dine al-fresco in the Chateau. In winters, apart from central heating and open fires, you can smell the seasoned oak and cedar logs from the cellar. In the evenings, sparkling chandeliers bring alive the Chateau's glorious past and illustrious visitors. Guests can enjoy a complimentary case of wine and selection of local produce. There's wi-fi, bicycles, cable TV, private child-safe pool and more.

Sleeps 18 and prices start at £1,974 for two nights.

Rapunzel's Folie, Dordogne

Built in the 15th C in golden stone, and flanked by four towers, a tributary of the Dordogne River and the Romanesque town of Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. The region is known for wonderful oaks, chestnut, walnut woods, foie gras, strawberries, walnuts, truffles and wine. Hot air ballooning, paper making, exploring castles, there's enough to keep the kids engaged and enjoying. Expect a lovely welcome hamper with local delicacies, wine, fruits, fresh flowers, BBQ fuel and logs for an open fire.

Sleeps 18 and £1,642 per week

Villa Shambhala, Dordogne

If you're a family that loves the outdoors, great food, wine, farmer's markets and medieval towns, this is the perfect spot to

explore France's finest. Spend Sundays kayaking or fishing on the river, older kids will love to browse local markets and you will definitely want to spend a lot of time out on the villa's garden terrace with its spectacular river views. The owner has a passion for art and has decorated the Shambhala with great care.

Sleeps 8 and priced at £974 to £2,316 per week

ENGLAND

Wood Hall Estate, Lake District

Recently renovated and featured in many country and décor magazines over the years, the Wood Hall Estate is a charming way to experience England's Lake District. Set amidst six acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, with two BBQ areas including one laid in stone next to a herb garden. The rooms have panoramic lake views. Children will enjoy the local markets and outdoor games in the front lawns.

Sleeps 18 and priced at £2,995 to £5,399 per week

Brooks Cottage, Devon

Built in the 1500s, and famous in the UK for being featured in a TV series and many magazines, Brooks Cottage is the quintessential way to experience a summer in the English countryside. If your kids have grown up reading Enid Blyton, they'd love Devon's country charm, spring meadows, cobbled lanes, oak thickets and hopping rabbits. There are tennis courts nearby and Devon has loads of sight-seeing and beautiful drives, so no one will be bored.

Sleeps 8 and priced at £1,610 per week

Amberstone Manor, Devon

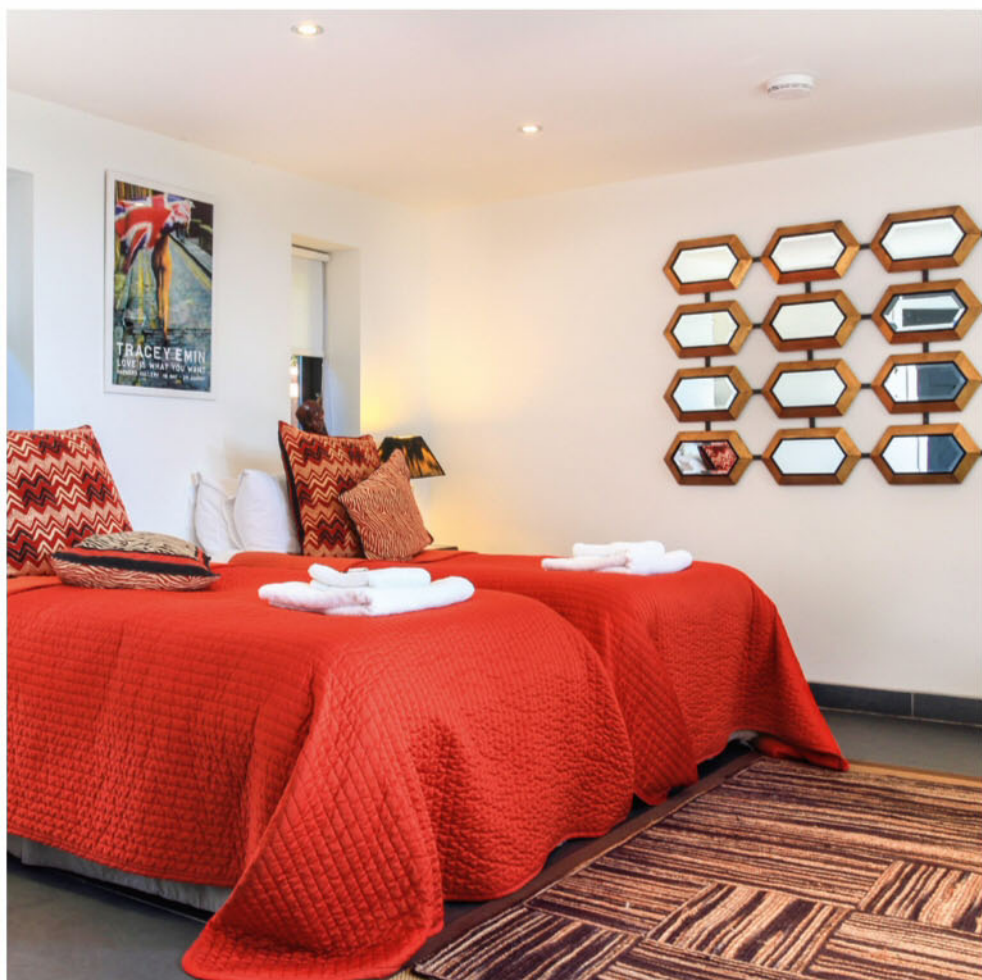
A 19th C country house in Devon is set over five acres of landscaped gardens and has 12 bedrooms all with en-suite bathrooms—perfect for a multi-generation family holiday or a great friends-and-family vacation. The cooks in the family will love the farmhouse style kitchen, the vegetable and herb garden and the apple orchard. There's also a sunken salt water swimming pool fringed by tropical plants, a tennis court amidst rhododendrons, and terraces built with Maltese limestone and a very Victorian garden grotto.

Sleeps 24 and priced from £5,850 to £9,500 per week.

IRELAND

Smiths Castle

An authentic 15th C Irish castle with a fascinating history and great views of the west coast of Ireland, minutes away



Amberstone Manor's modern interiors, Villa Daniel's gorgeous views and Villa Shambhala's rustic luxury all spoil for choice. OPPOSITE: Perfectly perched between Ibiza's best beaches, Villa Hermosura



from the world famous Cliffs of Moher, long sandy beaches, two championship golf courses and a great spa. Children will love the Killarney National Park as well as exploring the coastline.

Sleeps 8 and is priced at £1,138 to £1,544 per week.

SPAIN

Casa Orquidea, Costa Brava

A charming child-friendly six room house with views of treetops and just a few kilometers away from the beautiful Spanish coast. Nearby, you'll find a picturesque harbor, golf course, stables and a water park. The house itself has a lovely open terrace, private garden and fireplaces and guests can enjoy a 10 per cent discount on local tours and activities.

Sleeps 8 and is priced at £761 per week.

Villa Hermosura, Ibiza

A luxurious and private way to enjoy Ibiza. If you have older kids, they will absolutely worship you for choosing this. The villa is right between beaches Cala Carbo and Cala Vadella, so a dip in the sea or a stroll through the shops is just a short walk. The views of the Mediterranean from your suite's private balcony make you feel like a millionaire. There's also a swimming pool and outdoor dining area.

Sleeps 6 and is priced at £2,005 to £3,829 per week.

ITALY

Villa Rovani, Lazio

An Italian villa complete with Tuscan terracotta tiled floors, bright bougainvillea flowers framing green slatted windows, nestled amidst pine forests, farms and the part of Italy that still remains untouched by mass tourism. The semi-detached layout of the villa means each family has a bit of privacy too. The villa has a private dining terrace, pool, tennis and table tennis, with gardens and pergola overlooking vineyards and olive groves. Day trips away are cultural and artistic attractions of Rome, Tuscany and Umbria.

Sleeps 16 and is priced from £2,031 to £3,331 per week

Lorenzo Village, Tuscany

Purchased in 1990 by the Bandini Family and restored with great care, Lorenzo Village has eight independent apartments, each with its private entrance and terrace. There's an excellent restaurant and bar on the grounds; there's also a host of outdoor activities, bicycles, guided tours of Tuscany.



FROM ABOVE: Discover secret gardens in Chateau Seiguiuer, heritage dark wood interiors of Villa Sisi in Croatia, and relax poolside at Casa Maite in Portugal.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF CHATEAU SEIGUIER; COURTESY OF VILLA SISI; COURTESY OF CASA MAITE

The property comes complete with pushchair, baby bath, and baby monitor.
Sleeps 35 and priced between £5,745 and £10,010 per week

PORTUGAL **Casa Maite, Algarve**

Situated in Vale Do Lobo, a short distance Portugal's amazing golden sand beaches, this hillside villa is like your own private resort. Ocean views, beautiful landscaped gardens, a putting area, heated pool, playground for younger kids, a brand new kitchen to enjoy cooking with the wonderfully fresh local produce of Algarve. There are also sauna and steam rooms, a mini gym and tennis table.
Sleeps 8 and priced between £5,129 and £6,555 per week.

GREECE **Villa Daniel, Corfu**

Sleep amidst olive and cypress trees in a contemporary-design home located in a charming little fishing village, Agios Stefanos with a wonderful view of Ionian Sea. Sample local delicacies, freshly cooked traditional Greek dishes, sweet fruit preserves and homemade marmalades—all prepared by the owner using organically grown ingredients from her garden. The swimming pool has a stunning view!
Sleeps 12 and priced from £3,763 and £10,264.

Tiggi Beach House, Mykonos

Tiggi Beach House lies on the south eastern part of Mykonos, on the way to the secluded Tigani sandy beach. It's elevated position offers total privacy in a serene setting as well as exhilarating views of the Aegean and the islands of Naxos, Paros and beyond. The wonderful southern beaches of Lia, Kalafatis and Kalo Livadi are only a few minutes drive and the traditional village of Ano Mera with its famous monastery, its shopping and its wonderful tavernas is only about eight minutes away.
Sleeps 8 and priced from £4,080

CROATIA **Villa Sisi**

This beautifully restored 1907 country house has a pool with dramatic views of the mountains on all sides, is perfectly located so medieval seaside towns are just a short drive away. Older kids will love to explore and hike the Ucka highlands, Cepic field, and enjoy family time around the outdoor BBQ or in the lovely open plan kitchen.
Sleeps 6 and priced between £1,138 and £1,856.

For all bookings visit oliverstravels.com



FROM ABOVE:
 Rapunzel's Folie'
 fairytale setting;
 Grecian views
 from Tiggi Beach
 House, and
 Chateau Gaillac's
 beautifully
 restored interiors.

Just The Right Time

It's never too early to introduce your child to the varied benefits of a vacation. Choosing lively destinations where she or he can make vibrant cultural discoveries is always a win-win. Here's your cheat sheet to a few! **BY VATSALA KAUL BANERJEE**

TODDLERS (12-36 months old)

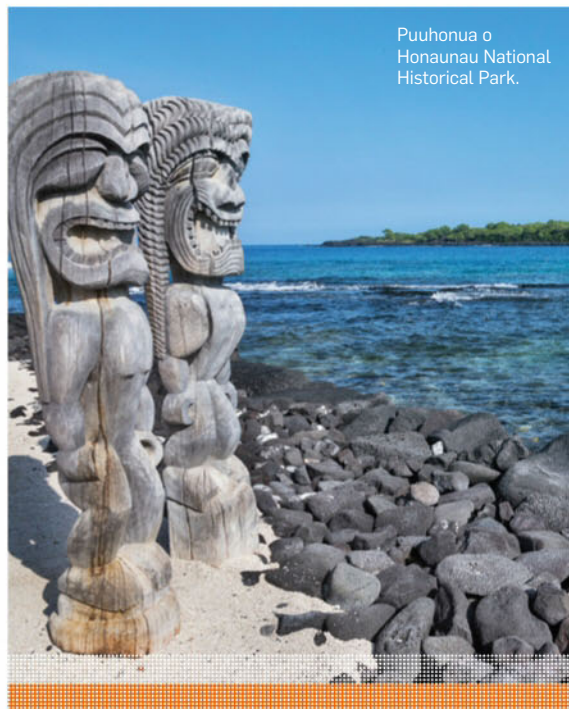
These movers and shakers are choosy eaters, with short attention and tolerance spans. A holiday with colour and movement – and new sights and sounds will engage them.

