

TRAVEL



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Game on

Thomas Bristow discovers the magic of Kenya – from bush to beach

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS
Elephant at Maasai Mara



JEEP THRILLS
Thomas on safari

Picture a place where the world's most incredible animals roam freely and safely. Where you can bed down in the heart of a wild, untamed landscape and sun yourself by the waters of the Indian Ocean. Well, there's no need to imagine it. This is Kenya. After the restrictions of Covid, many people are looking to travel bolder, experience continents, take that 'big trip' they had put on hold. Combining 'big five' safaris in the bush with hitting the beach on a twin-centre trip to East Africa is high on any bucket list of travel experiences, and I couldn't wait to get started on this epic adventure. After flying into Nairobi, I picked up a

transfer (an hour by plane, or a four-hour car journey) to the sweeping plains of the 579 square-mile Maasai Mara National Reserve, which joins with the Serengeti across the border in Tanzania. Where animal favourites from the Lion King wander at will and the annual great migration of 1.5 million wildebeest, antelope and zebra takes place, this vast protected grassland dotted with flat-topped acacia trees is often called the eighth wonder of the world. Fiercely protective of its wildlife and landscape, the reserve has been setting standards for sustainability and ecotourism for years. The carbon-neutral Emboo Camp is one of the pioneers. Situated in a forest on the Emboo River,

it uses a closed loop system where biogas is created from food waste, man-made lagoons filter water and electricity is generated from solar panels. Along the river bend there is luxury under-canvas accommodation which opens fully for views over the water. The posh tents come with double beds, cosy throws, handmade furniture crafted from natural materials, and decking. Sinks are on wooden washstands and rainfall showers are perfectly placed for privacy to wash with a view. There are no fences, which means you can spot hippos in the river, elephants wandering by for a drink and zebras grazing in the twilight. Even the game drives are eco-friendly, using electric safari vehicles powered by solar panels. They're silent too, so you

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Winter-sports holidaymakers can save up to £300 per booking on their Crystal Ski trip this season with the firm's two-for-one lift pass deal. The offer is on until August 2 and applies to all European packages to April 2023 in more than 100 resorts. crystalski.co.uk

Cruise news
BY VICKY LISSAMAN
The Port of Dover – the UK's second busiest cruise port – is introducing new measures to get school summer holidays off to the best possible start. To keep ships and passengers moving, it is expanding border control infrastructure, improving traffic systems and issuing fresh traveller

guidance ahead of the summer season, which is expected to return to pre-pandemic volumes. To help keep waiting times down, the port is installing 50% more booths for French border control staff. Internal traffic routes have been repositioned to improve vehicle flows and the port has issued recommendations to passengers to cut queuing times. As the UK is no longer part of the EU, travellers are subject to enhanced checks at the

border, and should expect average wait times of 60-90 minutes during peak periods. Passengers should confirm ticket availability or book prior to travelling, check their ferry or cruise operator's website for updates and only arrive at allotted sailing times. Travellers should bring food and water in case of delays, and have all relevant documents ready. See Kent County Council's Check Before You Travel guide at kent.gov.uk

Virgin Atlantic is boosting its Florida network from November 3 with a new Heathrow service to booming Tampa, home of top US sports teams such as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Gulf Coast beaches and Busch Gardens theme park. Fares start at £436 return. virginatlantic.com

Classic Sicily, Etna & Taormina

SAVE
UP TO 15%
BOOK BY
31 JULY



8 DAYS
NOW FROM
£821
PER PERSON

Lift the veil on Italy's fascinating southern island outpost, its ancient treasures, natural wonders, sun-kissed beaches and elegant resorts.

This two-centre holiday, featuring excellent, four-star hotels, combines a three-night stay close to the historic resort town of Cefalù, during which you'll also take in the Sicilian capital Palermo, with four nights beneath the fabled hill-town Taormina. Visit Roman Piazza Armerina, the towering cone of snow-capped Etna and Archimedes' ancient Syracuse and complete the Sicilian adventure with a memorable day spent cruising amongst the offshore Aeolian Isles.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS & INCLUSIONS

- Visit Monreale's Benedictine monastery
- Explore medieval Piazza Armerina and Casale's Roman villa
- Travel by cable-car to the top of Etna—one of the highest volcanoes in Europe
- Seven nights' carefully chosen dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation at four-star hotels
- Return flights to Sicily
- City tours of Palermo, Syracuse and Taormina
- A full-day tour to the Aeolian Islands
- Coach travel and transfers throughout
- Fully escorted by a friendly, experienced tour manager

Puglia & the South - Undiscovered Italy

SAVE
UP TO 15%
BOOK BY
31 JULY



8 DAYS
NOW FROM
£965
PER PERSON

Enjoy rest and relaxation on the shores of the Adriatic, and take in the often-overlooked delights of Italy's sun-kissed southern 'high heel'.

Full of included highlights, this hugely enjoyable holiday is based on the shores of the Adriatic and lifts the veil on a fascinating region of Italy. Discover the stunning, ancient, whitewashed hill-town of Ostuni, Alberobello and its conical trulli houses, and visit the extraordinary caves at Matera. A visit to Baroque gem Lecce – the Florence of the South – and the opportunity to discover Castellana's famous cave network, wine-producing Locorotondo and elegant Martina Franca, on an optional excursion, complete a wonderful stay.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS & INCLUSIONS

- Discover the UNESCO-listed wonders of Matera's sassi cave dwellings, inhabited from the Paleolithic Period right the way up to the 1950s
- Visit the medieval village of Cisternino
- Seven nights' dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation at the four-star Hotel del Levante, Torre Canne
- A tour of Apulia, Cisternino, Ostuni and Alberobello
- Tours of Lecce and the cave network at Matera
- Return flights to Bari
- Coach travel and transfers throughout
- Fully escorted by a friendly, experienced tour manager

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS: *Book by 31st July 2022. Exclusions apply. Price shown includes discount. Subject to availability and may be withdrawn at anytime. Single supplements apply. Standard airline charges apply. These holidays are organised & operated by Newmarket Holidays Ltd. ABTA V7812. ATOL protected 2325. Calls cost 13p/min from a BT landline. For customer services call 0330 160 7912. Prices correct at time of going to press.

