

the Sunday • Music • Games • Money • Motors • Puzzles • Travel



DIVE IN OUTRIGGER

THE Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort is an unspoiled paradise offering complete privacy and remote luxury. Set on an island in the Indian Ocean, all the stunning spacious villas have pools. You can enjoy world-class water sports, private boat excursions, a kids' club, and scuba diving or snorkelling. Tuck into all-day gourmet dining at Blue Salt. Chill with top-class treatments at the Navasana Spa and there's a kids' club, kids' pool and playground.

news CBEBIES Land at Alton Towers Resort has someBING to celebrate. The Big Fun Showtime is a new daily live show beginning on May 26. It includes Bing's Picnic, where Bing and Flop invite "Bingsters" to join them to play games and make new friends. The performances take place at 1.15pm and 3.15pm. You will also get the chance to join Hey Duggee, as he tries to achieve his Big Day Out badge, and the Funsters as they encourage learning through play. Earlier this year Alton Towers Resort unveiled the first Season Pass, allowing you to pay once and come back all season for free enjoying over 50 rides and attractions. See altontowers.com/cbeebies-land



FAMILY FUN IS HOT STUFF IN MURCIA

LIFE'S more than a beach for families in Murcia. With warm, shallow seas, more than 50 sandy beaches, and a wealth of activities to keep the children amused, it's no wonder so many are jetting to the Spanish region for their holidays. The Costa Calida boasts more than 300 days of sunshine every year. And a seven-night break in June costs around £75 per night for a family of four, so it represents fantastic value. But there is more than beaches to Murcia. Cartagena is a city with more than 3,000 years of history, while Lorca is home to 100 coats of arms. The Science and Water Museum has a great planetarium dome, pictured. At Planeta Azul in Cabo de Palos in Murcia, you can study the ocean floors and go diving and kayaking. More energetic members of the family can head to El Valle — just 6km from the city — with picnic areas, kids' playgrounds and a host of sports activities. Or you can chill with a 45-minute tourist train ride through downtown Lorca to the Fortress of the Sun. A seven-night B&B break in the 3* Pachoche Murcia, in Murcia city, for a family of four, costs £532, four sharing a family room. Flights to Murcia-San Javier airport not included. See murciaciudad.es/en

news MAURITIUS will be home to the first Casa Cook hotel outside Europe. The 130-room complex by Thomas Cook will open in Turtle Bay in winter next year. It will feature swim-up rooms, a spa with fitness facilities, a yoga pavilion with views across the ocean and a swimming platform at the end of a natural lava rock pier. There is also a beachside restaurant and bar serving high-quality food, including local specialities. Remo Masala, creative director at Thomas Cook Hotels & Resorts, said: "Each Casa Cook we have opened has set a new standard in that destination." Bookings open later this year at thomascok.com.

LIVERPOOL'S HARD TO BEATLE

IT is 50 years since The Beatles created their record label Apple, and Saga Holidays has curated a short break to the pop legends' home city of Liverpool. The three-night trip features a guided walking tour of sights such as the Casbah Coffee Club, Matthew Street and the Cavern Club, where John, Paul, George and Ringo began carving out their legacy. It also features an

introduction to the city's impressive architecture, including its two cathedrals. Guests will stay at the Grade II-listed former Royal Insurance Building, which opened in 1903. The original high ceilings, wood panelling and stained glass have been preserved with some contemporary twists added. Breakfasts are included, plus dinner on the first night in

the hotel's New York-inspired NYL Restaurant. Stir more memories on the Magical Mystery Tour bus, taking in the stars' childhood homes and haunts, plus sites that inspired songs such as Penny Lane and Strawberry Fields Forever. Three nights' B&B at Aloft Liverpool Hotel is from £179pp on selected dates in July and August, including dinner on first night, walking tour and wifi. See travel.saga.co.uk.