Locations: Much easier to holiday with them around your own country first and prepare them for more distance adventures. Try Onam-around mid-September—in **Kerala**, a tapestry of spectacles. Your toddler is likely to be enthralled by the Puli Kali in Thrissur, a tiger-themed, energetic dance form in which performers, in red, yellow and black, dress up in masks, artificial teeth, tongues, beards and moustaches. The Boat Races, with their splashing oars, around the same festival in Payippad, Aranmula and Kumarakom, usually preceded by a water parade of interesting boat-floats is another cool

activity for the young ones to watch. There's nothing to beat **Goa** at Christmas, a festival that gets kids going. The festive decorations at the churches in old Goa, the many stalls hawking homemade cakes, chocolates and other goodies, and the peppy music everywhere adds to the fun and festivity. For a different kind of adventure, head to Pushkar in **Rajasthan** – from around 8 to 14 November – where the kids will be amazed and amused by the 'sea' of tattooed, decorated and colourfully caparisoned camels as well as performances by desert musicians and gypsy dancers. Don't miss the camel-cart ride!



Puli Kali in Thrissur.



Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park.

KIDS (3-8 years old)

Curious, energetic and impatient, kids of this age group are responsive to intriguing new places and people. For them a full day of activities at a theme or nature park is perfect.

Locations: **Hawaii** offers a novel playground for little culture-vultures. The best place to learn about Hawaii and its unusual ways is on the Big Island: the ancient site of Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park, where the intriguing wooden statues and old long canoes are certain kid magnets! On Oahu, a day and evening at the Polynesian Cultural Centre introduces children not only to authentic Hawaiian villages and natives of six Pacific cultures displaying their arts and skills, with special activities for the kids – such as husking a coconut, climbing a palm tree, weaving and more. Then there are **South Africa and Kenya...** which child wouldn't like to camp outdoors next to hippopotamuses, feed elephants and get to know the secrets of the Maasai tribe – you can stay in a Maasai village, go on walking safari led by Maasai warriors, visit local schools watch the women make colourful beads. Depending on where you stay, you have a wide choice of cultural and fun activities for the children: cooking in the bush, bug catching, classes in African song and dance, bead-making, bird watching and star-gazing.

TWEENS (8-12 years old)

Children this age are explorers and learners. They love larger-than-life monuments they can talk about to their friends. History is just beginning at school and Geronimo Stilton and Percy Jackson have introduced them to two amazing locations already!



Hellenic Children's Museum, Greece.

Locations In Greece there is no dearth of outstanding places for experience-hungry children: in Athens they have everything from the Acropolis to the ancient Agora, the Museum of Greek Children's Art where they can learn about Ancient Greece, and the Hellenic Children's Museum, where they can join in Greek cooking and craft classes. At the Peloponnese, they can enjoy the ancient theatre at Epidavros as well as Ancient Olympia, the site of the original Olympic Games. And in **Egypt**,

they will aim straight for the mummies and Tutankhamen's treasures at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, or for a selfie at the Great Pyramids in Giza. The theme park Dr Ragab's Pharaonic Village is a bit over-the-top but very child-friendly for a peek into life in ancient Egypt, as well as trying their hand at making mini reed boats at the art centre. The puppet shows at the Cairo Puppet Theatre are in Arabic, fun enough to entertain even if they don't know the language.

TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS (12-18 years old)

Let them help choose the destination and/or what they want to do there. This age group will love exotic places their peer group will think are 'epic'. Go urban mixed with history.

Locations Fascinating and newsy **China** is the perfect mix of ancient and modern for teens: They will love the quote value of visiting the legendary Great Wall at Badaling and Juyongguan Pass, the movies' déjà vu of the Forbidden City in Beijing, the amazing Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, and the cruise on the waterways of Suzhou, along with experimenting with Chinese cuisine so different from what they call Chinese food back home. In South America, zero in on **Peru**, which has much to offer in its native villages in Cusco, the Inca trail right up to the historic ruins of Machu Picchu,

impressive old haciendas, and of course the Amazon forest, besides trying out and veggie *causa* and non-veggie alpaca meat! Or head for **Japan**, where your teens will likely head for manga heaven at the Kyoto International Manga Museum or rush to Suginami Animation Museum in Tokyo where they can even try out some voice-acting. Or they can time-travel back to feudal Japan at the Edo Wonderland Nikko Edomura in Tochigi, where the cosplay and the cuisine will fascinate them! And they can also catch the theatrical sumo wrestling at Ryogoku Kokugikan in Tokyo.



Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an.



A Bite of New

Celebrated children's books author **ROOPA PAI** tells us sweet and tangy tales of travelling with two kids who have polar opposite views on food. ILLUSTRATION BY **SHREYA KHARBANDA**

Even though you yourself are nothing like your sibling, it is always a bit of a shock to discover how different your own kids are from one another. Mine certainly are. Where food philosophies are concerned, the two—Girl (18) and Boy (13)—are at opposite sides of the spectrum. It has made for interesting times for us as a family, particularly when we travel.

GIRL VS FOOD

Travelling with the girl is a breeze—she's easy about food, as she is about everything else. When she turned 8, we took her to the famed Sunday brunch at the Leela Palace to celebrate. She raced excitedly from one laden counter to another, oohing over the tottering piles of Danish, aahing over the fragrant cinnamon rolls. Then she stopped short at the very end of the Indian lunch spread, filled a plate with curd rice, and proceeded to scarf it down with indecent haste, looking blissfully happy.

But the girl has her preferences, her likes and dislikes—yes to cheesecake and prawns, anytime; no to mushrooms, yes to medium-to-well-done pepper steak, 'Are you kidding me?' to *baingan*. Her appetite is elastic—if we are on the road somewhere in the hinterland, she will work her way through a packet of biscuits and half a packet of chips between breakfast and dinner and be okay, settling down to a gigantic meal—two double chicken shwarma rolls chased down with lemon ice tea, followed by a doorstopper wedge of chocolate cake—when we hit civilisation again.

Her food philosophy when we travel abroad is simple: she likes her food without eyes, tail or whiskers, and from a familiar genre—pizza, pasta, fried (familiar) meat in a bun, rice, dessert; she is not one of life's great adventurers. In Cape Town, she gave the ostrich burger a wide berth. In a Singapore kopitiam that became our *de rigueur* breakfast place, she took one look at the hundred different unidentifiable edibles being dished out, and ordered kaya toast for five days straight. In Liverpool, on a mom-daughter holiday, we walked into a Tesco one night and picked up a large apple pie (slashed to 99p) and a tub of icecream for dinner because neither she—nor I—could stomach the thought of bland fish and boring vinegary chips.

In short, she makes a great travel companion for a vegetarian mom—pizza and pasta places usually have a veggie option, and the world, thank god, has no non-veg desserts (oh wait, Japan does—raw horse meat ice cream, anyone?)—who much prefers chai to real food, and isn't often hungry.

BOY VS FOOD

For the past couple of years, the boy has been constantly and massively hungry. He dreams food, thinks food, and talks food 24/7. Among his favourite movies are *Ratatouille* (watched 28 times), and, more recently, *Julie and Julia* (9 times at last count). He loves the TV series 'Modern Family' so much that he used his pocket money to order 'The Modern Family Cookbook' (bet you didn't know there was one). Experiments in the kitchen began with Masterchef Australia, and have continued relentlessly with online cooking videos (current crush: *The Joy of Baking*). In fact, (proud mom moment) he launched his own YouTube channel—The MaskerChef—three months ago, after he got proficient at turning out near-perfect brownies, restaurant-style butter chicken, and a mean lemon meringue pie.

Despite all the butter and sugar he uses in his signature dishes, the boy has always had a natural affinity for healthy. He actually likes Chawanprash, will voluntarily pick muesli over Chocos, enjoys his grandmom's *ragi rotti* (finger-millet bread), loves the wholesome goodness of aubergine, binges on salad, and doesn't care much for chocolate, ice cream or oversweet Indian *mithai*. As part of his 2016 New Year resolution, he voluntarily went veggie in January, 'just to see what your life is like, mum', and stuck to it. A year ago, he saved up all his birthday money and spent it on—I'm not making this up—an air fryer, because, don't you know, it is a far healthier way to cook.

Travelling with the boy is exciting, eye-opening, and thoroughly exhausting. Two years ago, when he was studying the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals in history, I decided it would be a great idea for him to see it all in the flesh. I pitched the trip to him as a food tour, knowing that was the only way it would fly. It did—Boy trotted happily behind me to Humayun's Tomb and Qutab Minar, fully believing that these excursions were merely well-timed, and necessary, breaks from the main business of Paranthewali Gali, Karim's, and Old Famous Jalebiwala. Annual family trips to Goa traverse the well-worn triangle of beach-pool-shack food endlessly—until, thoroughly disgusted, Girl and I head off for the markets and Britto's cheesecake, leaving dad and Boy to it.

Last year, for weeks before our trip to California, Boy and his equally food-mad cousin co-edited a Google doc across continents to come up with a master plan detailing which restaurant to hit for breakfast, lunch and dinner each day, and what exactly to eat (bacon, bacon fried chicken, bacon-wrapped hot dogs, chocolate bacon) once they got there. The cousin is slated to visit us in June, and already plans are afoot around sorties to Mosque Road after sundown for Ramzan treats—emu and camel kebabs, patthar gosht, haleem...

As you can tell, travelling with the boy is not as much fun for a veggie mom, but having a food-mad child has its compensations. Chief among them being that, as he gets older and more skilful in the kitchen, I expect to hear a lot more "What shall I make for dinner?" than "What's for dinner?" Seriously, what's not to like about that? 🍴



Straight Out of the Book

Here's an idea: Take your kids to locations where the books that they're reading (for school or otherwise) are set. From Sherlock's London to Dan Brown's Paris and Tolstoy's Russia, they will see it's not all a figment of the writer's imagination. BY APEKSHA BHATEJA



SHERLOCK HOLMES | LONDON

Dressed in trench coat and armed with magnifying glasses, study places where Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson lived and breathed. The trail starts at **221b Baker Street**, the famous home of the fictional detective, now the **Sherlock Holmes Museum**. You shouldn't miss the chance to see a performance at the **Royal Opera House** (roh.org.uk) where Holmes was a patron. Visit **The Langham Hotel** (langhamhotels.com) on Regent Street, known to have been frequented and mentioned by Sir Doyle in his stories. Move over to the **British Museum** (britishmuseum.org) where the astute detective often went for research. Another long surviving icon reminiscing Sherlock's tales is **St Bart's Hospital**.



Sherlock Holmes Museum on Baker Street.



Jane Austen's House Museum in Chawton, Hampshire.

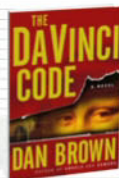


PRIDE AND PREJUDICE | ENGLAND

In the book, Elizabeth Bennet is a traveller too; she takes off with the Gardiners to see Derbyshire and gets reacquainted with Mr Darcy. Follow her to the beautiful estate of **Chatsworth House** (chatsworth.org) in Bakewell—believed to be Jane Austen's inspiration behind Mr Darcy's residence, Pemberley. Stop for a cup of tea and scones at the 18th century **Basildon Park** in Berkshire (nationaltrust.org.uk) which was Mr Bingley's residence Netherfield in the 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. To get a glimpse into the life of Jane Austen, include in your itinerary her house in **Chawton** and **Winchester Cathedral** in Hampshire where she is buried. Austen spent many years in **Bath** (*Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* are set in Bath too)—the **Jane Austen Centre** is unmissable here.

DA VINCI CODE | PARIS

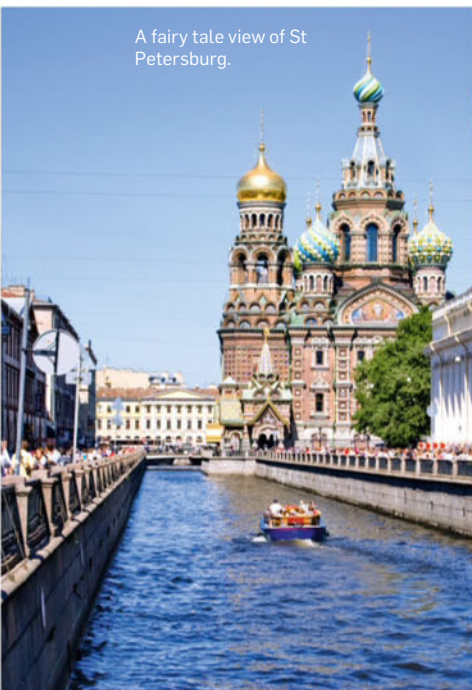
Written in controversial ink, this Dan Brown novel drops you at the heart of Paris. Protagonist Robert Langdon is a guest at the palatial Parisian hotel **The Ritz** (ritzparis.com), and it is here that the hunt begins. **The Louvre** (louvre.fr) is on the wishlist of almost every tourist landing in the city of lights, but with *The Da Vinci Code* as your handbook, it will seem like a place of deep mystery and stellar artwork. Next comes **Saint Sulpice Church**—notice the plaque here that blatantly disregards the Rose Line and refutes the book's claims.



The Louvre in Paris.

CLOCKWISE: SHUTTERSTOCK; DREAMTIME; SHUTTERSTOCK

A fairy tale view of St Petersburg.



WAR AND PEACE | RUSSIA



Explore the world of this timeless Tolstoy classic. Take your kids to the English Embankment in St Petersburg and Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow. A must-visit on this literary tour is Leo Tolstoy's ancestral home, **Yasnaya Polyana** (ypmuseum.ru) that houses his personal collections and memorabilia. Look closely and you might be able to conjure the image of Tolstoy sitting in his study, weaving tales of Natasha and Nikolai. His house in Moscow, **Tolstoy Memorial Estate in Khamovniki**, sheds more light on his life. The recently-concluded BBC adaptation of *War and Peace* dazzled viewers with its stunning locations. In St Petersburg, find time for the 17th century **Catherine Palace**, **State Hermitage Museum** (hermitagemuseum.org), and **Yusupov Palace** and see if they are as good in person as on camera.

The Capitol Building in Jackson, Mississippi.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD | AMERICA

Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* may be a work of fiction but it skilfully and innocuously captures the story of the deeply troubled America's south. The book is based in an imaginary town in **Alabama**, but you can visit the author's hometown **Monroeville** and take a tour of the **Old Courthouse Museum** (monroecountymuseum.org)—which safeguards the life and legacy of Lee. This small town has been performing *To Kill A Mockingbird* for more than 22 years, so schedule your trip in April or May to catch the annual drama.

Countless fictional novels have been set in this region, and if your kids are familiar with *The Help* or *Gone With The Wind*, you can take a road trip to the southern states of **Mississippi** (location of Kathryn Stockett's gripping novel), and **Georgia** (home of *Scarlet O'Hara*).

Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany.



THE BOOK THIEF | GERMANY



Traversing through Nazi-era Europe with *The Book Thief* (or *The Diary of Anne Frank*) as your companion can be heart-wrenching and life-changing. Although not listed in the book, Germany has a lot of reminders of the unfateful persecution of Jews where you can take your kids for better understanding of how it all unfolded: **The Munich City Museum** (muenchner-stadtmuseum.de), concentration camps including **Dachau Camp Memorial** (kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de), **Buchenwald** (buchenwald.de), and **Bergen-Belsen** (where Anne Frank died); **Jewish Museum** and **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe** in Berlin; and the **Nazi Documentation Centre**. Outside German borders, the ghastly **Auschwitz Camp** (auschwitz.org) in Poland and **Anne Frank House** (annefrank.org) in Amsterdam continue to give people the chills.

10 Questions

Every Holiday-Planning Parent Should Ask

Instead of focusing solely on the usual bucket-list destinations, consider which places and activities might benefit your kids and enrich their lives. Here are a few questions I ask myself when evaluating trip ideas. **BY RAINER JENNS**

Q Which destinations will strengthen our connections to wildlife and nature?

Love for animals is a common denominator among kids the world over. Going to a zoo or an aquarium is a great start, and you can further it by hiking in a national park, exploring a rainforest, or snorkeling at an island.

Q What activities will spark their curiosity?

Travel is a great way to release a child's natural sense of curiosity. Sometimes it's as simple as trying new foods. You might not think your child will like sushi, love astronomy, or want to see a musical—but they'll never know unless you let them try.

Q What kind of trip brings the family closer?

Given our busy work and school schedules, try to make it a priority to spend vacations in each other's company. The

hotel kids' clubs might be a nice reprieve for parents of preschoolers, but when the children get older, allow them to help plan your holidays. It's one way to ensure they'll be excited to spend time with you.

Q What activities enhance the kids' education?

Before you finalise plans for your next family vacation, take a look at your child's curriculum for some trip ideas. Will they be taking American history? Learning about volcanoes in science class? Studying Greek mythology? How about a language course? Not only will your trip be more interesting for the kids, it will reinforce what they're learning in school.

Q How can the trip promote self-discovery?

Travelling can be just as much an inward journey as an external one. Sometimes travelling allows children to

explore their interests with peer pressure. Perhaps they'll learn new forms of self-expression or become more self-confident. Kids (and their parents) can also learn a lot about themselves by visiting a house of worship different from their own.

Q Will we meet new people?

Chances are, when you travel as a family you'll cross paths with like-minded people who enjoy the same places and activities as you do. So don't be surprised if you return from

your next family vacation with lasting friendships with some of the people you met while travelling.

Q Is the itinerary/destination safe for kids?

Don't feel comfortable planning everything yourself and making your own arrangements? Not sure if a place is child-friendly? Tour operators are a great way to ensure everything is safe, and handled for you. And remember that everyone has their own threshold, so make sure to respect it.

Q Will the kids have fun?

Warning: The term 'family friendly' can be limiting. If you're planning a holiday that includes children, do you consider only the options that are kid appropriate? Conversely, if you're on a trip sans little ones, do you instinctively avoid doing anything with this label? The truth is, unless you absolutely refuse to be in the company of anyone under the age of 18, family-friendly activities can be the highlight of anyone's vacation, whether you have children or not. ☺



WHERE CAN WE LEARN NEW LIFE SKILLS?

Skiing in Gulmarg; horseback riding in Ladakh; making origami art in Japan; taking pictures of elephants in Kenya—family vacations are a great way to try new things, and you never know what might spark an interest in a new hobby.



WHERE CAN WE EXPOSE OUR KIDS TO NEW CULTURES AND PERSPECTIVES?

Travel is the gateway to understanding the world—and all that's in it. Just remember that gaining new insights and appreciation for different cultures doesn't necessarily require leaving the country. Want to learn a little about Chinese traditions? Head to a Chinese New Year Parade in Chinatown.

The Cool Kids' Club

Some of the most well-known hotels in the world have special programmes to keep the kids entertained on your next family vacation. **BY RAUL DIAS**

The Kid's Spa Angsana Laguna Phuket THAILAND

Besides kid-friendly activities such as surfing lessons, meeting the resident elephant, and swimming sessions at the kids' pool, the Angsana Laguna Phuket has a trump card up its sleeve—a kids' spa at the tree house-inspired children's activity area. So, treat the little ones to a wee bit more pampering by booking them in for a day at the spa where everything from yoga classes to colourful manicures await them. angsana.com

The Tennis and Football Academy Martinhal Beach Resort and Hotel PORTUGAL

This one's perfect for all those budding Sania Mirza's and

Cristiano Ronaldo's out there. The resort, set in a national park on Portugal's Algarve coast, already has a host of kid-friendly activities like windsurfing, dolphin watching, junior lifeguard courses, and bike trips. But the piece de resistance is the in-house tennis and football academy where the coaches are all former sportsmen/women who make it their mission to get your kids high on sports while on vacation. martinhal.com

Zone 4 Kids Activities Paradise Resort, Gold Coast AUSTRALIA

Abbreviated to the cooler Z4K, the activity programme at this luxury family resort on Gold Coast is packed with everything



Zone 4 Kids at Paradise Resort.

Surfing at Angsana Laguna.



Fun at the Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket Resort.



Swimming with a 'mermaid' at Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle De France.



SWIMMING WITH A 'MERMAID'

Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle De France SAINT BARTHÉLEMY

At this hedonistic Caribbean paradise owned by LVMH, your child's mermaid fantasy comes alive. *Amarylis*, the resort's very own 'mermaid' takes the kids on a swimming tryst along the resort's beaches, before they all settle down for a picnic curated by the resort's in-house chef, and a photo session with *Amarylis* as a memoir. stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com

from an ice-skating rink and gargantuan waterpark to a mini fun park that features themed play spaces such as 'Tiny Town' with pedal powered cars and working traffic lights, 'Under Water World' with submarines and slides, and the 'Magic Garden' with its colourful ball pit. paradiseresort.com.au

The 'Cousteau Experience'

The Ritz-Carlton ABAMA, TENERIFE, SPAIN

The Ritz Kids' Cousteau experience at the hotel pays homage to French oceanographic explorer and environmentalist Jean-Michel Cousteau by introducing kids to the natural wonders and rich cultural traditions of the Canary Islands. This immersive and adventurous experience is based on four pillars—water, land, environmental responsibility, and culture. Here, kids learn about coral reefs and forests along with the practices of recycling and sustainability, storytelling, art, and cuisine. ritz-carlton.com

THERE'S MORE!

- For shell painting, clay modelling, tennis, mini volleyball, badminton, and banana boat rides—**Penguin Club** at Le Royal Meridien Beach Resort & Spa, Dubai, UAE.
- For cooking classes, dogsled excursions, and figure skating at an in-resort skating rink—**Club Palazzino** at Badrutt's Palace, St. Moritz, Switzerland.
- For fun *batik* painting classes and raucous candy hunts—**Busy Bee Kids Club** at the Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket Resort, Thailand.
- For *piñata* making classes, treasure hunts, and treatments at the children's spa—**La Tortuga Children's Club** at St Regis Punta Mita, Mexico.
- For treasure hunts, painting and baking classes, along with playtime with Oisín, the club's five-foot-long dog otter 'ambassador'—**Oisín's Kids Club** at Liss Ard Estate, Cork, Ireland.

Big and Hearty Family Holidays

With families flung in different cities across the world, sometimes a big holiday with grandparents, siblings, and kids is the only way to enjoy 'together-time'. These destinations and journeys are just perfect landscapes for such occasions.