LEGENDS... The Beatles at the Cavern Club

LIFE'S NOT A BEACH FOR KIDS

ONE in four children have never been swimming in the sea in the UK, according to the Keep Britain Tidy charity. Nearly a fifth have never set foot on a beach in this country and one third have never been on holiday to the coast. Four in five parents admit to deciding against taking the kids to the seaside, with two in ten worrying about unclear water. Similar numbers of parents are also worried about litter and dog mess. The survey findings come as Keep Britain Tidy announced

the winners of 65 Blue Flags and 125 Seaside Awards for clean beaches, water quality and facilities. Blue Flag beaches must run at least five educational activities to inform people of the importance of looking after the natural environment. VIRGIN Atlantic has announced a new route between Heathrow and Las Vegas, launching in spring 2019. The flights have already gone on

sale, with prices from £369pp. The carrier is also adding a second daily Boston service from Heathrow, and bringing back popular seasonal flights to Barbados — the only direct connection between the London hub and the Caribbean island. The new Boston service will be operated by an Airbus A330-300 and will make 100,000 additional seats available between the UK and US east coast. See virginatlantic.com.

HARRY AND MEGHAN'S HOLS SPOT



TOP OF THE DROPS... Victoria Falls

AS the current dragged my wife to the edge of the world's largest waterfall, she screamed: "There's no way Harry made Meghan do this!" Morgan and I were on honeymoon at Victoria Falls, Zambia, a bucket-list destination where, last year, Prince Harry took the then-Miss Markle for her 36th birthday. And to be fair, my wife was right, he probably didn't make the former Suits star swim across the croc-infested Zambezi river, to reach the world's scariest infinity pool. Devil's Pool sits at the top of the mile-wide wonder, surrounded by the largest mass of falling water on Earth. The deep pool is the only spot where visitors can swim to the edge and peer over the 33-storey drop, known locally as The Smoke That Thunders. This was the mad finale of a honeymoon fit for royalty. Organised by Africa Exclusive, we'd visited three safari lodges, and the capital Lusaka, where nine days earlier we'd checked into Latitude 15, a boutique oasis blending modern Africa with international design. It would also be our only night in a room with solid walls. And while we weren't on safari yet, there was no mistaking from the stylish decor that this was Africa. Local artisans working in leather, feathers, beads and metals designed the fantastic furniture, cushions and lighting

GO: ZAMBIA

GETTING THERE: African Exclusive offers a range of package deals to Zambia. See safari.co.uk or call 01604 628979. Flights from London to Lusaka with Kenya Airways are from £490pp return. See kenya-airways.com or call 020 8283 1818. Flights from Lusaka to Jeki are from £143pp one-way. See proflight.com. STAYING THERE: Latitude 15 is from £133ppn B&B. See 15.thelatitudehotels.com. Ila Safari Lodge is from £266ppn all inclusive. See greensafaris.com. Anabezi is from £595ppn all inclusive. See anabezi.com. Tongabezi is from £383ppn all inclusive. See tongabezi.com.