Alaska

Cruises offer a relatively inviting way to travel with the whole family. Parents can let their kids roam free on ships, and there's usually a broad range of entertainment choices aimed at each age group. Alaska's breathtaking scenery, its glaciers, whales and brown bears, and excursions including salmon fishing and dog-sledding, offer enough to engage different tastes. Many cruises include viewings of Glacier Bay National Park, known for its striking glacier-carved terrain, roughly 70 species of mammals including grizzlies and lynx, and more than 250 species of birds; and visits to coastal cities like Juneau and Ketchikan. Passengers who are up for a longer excursion away from the ship can visit Denali National Park, home to Mount McKinley, the tallest mountain in North America.

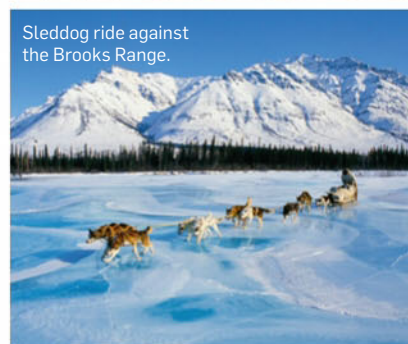
When to go/what you'll pay: The most popular time to go is in the summer, but if you can stand a little nip in the air, you can find better deals and fewer crowds in May and September. Seven-day cruises in September onboard Holland America and Royal Caribbean typically start at about US\$600 or US\$700 per person.



Tourists viewing the Margerie Glacier from a tour boat off Glacier Bay.



A breaching humpback whale spotted in Glacier Bay.



Sleddog ride against the Brooks Range.



Visitors at the Forecourt of the Louvre Museum.

PARIS

Sixty per cent of people who were considering multi-generational travel reported an interest in visiting Europe in the next two years (the highest percentage for an international destination), according to the Preferred Hotel Group survey. One of the most popular is Paris for its shopping, museums, and culinary delights. There are many Parisian hotels catering to the entire family, with on-site baby-sitting and kid-friendly activities. Companies like Road Scholar offer great programmes which are geared for three generations, and includes tailored guided tours to big sites like the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower (where there's a behind-the-scenes tour), French language lessons, and dinner with a Parisian host family.

When to go/what you'll pay: The best months to visit Paris are April and May or September and October, when the weather is relatively mild, and there are fewer tourists in the streets. Most of the new multigenerational travel offerings are clustered in the more crowded summer months.

FROM TOP: JOHN DELAPP/DESIGN PICS/GETTYIMAGES; BETTY WILEY/GETTYIMAGES; DAVID MADISON/GETTYIMAGES; PAWEŁ LIBERA/GETTYIMAGES;

Sundowners in the wild at Kirkmans Camp Safari Lodge in Kruger National Park.



South Africa

The spectacle of a game drive, where tourists can catch a glimpse of Africa's 'Big 5'—elephants, lions, leopards, buffalo, and rhinos—can appeal to just about every age group. South Africa is one of the more popular safari destinations for families because it has better infrastructure than many other African countries, says Lindsey Ueberroth, president of Preferred Hotel Group. Apart from the popular Kruger National Park, a number of resorts and hotels in safari country cater to multigenerational travel. At Gondwana Game Reserve Hotel in Mossel Bay, there is a year-round Big 5 viewing and five-star cuisine, plus a 'junior ranger programme' that teaches children about African wildlife and nature using sightseeing trips and other activities.

When to go/what you'll pay: Your best bet for a South African safari is between June and September, the Southern Hemisphere's winter, when it's not too hot and less likely to be rainy. (The lack of rain also means the trees are less leafy, which can make it easier to spot wildlife.)

Statues decorating graves on La Recoleta Cemetery.



ARGENTINA

Argentina is a great place for families because there's lots of culture, a diverse landscape and a good infrastructure. Opt to start with the culinary, shopping, and historic attractions of Buenos Aires. Also check out the Recoleta (Evita Peron is buried in this old cemetery) and grab a steak (an Argentine specialty) at one of the many sidewalk cafes. Families then often switch gears and head to the Patagonia region, where they can fish and boat or ride horses over mountains and lush grassland terrain.

When to go/what you'll pay: While Patagonia is best seen in the Southern Hemisphere's spring and summer months (November through April), the beginning and end of that period are the times it's least likely to be hot in Buenos Aires. One of the best ways to tackle Argentina is by booking a custom guided tour. A 14-day trek through Argentina, which takes visitors to Buenos Aires, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego National Park and more, costs US\$5,425 per person through travel company Journeys for Families.

Italian Village & Pirates Island Waterpark.



Turks & Caicos

Caribbean beach vacations offer activities for the active (think snorkeling or parasailing) and the sedentary (sunbathing!), and most major beach destinations have all-inclusive resorts. The Turks & Caicos' beaches are less crowded than Jamaica and the Bahamas and a big draw. The all-inclusive Beaches Turks & Caicos, which sits on a six-kilometre-long beach, hosts a 45,000-square foot water park, and offers activities for the kids that range from an Xbox play lounge to a teen disco to Sesame Street characters on site.

When to go/what you'll pay: Mid-December through mid-April is the high season, therefore higher prices. In November, late April, and early May, the temperatures average between about 32 to 36 degrees, and visitors can avoid the hottest summer temperatures while still scoring off-season deals. Beaches Turks & Caicos is currently offering deals starting at US\$319 per adult per night and US\$54 per child per night. There are direct flights from the US; from New York, the flight takes about three hours.



Following a scooter and bottlenose dolphin in the Caribbean Sea.

Little Feet on Sand

When Baywatch becomes baby watch, you need to think of beaches that are safe for kids, clean as a whistle, and in the 'not-to' list of party-goers. This is our secret list of family-friendly beaches that fit that category.

Copacabana, Brazil

Simply put, Copacabana beach is one of the greatest vacation getaways in the world. It's a breathtaking 2.5-mile stretch of bright sand that's filled with people luxuriating in the sun and soaking up the atmosphere. Lying on the borderline of a tropical refuge and the vivid world metropolis of Rio de Janeiro, no other beach in the world compares—so my apologies to Maui, South Beach, and Santa Monica, this one's just got you beat.



Boulders Beach, South Africa

Travelling to Africa usually conjures visions of safari. But this Cape Town beach is unmissable—it combines wildlife and sand. Typically in Cape Town, you could find beaches that range from secluded bays to long, open stretches of sand and surf. The west side of the Cape Peninsula, on the Atlantic Ocean, is where the more fashionable set go to see and be seen. The east side of the peninsula, on the warmer Indian Ocean, is generally more laid-back and not as frenetic as the Atlantic coastline. But for a different seaside experience, Boulders Beach forms part of a conservation area that is home to the African penguin, and wooden walkways have been constructed to view the penguins in their natural habitat.



RED BEACH, GREECE

Santorini has long been called the diamond of the Greek Islands. Its white sculptured villages are nestled atop steep volcanic cliffs that fall sharply to the deep blue Aegean Sea. The most famous beach here is Red Beach because of the slabs of red and black volcanic rocks. Most people just come to admire the steep cliffs and never make it down to the hot sand. Those who do are treated to a picturesque ambience of sunbathers and natural beauty rarely seen anywhere else in the world.

Moorea, French Polynesia

Lesser known (and less expensive) than its sister island Bora Bora, Moorea is just as beautiful with as many (or as little) activities as you can jam into a day. Although the best thing to do is sit back, relax, and enjoy the gentle breeze, beautiful sunsets, and island hospitality!

MAGENS BAY, UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Located on the Atlantic side of St Thomas is a protected white-sand beach that stretches for nearly three-quarters of a mile. Often cited as one of the best beaches in the world thanks to its pristine sand and calm waters, visitors can spend the day at Magens Bay for just US\$4 per person. Legend also has it that Sir Francis Drake used Magens Bay as an anchorage site while waiting for ships to plunder.



CLOCKWISE: JAG IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; DREAMTIME; SHUTTERSTOCK; DAVID CLAPP/GETTY IMAGES

ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK, NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's smallest national park certainly packs a punch. Abel Tasman curves along the north coast of the South Island, peppered with golden sand beaches and steep cliffs that fall away to crystal-blue waters. There are many options for exploring the park—by water taxi and boat, kayak, walking, or a combination of all three. Normally taking four to five days to hike the whole coastal track, you can split up the journey at many of the campsites, cabins, or even boat hostels along the way. One of the most interesting features of Abel Tasman is the high and low tide extremes, which affect the paths you take on the hike. Sometimes at low tide you might be able to cross a long beach while at high tide you have to go the long way around, making your exploration of this national park much more exciting.



Anse Source d'Argent La Digue, Seychelles

If you're looking for an unspoiled and exotic beach vacation destination, La Digue is one of the most popular islands in the Seychelles, and Anse Source d'Argent is the reason why. This amazingly beautiful beach features giant boulders on its shores. Dark granite boulders on a white sand beach is the most dramatic vision you could imagine for a tropical setting! The pathway to the beach runs through an old coconut plantation, which is fascinating in and of itself.



MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK, COSTA RICA

A stunning national park on the Pacific coast, Manuel Antonio has it all: non-stop beautiful beaches, lush tropical rainforest, and oh, the wildlife and flowers, everywhere you look. Monkeys abound on these beaches, and they are not timid around people. The Viewpoint Trail hike is an uphill climb to this lookout (mirador) with outstanding views of the coastline.

Malibu, California, USA

There are lots of little inlets along the SoCal (South California) coast, some specifically geared towards surfing and lacking in the sandy beach element, and some with plenty of sand for the non-surfers to sit and admire the people slicing through the waves. Driving up the Pacific Coast Highway, you just pull off into the shoulder to park, walk down to the beach (sometimes there are pathways, other times you have to navigate down the rocks), and just sit and enjoy.

Railay Beach, Krabi Town, Thailand

Not only is Krabi home to the beautiful town of Ao Nang, just south is the small peninsula known as Railay Beach, a dazzling stretch of sand surrounded by towering limestone cliffs on both sides. Its isolation from the mainland combined with the complete absence of cars and roads make Railay feel like an island all its own. Adventurers can explore a ragged jungle path from the beach to discover a hidden lagoon with the most beautiful emerald-green waters. It's worth hanging around at Railay after the sun has gone down and you've tucked your kids in, with lively reggae-style bars that stay open late. You might even catch one of the area's notorious fire shows.



THE ULTIMATE RESORTS & RIDES LIST

The Kid's Pass

We reckon it feels good to let kids loose at an entertainment park, and watch them go nutty on the rides. For reasons best known to young parents, we've hunted down all the integrated resorts, theme and amusement parks, for times when adrenaline takes over parenthood. BY ANITA RAO KASHI.

Riders on a rollercoaster in Knotts Berry Farm, California.

RODOLFO ARPIA/GETTYIMAGES

INTEGRATED RESORTS

ASIA

Resorts World Sentosa

SINGAPORE

Catch *Imagine|Native*, a unique maritime experiential museum that opens in May-June 2016. 8 Sentosa Gateway; +65/6577-8888; rwsentosa.com

Marina Bay Sands

SINGAPORE

Star Wars and Beyond, the musical performance opens in early March. 10 Bayfront Ave; +65/6688-8868; marinabaysands.com

Resorts World Genting Heights

PAHANG, MALAYSIA

Catch the newly opened madcap magic show and circus anchored by misfit magician *Ed Alonzo*. rwgenting.com

City of Dreams

MACAU, CHINA

Watch an aquatic acrobat show at *The House of Dancing Water*. The Boulevard, Estrada do Istma (Coloane); +853/8590-3000; cityofdreamsmacau.com

MGM Macau

MACAU, CHINA

Swim amidst more than 1,000 fish in MGM Aurora and an eight-metre cylindrical aquarium with a coral palace. Avenida Dr Sun Yat Sen, Nape; +853/8802-8888; mgmmacau.com

AFRICA

Sun City Theme Park

RUSTENBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Children will enjoy *Kowabonga*, a unique under-18 nightclub. Sun City Resort, Sun City; +27-14/557-1000; suncitywaterworld.com

EUROPE

Cornelia Diamond Golf Resort & Spa

ANTALYA, TURKEY

A medley of music and dance performances, beach parties, and a variety of other entertainment options open in summer. Iskele Mevkii, Belek; +90-242/710-1600; corneliareort.com



Over the water and under, at Resorts World Sentosa Singapore.

Alton Towers

STRAFFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Galactica is a new reality rollercoaster ride themed on the Battlestar Galactica series. Set in the beautiful UK Alton; +44-871/222-3330; altontowers.com

NORTH AMERICA

Disneyland

CALIFORNIA, USA

Disneyland Forever is a new fireworks and projection mapping show. 1313 Disneyland Dr, Anaheim; +1-877/560-6477; disneyland.disney.go.com

Cedar Point

OHIO, USA

Experience *Rougarou*, the newly refurbished floorless coaster. 1 Cedar Point Dr, Sandusky; +1-419/627-2350; cedarpoint.com

Atlantis Paradise Island

NASSAU, BAHAMAS

Catch *Rob Lake*'s incredible magic show that has just launched in February. Paradise Beach Dr, Paradise Island; +1-242/363-3000; atlantisbahamas.com

SOUTH AMERICA

Beach Park

FORTALEZA, BRAZIL

Try *Arrepius*, a scary transparent skybox that is suspended above water and the floor opens for a sudden drop. Rua Porto das Dunas, Aquiraz; +55-85/4012-3000; beachpark.com.br



The House of Dancing Water, City of Dreams Macau

THEME PARKS

ASIA

Patriot Park

KUBINKA, RUSSIA

Newly opened and dubbed as the military Disneyland, the park has simulators for all kinds of war equipment and can be tested by visitors. Kubinka, Odintsovsky District, an hour's drive from Moscow.

Shanghai Circus World

SHANGHAI, CHINA

Watch *ERA: Intersection of Time*, a show with music, acrobatics, juggling, space motorcycles, and a water screen. Gonghe Xin Lu; +86-21/5665-6622; shcircusworld.com

Hello Kitty Theme Park

ZHEJIANG, CHINA

The new attractions include night parades, 11 theme rides, and a large ferris wheel. Anji County, Zhejiang Province

Dinosaurs Park

CHANGZHOU, CHINA

The *Lantern Festival* with fireworks and lanterns is a surreal experience. Changzhou, Jiangsu, China

Universal Studios

OSAKA, JAPAN

The Flying Dinosaur, a flying rollercoaster, has just launched. Chome-1-33

Sakurajima, Konohana Ward; +81-570/200-606; usj.co.jp

Treetop Adventure

BALI, INDONESIA

Attempt a 20-metre high jump at the *Adrenaline Black Circuit*. Candikuning, Baturiti, Tabanan Regency; +2-361/852-0680; balitreetop.com

Ramoji Film City

TELANGANA, INDIA

Watch a live movie shoot on the *Studio Tour*. Anaspur Village, Hayathnagar Mandal, Hyderabad; 1800-4250-9999; ramojifilmcity.com

Kingdom of Dreams

HARYANA, INDIA

Showshaa Theatre has a changing line of events; from magic shows to stand up comedy. Auditorium Complex, Sector 29, Gurgaon; 0124/452-8000; kingdomofdreams.in

MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

The Lost Chambers Aquarium

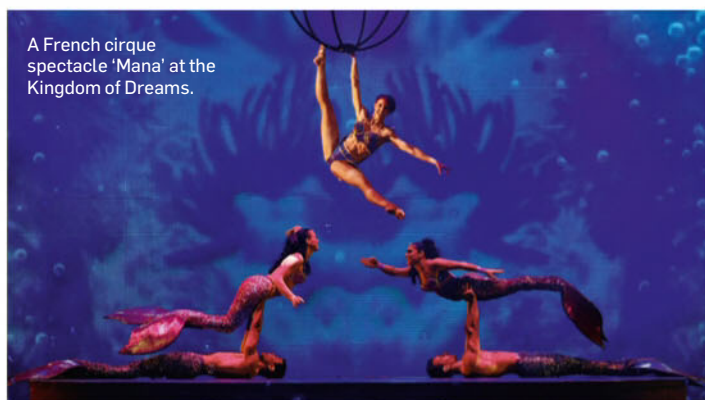
DUBAI, UAE

Experience snorkelling and diving into an aquarium. Atlantis The Palm; +971-4/426-1040; atlantisthepalm.com

uShaka Marine World

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Get up-close and personal with dolphins in the unique *Meet A Dolphin* programme. 1, King



A French circus spectacle 'Mana' at the Kingdom of Dreams.

Shaka Ave, Point; +27-31/328-8000; ushakamarineworld.co.za

EUROPE

Warner Brothers Studio

HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Original sets from the Harry Potter movies, souvenirs from Hogsmeade, and the Hogwarts Express steam Engine at Platform 9¾, the world of HP is here. Warner Drive, Leavesden; +44-20/3427-7777

Oceanografic

VALENCIA, SPAIN

Work with selected mammals in the *Trainer For A Day* programme. Carrer Eduardo Primo Yúfera, 1; +34-902/100-031; oceanografic.org

Parc Asterix

PLAILLY, FRANCE

Discobelix, a new whirling attraction opens here in April. +33-826/466-626; parcasterix.fr

Mini Europe

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Enjoy the newly launched *Thousand And One Nights* show on Saturdays. +32-2/474-1313; minieurope.com

Tayto Park

COUNTY MEATH, IRELAND

Cu Chulainn is a new wooden rollercoaster based on an Irish mythological hero. Ashbourne; +353-1/835-1999; taytopark.ie

NEW ZEALAND

Odyssey Sensory Maze

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Walk through quirky and challenging obstacles amidst illusions, light effects, scents, and sensations. 57 Shotover Street, Queenstown; +64-3/441-3313; odysseysensorymaze.co.nz

Spookers Haunted Attractions

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Run for Your Freakin Life, a new zombie run, opens in May. 833 Kingseat Road, Karaka; +64-9/291-9008; spookers.co.nz

NORTH AMERICA

Legoland

CALIFORNIA, USA

Experience the Lego movie in 4D. 1 Legoland Dr, Carlsbad; +1-760/918-5346; legoland.com

Nickelodeon Universe

MINNESOTA, USA

Bubble Guppies is a new spinning tower ride based on the TV show. 5000 Center Way, Bloomington; +1-952/883-8500; nickelodeonuniverse.com

Ark Encounter

KENTUCKY, USA

Noah-themed park that is set to open in July 2016. Willaimstown; arkencounter.com

Flyover Canada

VANCOUVER, CANADA

Flight of the Dragon is a newly launched 4D experience. 201-999 Canada Pl; +1-604/620-8455; flyovercanada.com

SOUTH AMERICA

Fantasilandia

SANTIAGO, CHILE

Moby Dick, a thrilling ride, opened a few months ago. Avenida Beaucheff; +56-2/2476-8600; fantasilandia.cl

Parque de la Costa

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Watch out for the new carnival that is scheduled to come to the park soon. Vivanco 1509, Tigre; +54-11/4002-6000; parqueadelacosta.com.ar



The yellow dome of Shanghai Circus World.

AMUSEMENT PARKS

ASIA

Sochi Park Adventureland

KRASNODAR KRAI, RUSSIA

Additional bottlenose dolphins and fur seals join their friends in the dolphinarium. Olympic Avenue, 21, Sochi; +78-800/100-3339; sochipark.ru/en

Chimealong Water Park

PANYU, CHINA

Catch the **Samba Carnival** in summer with Samba dancers and night visits to the park. Guangdong, Guangzhou; +86-20/3993-2888; int.chimelong.com

Oct East

SHENZHEN, CHINA

Take part in the extended Chinese New Year celebrations with shows and performances. Dàméishā; YánTián District; +86-755/2503-1837; chinaoct.com

LotteWorld

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Mask Festival with masquerades and masked

dancers runs between March and June. 240 Olympic-ro, Songpa-gu; +82/1661-2000; lotteworld.com

Everland

GYEONGGI-DO, SOUTH KOREA

Catch the brilliant winter light decorations before they come down for the summer. 199 Everland-ro, Pogog-eup, Cheoin-gu, Yongin-si; +82-31/320-5000; everland.com

Nagashima Spa Land

KUWANA, JAPAN

Try **Acrobat**, the newly introduced flying coaster. Mie Prefecture; +81-594/45-1111; nagashima-onsen.co.jp

Tokyo Disneyland

CHIBA, JAPAN

Don't miss the new night-time parade of lights and music. Maihama, Urayasu; +81-45/330-5211; tokyodisneyresort.jp

Asia Park

DA NANG CITY, VIETNAM

Launched last year, the

modern monorail and high-speed rides are exciting.

1 Phan Dang Luu Street, Hai Chau District; +84-511/3681-666; asia-park.vn

Adlabs Imagica

MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

Experience India's biggest floorless rollercoaster based on the movie, Mr India. Sangdewadi, Pali-Khopoli Road, Tal-Khalapur, Off Raigad, Khopoli; 022/4213-0405; adlabsimagica.com

Wonderla

KARNATAKA, INDIA

Check out **Jungle Lagoon**, a jungle-themed water attraction. 28th km, Mysore Road, before Bidadi, Bengaluru; 080/2201-0333; wonderla.com

Black Thunder

TAMIL NADU, INDIA

Don't miss the novel 5D theatre to be awestruck by movement, smell, and other special effects. Ooty Main Road, Mettupalayam, Coimbatore; 04254/226-632; btpark.org

Wild Wadi Waterpark at Jumeira Beach.



MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

Yas Waterworld

ABU DHABI, UAE

Try the world's first rattling water slide. It's also home to the world's fastest rollercoaster. +971-2/414-2000; yaswaterworld.com/en

Wild Wadi Water Park

DUBAI, UAE

Wipeout Flowrider is one of the only four such rides in the world. Jumeirah Road-Umm Suqeim 3; +971-4/348-4444; jumeirah.com

Aqua Blue Water Park

SINAI PENINSULA, EGYPT

The hair-raising **Kamikaze** ride is for adrenaline junkies. Sharm El-Sheikh; +20-100/172-2277

Parc Sindibad

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO

Launched last year with 22 attractions, the toboggan and flying chairs are most popular. sindibad.ma

Adlabs Imagica Maharashtra, India





The 'Christmas Fantasy' parade at the Samsung Everland Amusement Park.