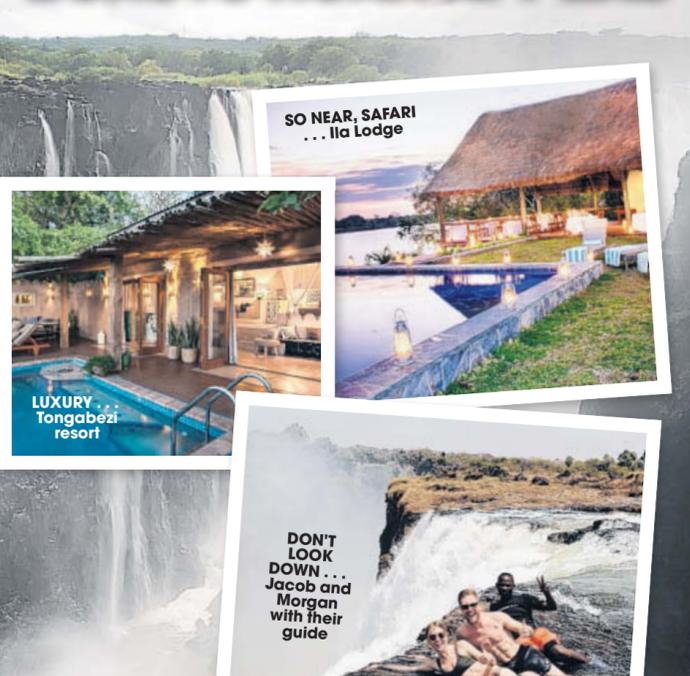


TRUNK DUNK... African elephants

while contemporary sculptures, photography and paintings showcased a modern, vibrant Zambia. From here, it was a four-hour transfer to Ila Safari Lodge on the edge of Kafue, the second biggest National Park in Africa. No number of Attenborough documentaries or childhood trips to the zoo could have prepared me for the world's last great wilderness. I thought you went looking for animals on safari but Zambia is bursting so full of life that we couldn't have avoided nature if we'd tried. Elephants crashed past our table at breakfast, hippos woke us munching grass

by our tent and lions roared in the dark of night. We ate dinner watching distant thunderstorms roll across the jungle, sipped gin and tonic on a sunset boat tour and drank beer in an infinity pool while burping along with hippos in the mighty Kafue River. And that was just in camp. Early mornings and late afternoons were spent on game drives or cruises, where we were charged by a bull elephant, ignored by lion cubs playing in the heat and mooned by a warthog family rooting in the mud. Even without the animals, our safari tent, complete with riverfront veranda and outdoor shower, would be a dream romantic glamping retreat. Opened in 2016, Ila's eco-friendly credentials even extend to a poop-powered electric Land Rover, charged by electricity gathered from recycling the camp's waste water. While their silent solar-powered boat makes romantic dinner cruises extra special, as the only sound is the lapping water on the hull and alien animal calls. From here it was back to Lusaka, followed by a 12-passenger flight to Jeki, a dirt airstrip in the middle of Lower Zambezi National Park. Stepping off the tiny plane, we were greeted by Elvis, our safari guide from Anabezi, for the ultimate airport transfer. More animals were ticked off our to-see list, as we bounced around in the open-top jeep, past herds of zebra, buffalo, a lion and his ageing one-eyed

BOASTS ROAR APPEAL



SO NEAR, SAFARI... Ila Lodge

LUXURY... Tongabezi resort

DON'T LOOK DOWN... Jacob and Morgan with their guide

mum and, as darkness fell, a leopard stalking its prey. Anabezi appeared through the bush as a string of dancing candle lights. We were escorted to our huge safari tent, overlooking the Zambezi River and Mushika River flood plain. Next morning, from our balcony, we watched monkeys, warthog, elephant, hippo and lizards. Not to mention the frog that joined us in the outdoor shower every morning or, if unlucky for the frog more than me, under the toilet seat. It's one of very few camps that allow canoeing safaris, due to the obvious risk of hippos and crocs.

Grumpy beasts dived under and out of our path

Elvis assured me that they'd not had a guest gobbled up yet, but that if we were capsized I should swim for shore, rather than grab the boat, as hippos will attack the lowest object. We rowed feet from a bull elephant bathing in the shallows and past an African buffalo grazing peacefully, only to startle a five-metre long crocodile which leapt into the water. I kept my cool until an agitated hippo leapt from the deep, prompting Elvis to paddle full speed toward another two hidden below the surface. Thinking he'd not seen them, I had a meltdown. But we won the game of chicken and the grumpy beasts dived under and out of our path. Apparently, if it's an option between a hippo in the shallows, or the deep water, it's always best to paddle straight at the hippo. Our final camp was Tongabezi, near