Gold Reef City

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

The **Anaconda** ride with thrill factor 9, and **Tower of Terror** with fear factor 10, are a must visit. *Northern Pkwy & Data Cres*; +27-11/248-6800; tsogosun.com

Ratanga Junction

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Try **Slingshot**, one of the most extreme rides in the world. *Century Blvd, Century City*; +27-21/550-8504; ratanga.co.za

EUROPE

Tivoli Gardens

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Comedy, music, and dance show **Hairspray** opens in March. *Vesterbrogade 3*; +45-33/151-001; tivoli.dk

Europapark

RUST, GERMANY

Look forward to the Irish themed area that's to open soon. *Europa-Park-Strasse 2*; europapark.de/en

Grona Lund

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Participate in the pentathlon when the park re-opens in late April. *Lilla Allmänna Gränd 9*; +46-10/708-9100; gronalund.com/en

Pleasure Beach Theme Park

LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

Red Arrows Sky Force, the sky fly experience is a latest addition. Also, a new ice show with champion skaters opens in June. *525 Ocean Blvd, Blackpool*; +44-871/222-1234; blackpoolpleasurebeach.com

Efteling

KAATSHEUVEL, NETHERLANDS

Try **Baron 1898**, an exciting new dive coaster. *Europalaan 1*; +31-416/537-777; efteling.com

Walt Disney Studios

CHESSY, FRANCE

Billy Bob's has new live shows. *Place des Passagers du Vent*; +33-825/300-222; disneylandparis.com

Port Aventura Park

TARRAGONA, SPAIN

Catch the new version of the ice show in the Far West section. *Avinguda de l'Alcalde Pere Molas, km 2, Vila-seca*; +34-902/202-220; portaventuraworld.com

Gardaland

VERONA, ITALY

Oblivion The Black Hole is a

new dive coaster which drops vertically, flips, then does a helix loop. *Via Derna, 4, Castelnuovo del Garda*; +39-04/ 644-9777; gardaland.it

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Sea World

QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Newly opened **Nickelodeon**

Land has three sections and four kiddy rides.

Seaworld Dr, Main Beach QLD, Gold Coast; +61-7/5588-2222; seaworld.com.au

Rainforestation

CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA

Meet the latest addition, **Precious the Wallaby Joey**. *Kennedy Hwy, Kuranda*; +61-7/4093-9033; rainforest.com.au

Sovereign Hill

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Stay for **A Night In The Museum** kitten out in period costumes followed by a dinner with vintage recipes on the menu.

Bradshaw Street; +61-3/5337-1199; sovereignhill.com.au

Adventure World

PERTH, AUSTRALIA

The newly launched funnel ride is supposedly the world's biggest. *351 Progress Dr, Bibra Lake*; +61-8/9417-9666; adventureworld.net.au



Caught between scenes at the Universal Studios Los Angeles.

FROM TOP: BLOOMBERG/GETTYIMAGES; COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



Dolphins of Discovery Cove say goodbye to wet-suited park guests.

Splash Planet

HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND

Master Blaster, the all time favourite vigorous water ride, will be open on weekends till end of March. 1001 Grove Road; +64-6/873-8033; splashplanet.co.nz

Rainbow's End

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

The park's novel scary night rides are quite a rage. 2 Clist Cres, Manukau; +64-9/262-2030; rainbowsend.co.nz

NORTH AMERICA

Universal Studios

LOS ANGELES, USA

Await the new **World of Harry Potter** and try the new **Springfield** thoroughfare based on The Simpsons. 100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City; +1-800/864-8377; universalstudioshollywood.com

Seaworld

CALIFORNIA, USA

Magic weekends in April will feature a different illusion each weekend. 500 Sea World Dr, San Diego; +1-619/226-3901; seaworldparks.com

Schlitterbahn Water Park

TEXAS, USA

The recently opened park has fun rides for all ages. Commodores Dr, Corpus Christi; +1-361/589-4200; schlitterbahn.com

Discovery Cove

FLORIDA, USA

Sea Venture is a new underwater walking experience. 6000 Discovery Cove Way, Orlando; +1-877/557-7404; discoverycove.com

Hershey Park

PENNSYLVANIA, USA

Try the new **LaffTrakk** coaster, an indoor, spinning glow coaster. 100 HersheyparkDr, Hershey; +1-800/437-7439; hersheypark.com

Knott's Berry Farm

CALIFORNIA, USA

Voyage to the Iron Reef is a new underwater 4D interactive dark ride. 8039 Beach Blvd, Buena Park; +1-714/220-5200; knotts.com

Carowinds

NORTH CAROLINA, USA

Sling Shot is a reverse bungee ride that propels riders at over

160 km/hr. Carowinds Blvd, Charlotte; +1-704/588-2600; carowinds.com

La Ronde

MONTREAL; CANADA

Fear-junkies will love **Maison Rouge**, a new terror attraction. 22 Chemin Macdonald, Île Sainte-Hélène; +1-514/397-2000; sixflags.com

Wonderland

ONTARIO, CANADA

Two new rides, **Skyhawk** and **Flying Eagles**, promise to take visitors to a new high. 9580 Jane St, Vaughan; +1 905/832-7000; canadaswonderland.com

SOUTH AMERICA

Six Flags

TALAPAN, MEXICO

Look forward to the new 4D attraction **Justice League Battle for Metropolis**. Carr. Picacho-Ajusco, Héroes de Padierna; +52-55/5339-3600; sixflags.com.mx

Xplor

PLAYA DEL CARMEN, MEXICO

Try **Xplor Fuego**, a night-time adventure extravaganza. Puerto Juarez, CarrCancún

Tulum Km 82, Solidaridad; +52-800/009-7567; xplor.travel

Hopi Hari

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Summer at Hopi Hari is a series of floats, parades, processions, and special live shows till March. Rod. dos Bandeirantes, Vila São Sebastiao, Vinhedo; +55/4007-1134; hopihari.com.br

Parque Mundo Aventura

CUNDINAMARCA, COLOMBIA

The freshwater aquarium attraction launches this year. Bogotá; +57-322/326-4278; mundoaventura.com.co

Beto Carrero World

PENHA, BRAZIL

Fast and Furious based on the movie franchise, is a recent addition. RuaInácio Francisco de Souza, 1597-Praia de Armação; +55-47/3261-2222; betocarrero.com/br

Xetulul Theme Park

GUATEMALA

Try **Avalancha**, which has over eight inversions. Retalhuleu, Guatemala City; +502/7722-9450; irtra.org.gt

At the Gardaland amusement park in Italy.



upgrade

|| TRAVEL SMARTER ||



Border Intelligence

You have a passport—what else is there to know? From what new security concerns will mean for your next trip, to visa on arrival, here are some answers to questions you didn't know to ask.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TINA BERNING

PASSPORT-FREE TRAVEL IN EUROPE: IS IT DEAD?

Terrorist attacks, a refugee crisis, and fears about future security threats may put an end to unrestricted travel on the Continent.

Last November, hours after terrorists launched a series of deadly attacks in Paris, French president François Hollande made a declaration: for security's sake, the country's borders would be closed. It was easier said than done—how do you shut the hundreds of roads that enter France from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland?—and the government soon clarified, saying it would implement border checks. Still, it was a pivotal moment for Europe, most of which has been border-free for more than 20 years.

Since the 1990s, 26 countries have removed controls at their boundaries, creating a zone known as the Schengen Area. It was a boon to commerce and to tourism; travelling around Europe became as easy as passing between states in the USA. But terrorist attacks and a wave of migrants and refugees from the Middle East and Africa have called all that into question.

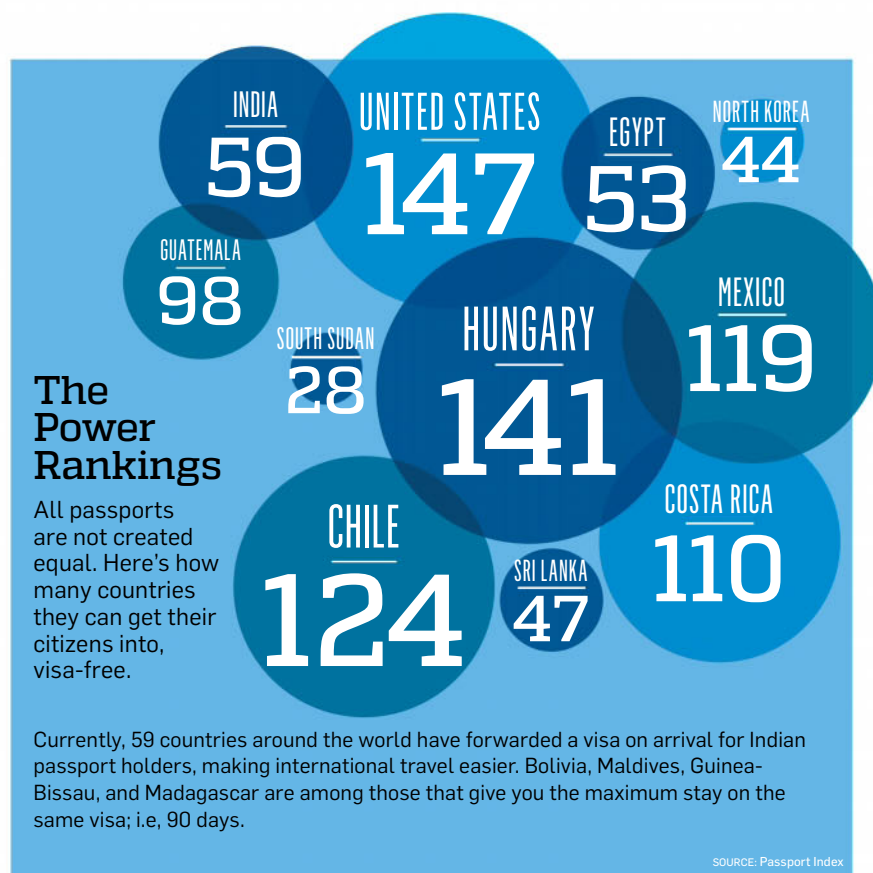
In September, with an estimated 8,000 refugees per day entering Europe, Germany implemented checks at the Austrian border, inspecting cars on main highways and stopping trains in an effort to control the flow; the Netherlands started reviewing passports on its German border. After November's attacks, checkpoints were imposed between France and Belgium indefinitely. In early January, Sweden started requiring travellers to show ID when coming from Denmark, and Denmark imposed checks on the German border. The measures weren't aimed at leisure travellers, but canceled trains and, in some cases, hours-long waits at highway checkpoints took their toll.

Since then, the delays in Germany have abated, says Jens Alberts, a spokesman for the German Consulate General in New York. And besides, he adds, travellers' paths are unlikely to overlap much with those of refugees. Ilse van Overveld, a spokesperson for the Dutch embassy, said there have not been any significant delays for flights to the Netherlands. "I don't think tourists will feel any different today when they travel to the Netherlands than when they were in the country a year ago," she says.

However, travellers are still likely to be impacted at airports, train stations, sporting events, and holiday gatherings, and to see more of a law-enforcement

presence, says Scott Hume, associate director of security operations at travel-risk agency Global Rescue. Visitors should be prepared for longer lines and more intense scrutiny of documents.

Things could change quickly if another attack occurs. And even if it doesn't, policy shifts may slow down travel. At press time, the European Union was considering beefing up its external border-control force, called Frontex. Some politicians were calling for the end of Schengen altogether. Commentators for the Financial Times, Der Spiegel, and others have speculated that the end of a borderless Europe may be upon us.



Tip | KEEP AN EYE ON EXPIRATION

Even with a valid passport, you can be barred from certain countries, such as Switzerland, that require travel documents to be good for at least three months after your planned departure.

Q&A

I recently lost a lot of weight, and don't look much like the photo in my passport. Do I need to get a new one?

If you've gained or lost a lot of weight, had facial surgery, been disfigured, or otherwise dramatically changed your appearance, it's wise to get a new passport, with a new photo—or risk running into problems at the border. Log on to passportindia.gov.in for more details.

GONE, BABY, GONE

Passport lost or stolen? Follow these steps at home and abroad.