Victoria Falls, just outside Livingstone. Here, we stayed in a riverfront treehouse complete with a roll-top bath and an ornate four-poster bed. Due to changing tastes, the resort has transformed most of its lodges into double-glazed, air-con-cooled, sanitised spaces, but the treehouse is one of the last that leaves you open to nature. We came home to a hornbill smashing open a crab in our posh bathroom sink, were woken by monkeys rushing down our roof to forage breakfast and saw a wild cat hunt and kill a lizard by the pool. In the night, I found a dead bat by the bed, only to hear a rustling later and find it gone in the morning. With no walls and nothing but a mosquito net separating us from the African night, I just hoped it was something small that took it. It wasn't all animal-related madness. We were treated like royalty at every resort by the most attentive staff and guides, who helped put together a never-ending string of romantic experiences. Like a picnic on a secluded island, while a family of elephants cooled off on the opposite shore. And dinner on a candlelit pontoon in the middle of the river. Back in Blighty, we were welcomed home by London's own wildlife, as a family of mice had eaten through our entire pantry. Along with extreme waterfall swimming that's probably another thing our new princess won't be facing on her own honeymoon. JACOB LEWIS



WILD ABOUT WALES... Skomer island

ALL PUFFIN AND NO HUFFING... ISLE BE BACK

THE puffin peered at me from a few feet away and poked its huge, brightly coloured beak forward as if to say, "What the hell are you doing on my patch?" I was taking a stroll around the stunning Skomer island, a short boat hop off west Wales' Pembrokehire coast, and this was the first time I had ever set eyes on the fearless and slightly comical seabird. You have to watch your step as you walk around the two-mile-long island, a national nature reserve, not least because the puffins are likely to waddle over your feet during breeding season in the spring and early summer. The reserve, a huge carpet of wildflowers in springtime, is also home to dolphins, porpoises, seals, the rare Marx shearwater bird, razorbills, gullinets, peregrine falcons, short-eared owls, rabbits and a species of vole only found on the island. A highlight of the trip was watching greedy gannets dive into the sea at up to 60mph to catch fish at nearby Marloes Sands. After all that exercise, my family — wife Jo and daughters Rosie, 17, and Daisy, 14 — and I feasted like gannets on home-made cakes in the excellent Runeskiiln cafe before heading north. You can walk the 186 miles along the breathtaking coastline from Amroth Bay in the south to Cardigan Bay in the north on the

Pembrokehire Coast Path. We opted for the more leisurely — but almost as spectacular — winding coastal route by car to the pretty harbour village of Solva. Car park attendant, local Tudor king Henry VIII, is also well worth a visit. The kids left off steam in the maze of tunnels, stairs, towers and battlements — and the dungeon was a useful deterrent if they stepped too far out of line. Now, history and culture are all very well but sometimes you just want to eat, drink and be merry. Raul was happy to chat as he worked on his latest masterpiece before breaking off to bang out a tune on the piano in the corner of the room.

Just up the road is St Davids, the smallest city in the UK, with its 12th century cathedral and ruins of the 13th century Bishop's Palace. Pembroke Castle, the birthplace of Tudor king Henry VIII, is also well worth a visit. The kids left off steam in the maze of tunnels, stairs, towers and battlements — and the dungeon was a useful deterrent if they stepped too far out of line. Now, history and culture are all very well but sometimes you just want to eat, drink and be merry. We were staying near the village of Marloes at the luxurious East Hook Barn, 100 yards from the coast path and commanding magnificent sea views. Our terriers Sid and Bells loved the walks even more than we did. And that night we dined at the Griffin Inn in nearby Dale, a multi-award-winning pub and restaurant offering fresh seafood and local ales. As we scoffed our meal on the harbourside balcony, watching the bustle of fishermen, windsurfers and canoeists, we thought about doing something energetic too. But the most exercise I could manage was walking to the bar and ordering another round as we watched the sun set in the bay. PAUL COLLETT

BEAK UNIQUE... puffin and, right, terrier Sid at Pembroke Castle



Picture: ANDY DAVIES, INFO

BARN-STORMER... East Hook accommodation



GO: PEMBROKESHIRE STAYING THERE: Seven nights' self-catering at East Hook Barn, near Marloes, is from £128.80pp based on five sharing. See qualitycottages.co.uk or call 01348 837871. OUT & ABOUT: For more information on Skomer, see welshwildlife.org. For Pembroke Castle, see pembrokecastle.co.uk. Other things to see and do can be found on visitpembrokeshire.com.