1 | LOOK AGAIN

Though your first instinct may be to call the authorities, have someone else sift through your belongings with fresh eyes, advises Brenda Sprague, deputy assistant secretary for passport services for the U.S. Department of State. "Once it's been reported lost, too bad," she says. The document is cancelled, and details go into the Lost Documents database. Anyone, including you, who is caught trying to use a document that's been reported missing could be detained—and at the very least will be denied entry or boarding. So have a pal check your pockets, drawers, safes, suitcases, and other bags. If you're at home, be sure to search the clothes you were wearing the last time you used your passport.

2 | CALL IT IN

If you're overseas and you're certain the passport is gone, contact the Indian Mission as soon as you can; a staff member will take the report and tell you how to get an Emergency Certificate. (The embassy generally can't issue documents on weekends or holidays.)



You'll have to pay a fee, and should arrive with identification and a new passport photo. When you get home you can exchange it for a regular book at a small fee. If your passport goes missing at home, make an FIR at your nearest police station, and the Passport Seva Kendra. You'll have to apply for the replacement in person.

3 | REVIEW YOUR PLANS

Some countries—including France—may not allow you in with an emergency passport, because it lacks the electronic data chip embedded in a regular version. Manage your itinerary accordingly. —MALENA CAROLLO

The Case for Covers

A scuffed, stuffed passport may be a badge of honour—but it can also derail a trip. Border officers can reject a document for being dog-eared, torn, or otherwise beat-up. A passport case can prevent problems, and these might get a second look—in a good way.

1. Cedar Street Dot Passport Holder, US\$78; katespade.com

2. Clare V. Leather Passport Case, US\$115; clarev.com

3. Byredo Passport Case, US\$250; byredo.com

4. Passport Case in Intrecciato Nappa, US\$340; bottegaveneta.com

5. Valextra Passport Holder 3CC, US\$490; valextra.com



Tip | HUSTLE WITH LESS HASSLE Indian passport holders have SmartGate entries at few international airports. The new Mobile Passport Control app (for iOS and Android) lets you access express immigration lanes at participating airports. Download the app and when you land, use it to fill out a customs form and submit a selfie; you'll get a QR code that an officer can scan with your passport. "Think of it like a tollbooth," says John Wagner of US Customs & Border Control. "This is your exact-change lane."



/ **MARCH 2016** / The Dominican Republic's most
luxurious new resort | **Aosta Valley** is Italy's plush
secret long privy to European cognoscenti



The open-air Casa Grande, which houses the lobby, a restaurant, the infinity pool, and plenty of lounging areas, serves as Amanera's main hub.



take me

Aman's latest Caribbean property brings a new kind of luxury to the pristine, jungle-shrouded northern shores of the Dominican Republic.

Amelia Lester checks in and finds out why Amanera is the season's hottest hotel debut.

Photographs by
Floto + Warner

to the water



On the first night of my recent stay at Amanera, the new Aman resort in the Dominican Republic, a crab scuttled across the floor of a walk-in closet the size of an extravagant Brooklyn bedroom. Like everything in this fertile part of the world—the ferns, the fruits, the cigars—he was big. Bowling-ball big. And he was also a reminder that at a resort on 2,000 acres of dense jungle, by a coastline that looks like it hasn't changed since Christopher Columbus declared it the most beautiful in the world, there will be wildlife, and lots of it. (The very large crab was swiftly removed, amid shrieks and with good humour, by the staff.)

Aman's arrival signals that the Dominican Republic—a destination better known for its popular all-inclusives—is ready for a higher level of luxury. Unlike resort-studded Punta Cana, in the easternmost province of the country, the area around Amanera, on the northern shoreline, is more subdued. In 2007, a

developer partnered with Aman to build on a plot of dense jungle near the town of Río San Juan. The location came with its own set of challenges: while Amanera, its Turks and Caicos sister hotel, offers a postcard-perfect beach experience, the water here can sometimes be too rough for swimming, so the focus is on the property's jungle slopes and activities like surfing and kayaking.

The resort was designed by architect John Heah to be integrated into the environment, so it sometimes appears invisible. A main building, the Casa Grande, houses the lobby, restaurant, and infinity pool facing the beach, and is all glass and concrete and Indonesian teak. Twenty-four casitas (and one two-bedroom casa) sit in an amphitheatre formation facing the ocean. Amanera lies at one end of Playa Grande, a mile-long, crescent-shaped beach that has a rare, wild beauty. At the other end is Aman's closest neighbour: the equally chic Playa Grande Beach Club, a boutique hotel with colourful

interiors by Celerie Kemble and a clientele that also values seclusion.

Amanera is luxuriously laid-back, but it isn't lacking in things to do. There's no official list of activities—just a deeply knowledgeable and obliging team, ready with suggestions and gently scented towels, willing to withhold judgment when you sleep through a Pilates session and wake up, instead, to the trill of grey kingbirds at 11 am. It is possible for the casita to become a fort of sorts—one day, I had a sprawling breakfast with fresh pineapple juice by the private pool, followed by an in-room massage. No one need know; the spacious, minimalist casitas, with glass walls that allow you to observe the ocean's moods, are utterly secluded.

Venturing out, however, is the only way to fully appreciate the natural setting. The beach is straight out of *Robinson Crusoe*, with soft golden sand fringed by bowing palms. There's an open-air dining area for eating lobster rolls while kids splash in the pool. And,



FROM FAR LEFT: In each casita, glass walls let in sunlight while the surrounding vegetation provides seclusion; a private pool at the resort (half the casitas come with one); the 18-hole golf course, the first at an Aman property; sunset over Playa Grande; lounge chairs lining the beach.

for the first time ever at an Aman resort, there's an 18-hole golf course.

There's also much to do in the surrounding hills. Antonio Alvarado, a full-time guide at the resort who in a former life was a martial-arts champion, leads nature walks and mountain bike trips with a sprightly, inquisitive demeanour. He explains medicinal uses for plants, plucks swollen passion fruit off the vine, and breaks open coconuts on sharp branches to share the intensely flavoured meat within. One afternoon, reaching the crest of an undulating path, my companion and I ran into a wild horse, which Alvarado gently shooed away. (For a moment, it felt like a music video from the eighties.) After an hour or so of gentle exertion, we arrived at an overlook with a panoramic view across the hills and ocean, as well as two Amanera staff members waiting with chilled Viognier and sandwiches made with prosciutto and *burrata*.

Most meals at the resort are in this generally European mode. The chef is

Italian, the sous-chef Mexican, and the pastry chef Spanish—though you wouldn't necessarily pick up on the staff's diversity from the menu. Steak tartare, risotto, and snapper *en papillote* are kitchen mainstays. Although there are glimpses of excitement, particularly the Mexican breakfast options (huevos rancheros, satisfyingly spicy chicken chilaquiles), the fare mostly sticks to the tried-and-true.

The real highlight, though, is the chance to interact with the staff. A mangrove tour organised by the hotel, beginning in nearby Río San Juan, was memorable for the astonishing sight of dozens of black buzzard and egret nests, as well as the opportunity to meet Juan Carlos Garcia, the friendly motorboat captain, who offered us Presidente beers and revealed a hidden swimming cove. Victor Rojas Gomez, a driver who led the excursion, pointed out sites like the popular Playa de la Guardia, a dance club/car wash hybrid at the center of the town's social scene, and his house, painted a typical

marigold yellow, with a dozing dog out front. "This is your home too now," he said, and he sounded like he meant it.

Juan Alberto Martinez, known as Babunuco, after his legendary restaurant in the mountains, often comes by the resort to introduce guests to Dominican cigars. "Everyone knows Cuban cigars, but ours are just as good," he said, demonstrating the delicate art of rolling the leaves and folding the tip. He insists no cigar session is complete without Mama Juana, a regional drink made with dried bark, rum, honey, and red wine. Recipes vary; Babunuco's, which he ferments in a big Johnnie Walker bottle for a month, is a secret. It's best sipped by the infinity pool, which deliberately has no lights to create better reflections, especially when the sound of an acoustic guitar drifts from the restaurant and skims across the sky, dense with stars. You can see why the crab was so eager to stay. +

amanera.com; casitas from US\$950.

Snuggled between France and Switzerland, in Italy's remote Northwest corner, the Aosta Valley is a plush secret long privy to European cognoscenti. But even if you aren't ready to ski up a storm swathed in Prada, it serves up Michelin-starred pampering, extraordinary physical challenges and an alluring après-ski scene. By **APARNA PEDNEKAR**

WHITE MAGIC



EVERY WINTER, FLOCKS OF SOCIALITES

and business barons from Milan, Turin and Geneva descend upon the cobblestone streets, Roman ruins, quixotic castles and understated glamour of Valle D'Aosta. Home to some of the continent's loftiest peaks including the Matterhorn, Monte Rosa and Gran Paradiso, the region is a haven for serious skiers, and the highest mountain of them all—the magnificent Mont Blanc—beckons with all manner of seductions to those who are keen to knock off a must-do on their Alpine bucket list.

At the heart of the valley is the ancient city of Aosta. Barely 130 kilometres from Geneva, it makes for an ideal family weekend, where kids can run amok at cosy pizzerias, while fashion-forward parents indulge in retail therapy or stroll hand en masse through the ruins where Emperor Augustus's mighty army once held

court. One of Italy's wealthiest towns, Aosta is typical of the valley's resorts. Instead of an icy and snooty atmosphere, it has a warm, easygoing vibe. On my second day in town, I stroll over to a family-run trattoria in Piazza Chanoux and dine in solitary splendour on a giant plate of spaghetti alla carbonara washed over with grappa while the family at the next table digs into fondue (these are the Italian Alps, I have to remind myself, not the sunny South) and a little girl from another family comes by to chat.

To get a feel of an ancient Roman military base, walk through the massive, arched Praetorian Gate to the ruins, comprising the Teatro Romano, Museo Archeologico and 11th century Cattedrale. There's also a slightly spooky underground mercantile city, equipped with the clever Roman audio systems. The Pila Ski Resort is just a short walk from the downtown area, but if you're prepping for some high-voltage backcountry action, do take the 35 kilometres pleasant drive to the town that's the heart of the valley—Courmayeur.



The terrace on Punta Herbronner offering a 360 degree panoramic view.

TO SKI OR NOT TO SKI

The towns of Courmayeur and its famous French cousin, Chamonix are (glamorously) head-to-head on Europe's most-adored ski resort list. If you're aching to experience the best of both, grab your skis, brain buckets and a really good guide to tackle Vallée Blanche, one of the world's most beautiful, daring glacier off-piste ski routes. A spectacular 20 kilometres run down the Mont Blanc massif, it calls out even to intermediate level skiers.

Unmanned all through, it offers a unsurpassed wild, untamed beauty. Other adventurous runs for fairly experienced skiers include a stunning treeline bowl at the top of the Cresta d'Arp and the Torino summit. If you're a beginner and want to play it safe, the on-piste options are equally scenic. Most of the runs are marked red (advanced intermediate) whether at Plan de la Gabba or Bertolini.

COLOSSAL STRIDES

If skiing and snowboarding aren't up your alley, Courmayeur and its surroundings provide rich opportunities for trekking and hiking up

charming rifugios for an overnight camp. For those looking to smell the geraniums, the Gran Paradiso National Park has 725 kilometres of marked trails and mule tracks. I took a short but absolutely winsome hike through waterfalls and bursts of Alpine flowers. The tracks are also suitable for a brisk electric bike ride. Even more fetching is Val Ferret, a thickly verdant valley duo straddling the Swiss border. Like a romantic painting, the tracks lead through Pré de Bar glacier and the towering Grandes Jorasses peaks, with the Dora di Veny stream flowing placidly in between.

Unfortunately (or fortunately) I arrive in Courmayeur after the legendary Tor des Geants is done, but find myself in the piazza cheering on the ladies and gents (440 champions) who have traversed 330 kilometres, averaging 120 hours. Age is no bar to this massive endurance challenge, and—mimicking a life lesson—the key to completing the race is fortitude and steadiness, not speed. Participants, from across the world, fall off steep cliffs, break into panic attacks and get lost in snow blizzards, but the experience is said to be as life-changing as it is arduous and emotional.



POSITIONED AS THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD, THIS 360 DEGREES ROTATING CABLE CAR WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION FOR OVER FOUR YEARS AT A COST OF €110 MILLION

WONDER CAR TO PARADISE

The Skyway Monte Bianco is a good way of reaching heaven without skiing your way down a deadly off-piste slope towards it. Positioned as the eighth wonder of the world, this 360 degrees rotating cable car was under construction for over four years at a cost of €110 million. The entire ride is divided into two sections. At the first station, the swanky aerodynamic-styled Pontal d' Entrèves, I glide into the first cable car with over 20 enthusiastic guests. It feels light and zips up the cable like a dollop of butter, but is no mean feat; the monster funivie (cable car) hauls 800 people an hour. At the second station, Pavillon du Mont Fréty, we change to another gondola that takes us up—via stunning views of Val Ferret—to the third and last station, Punta

Helbronner, also serving as the starting point for the Valle Blanche off piste. There's talk of gentle snow beginning to fall and we immediately hustle to the 360 degrees circular terrace offering the best possible view of Mont Blanc. Perhaps it's the avalanche of selfies and Instagram-breaking flashes, but I don't feel any loss of breath or dizziness associated with thin air. After frolicking with snowflakes and getting a free ice facial, I wander the pretty botanical garden, crystals museum and lunch on chicken curry and eggplant bruschetta at the house restaurant.

A MARVELOUS FORT

On my last day in the valley, I go to the little town of Bard and take the efficient elevator up its famous fortress. Rock solid walls with wide arches

BELOW: A view of Courmayeur; a wooden sculpture of an alpine sportsman in the Courmayeur hotel; Cave Mont Blanc Morgex.





FROM LEFT:
Botanical garden
outside the Punta
Helbronner; Fort
de Bard; on the
streets of Aosta;
Roman city ruins
in Aosta; hiking in
Val Ferret;
restaurant on
Funivia Monte
Bianco.

and mullioned and cross windows may be de rigueur for Roman castles in the 1800s, but this one is special. Fort Bard was one of the prime locations for the 2015 blockbuster *Avengers—Age of Ultron*. A fan will recognise it as the headquarters of super-villain Baron von Strucker, and the castle where Ultron works out his evil plan to destroy the Earth. If you nurse any world domination desires yourself, book one of the 11 artistically decorated rooms at Hotel Cavour et des Officiers inside the old garrison. When you set out to explore, you'll realise how massive this military fortress is—formed around three defense stations, it rises to 1,500 feet in a spiral design.

SALUD!

With Michelin starred restaurants and the freshest of produce, it'd be a wonder if the Aosta Valley didn't have a local wine to flaunt. The Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle Piagne is a biological wine produced in the vineyards of Morgex, the highest in Europe at a height of 700 feet on the slopes of Monte Bianco. Clear yellow in colour with green reflections, it smells of Alpine herbs and has almond accents with a hay and cedar aftertaste. Savour it leisurely at a Gran Paradiso picnic with nibbles of Gressoney Toma cheese and Sant Marcel ham.

EAT, GUSH, REPEAT

Back at Courmayeur, the town's famed après-ski scene is alive and shimmying. Courmayeur doesn't skimp on the glamour and big star draws. Last year British celebrity chefs Sat Bains, Marcus Wareing and Heston Blumenthal curated a gourmet experience for one of the 5-star chalet lodges, which included Blumenthal guiding participants in the uber-premium tour through the fine points of creating the perfect hot chocolate. I'm staying at the more homey but quietly lavish Villa Novecento. Equally cosy, but refurbished to a more 60's Italian style is the Duca d'Aosta Hotel, where I down a glass of the potent local poison, an Italian absinthe called *génépy*.

Skiers and non-skiers alike don't need an excuse to hotfoot it to one of Europe's most famous thermal spas, just 10 minutes from the town centre. The QC Terme Pre Saint Didier is set in cavernous premises (attached to its own swanky resort) and features thermal pools, Turkish baths, Vichy showers, waterfalls and saunas. After a blissful morning, it may be time to book a table at the hottest table in town. The

BOTTOM: ENRICO ROMANZI



Petit Royal Restaurant, inside Hotel Royale Golf, is typically like the valley's other 5-star establishments; welcoming and unpretentious. But its Michelin star is no accident. Chef Maura Gosio's scampi tempura, turbot and caviar parmigiana and crème brûlée are the stuff of modern legend. Another restaurant that is a luscious Italian dream is Chiecco—try ravioli stuffed with ricotta and herbs, tuna filet with lime and ginger, and ragù of wild boar with polenta.

Au Coeur des Neiges, a luxury chalet lodge, features individual residences toggled out in earthy comforts. It's the sort of rustic-luxe Alpine design where you can imagine Giorgio Armani would escape to hide from the paparazzi; to lie back by the hot tubs and ponder his Autumn Winter 2016 line, while staring out at the honey-hued, sunset-tinged Mont Blanc, while his personal butler rustles up a fashionably lean dinner and a bunch of models hang out, discussing ski plans.

It's that picture of Aosta Valley—awash in understated oomph—that implants itself in my memory, interrupted by shots of a potent local poison, an Italian absinthe called *génépy*, and the magical Monte Bianco. +

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Take the Turkish Airlines from Mumbai or Alitalia from Delhi to Milan. Then, rent a car for the 2-hour drive to Courmayeur.

STAY

Villa Novecento (alpissima.it) in Courmayeur is ideally located in the city centre and has comfortable rooms with great food.

Hotel Duca D'Aosta in Aosta city is a chic mid-budget hotel with a great French brasserie and a cosy lounge.

DO

Heliski (heliskicervinia.com) in the Aosta Valley. Chart the **Aosta wine route** (routedesvinsvda.it) sampling local Pinot Grigio, Pinot Noir and Petit Rouge on the way. Hire a **vintage bike** and ride through the scenic Gressoney Valley.

VISIT

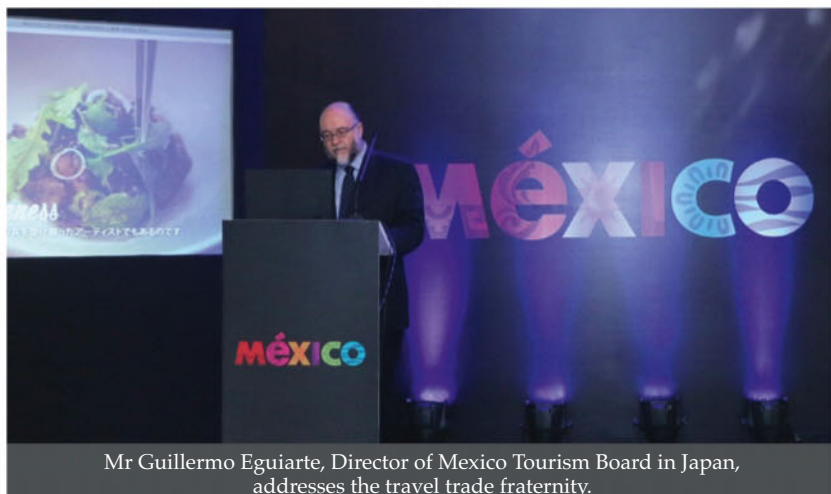
The medieval **Fenis castle** (fenisweb.it) is a modern-day fairyland. Comic book geeks must visit **Forte Di Bard** (fortedibard.it) where the movie *Avengers—Age of Ultron* was shot.

SHOP

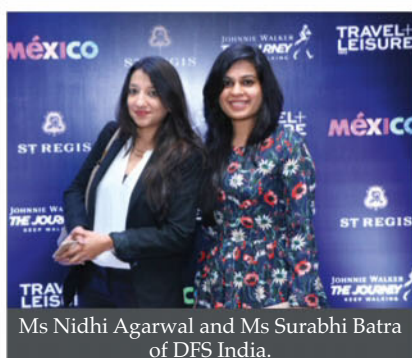
In Courmayeur, pick up souvenirs like **grollas** (vertical wooden chalices) and **Friendship Cups** with multiple spouts, in which Italians share caffè alla valdostana with friends. **Chat Noir** at the Piazza della Repubblica in Aosta city stocks young designer labels.

EAT/DRINK

Spend an afternoon over coffee at Caffè della Posta in Courmayeur before snacking on local Fontina and Fromadzo cheeses. **Chiecco Restaurant** (chiecco.com) is famous for its ricola-stuffed ravioli. **Osteria dell'Oca** (ristoranteosteriadelloca.com) in Aosta serves a superb veal stew.



Mr Guillermo Eguiarte, Director of Mexico Tourism Board in Japan, addresses the travel trade fraternity.



Ms Nidhi Agarwal and Ms Surabhi Batra of DFS India.



Mr Marzban Antia, Vice President, Travel Agents Association of India, with guests.



Leading travel agents and tour operators attend the event in Mumbai.



Mr Eguiarte with guests.



From left: Raghavendra Raj, Sanjiv Bisaria, and Soumya Maheshwari (R), of Exposure Media Marketing Pvt Ltd, with Mr Guillermo Eguiarte.

TRAVEL+LEISURE INDIA & MÉXICO

Present

A Taste of Mexico

Last month, Travel+Leisure India & South Asia, in association with Mexico Tourism Board, hosted a networking event over two days at The St Regis Mumbai and Shangri-La's Eros Hotel, New Delhi. In attendance were members of the travel and trade fraternity, including members of TAAI, OTOAI, and IATO, for a session with Mr Guillermo Eguiarte from Mexico Tourism. Mr Eguiarte shared insights into how Mexico is now a popular destination for Indian travellers.

HOSPITALITY PARTNER



ST REGIS



From Left: Ms Jessica Mancera Sanchez and Ms Edith Devora Ibarra from the Embassy of Mexico in New Delhi, with a guest.



Mr Guillermo Eguiarte addresses the audience at Shangri-La's Eros Hotel, New Delhi.



Mr Parmmeet Singh Nayar, General Manager, Shangri-La's Eros Hotel, New Delhi welcomes guests.



Ms Punam Singh, Executive Director, Out Bound Tour Operators Association of India, with travel trade professionals.



Leading travel agents and tour operators attend the Mexico event.



Guests listen to insights at the Delhi event.

HOSPITALITY PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



wish you were here...



Anil Chawla / *Photographer* / NUBRA VALLEY

I was driving through Nubra Valley, Ladakh when I passed this place. It's a tri-armed valley in the North near Diskit—the capital of Nubra. The Shyok River meets the Nubra to form a large valley that separates Ladakh from the Karakoram ranges. The Shyok river is a tributary of the Indus river. Hundar was the capital of the erstwhile Nubra kingdom in the 17th century, and is home to the Chamba Gumpa. Between

Hundar and Diskit lie several kilometres of sand dunes, and (two-humped) bactrian camels graze in the neighbouring “forests” of seabuckthorn. Non-locals are not allowed beyond Hundar village—it is the border area and is called Balti. The beautiful village of Baigdandu is also located in this area. People here have startling blue eyes, auburn hair and rosy cheeks unlike the typical Mongoloid features of the Ladakhis.



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