TRAVEL

Deals of the week

BY VICKY LISSAMAN

LONG HAUL

Barbados from £1,259pp: Relax for a week in a junior suite at the four-star South Beach hotel on B&B. Includes return flights from Heathrow on August 30. southbeachbarbados.com/ba.com/south beach

Mexico from

£1,561pp: Seven nights all-inclusive at the five-star Hard Rock Hotel in Cancun in a deluxe room with lagoon view, balcony and whirlpool bath includes return flights from Heathrow on August 31 and transfers. hrhcancun.com/tui.co.uk



SHORT HAUL

Tenerife from £503pp: Seven nights room only at the five-star Iberostar Heritage Grand Mencey in Santa Cruz de Tenerife departing from Cardiff on August 24. onthebeach.co.uk

Lake Garda and Austrian Tyrol from

£724pp: Depart September 9 or 23 for a 10-day coach break with four nights D/BB accommodation in Lake Garda, three nights D/BB in the Austrian Tyrol, plus first and last night B&B overnight stays in France. Includes return coach travel from pick-up points around England and Wales, return ferry crossing, scenic coach tours around stop-off locations, excursion to Salzburg and en-route visit to Innsbruck. justgoholidays.com

CRUISE

Amsterdam from £273pp: Depart from Southampton on September 13 for a four-night sailing on board Ventura with P&O Cruises plus an overnight stay in Amsterdam. Includes all meals (excluding speciality restaurants), children's clubs, theatre shows, on-board gym, afternoon tea and tips. cruise.co.uk

CITY BREAK:

Paris from £479pp: Stay for three nights room only at the four-star Mella Paris La Defence, departing Leeds Bradford on August 4. Includes 22kg baggage allowance. jet2holidays.com



STAYCATION

Cotswolds for £1,194: Save £489 on a seven-night, self-catering stay at Bellaire Boutique in Bourton-on-the-Water, known as the Venice of the Cotswolds. Sleeps four, plus one dog (£20 supplement). Arrive August 5 or 19. caninecottages.co.uk

STAR BUY

Zante from £335pp: Save £300pp on this bargain seven-night, self-catering break at the three-star-plus Zante Star Apartments, Tsilivi, departing from Bristol on October 12. Other UK airports available. olympicholidays.com



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49

hear the sounds of the savannah and can get up close to the animals without disturbing them with noise or exhaust fumes.

Starting early in the morning, when the animals are moving around the most, my fellow campers and I drive out to their favourite hangouts then simply watch, listen and wait.

There are few times in life when you witness something that gives you an entirely new feeling.

Seeing a lion stroll inches from the safari jeep unlocked this for me.

Moments earlier two giraffes had galloped gracefully past. Only then did we realise why – their eyesight to spot the lion is much better than ours.

Two back-to-back wow moments, and they didn't stop there.

During my three-night stay in the Maasai Mara I managed to see the entire 'big five' – lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants and buffalos.

On the daily game drives I also witnessed the glorious sight of cheetahs sunbathing, lion cubs play-fighting and buffalos cleaning themselves in mud baths.

Between the highlights you almost take for granted the dazzle of zebras grazing, warthogs shuffling and hyenas circling. On the way back one evening we bumped into a hippo having dinner.

After all the excitement of the



TALL TALES Spot giraffes on a hot air balloon ride

animal encounters, nothing beats a sundowner in the bush. Cold beers taste so much better when a wild giraffe ambles past. Then when the sun has set, you can bask in the glow of the campfire, gaze at the stars and listen to the tales of the Maasai.

Dinner is served in the lounge area by the river or on the decking of your tent. The camp has its own organic vegetable and herb garden all under a monkey-proof cover.

The menu is mainly focused on veggie dishes, with a limited number of meat options to reduce the impact on the environment.

Rhinos are especially rare in the Maasai Mara so the best way to search for them is in the sky.

I took a hot air balloon ride with Governors' Balloon Safaris, tracking the Mara River. What an extraordinary experience, catching sight of rhinos, hippos and elephants going about their morning routine – and a champagne breakfast is included.

Emboo Camp is a proud member of the Maasai community and guests get

*Prices correct at time of publication and based on two sharing unless stated otherwise.

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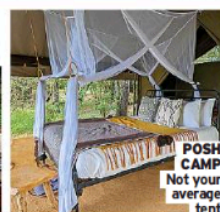
Gimme five

MOTHERS' PRIDE
 Lionesses and cubs at the national park



OPEN WIDE
 Bathing hippos

ECO PIONEER
 Emboo Camp



POSH CAMP
 Not your average tent



PLAIN SIGHT
 A Maasai man at the savannah



BOOK IT

Emboo River, Maasai Mara, starts from around £355 per person per night for the Game Package (includes game drives, meals and drinks during meals, tree planting project, bush walks). emboo.camp

Nairobi Tented Camp starts from around £95 per person per night on B&B. nairobitentedcamp.com

Sands at Nomad, Diani Beach, starts at around £125 per person per night on B&B. thesandsatnomad.com

GET THERE

Kenya Airways fly from Heathrow to Nairobi start at £699 return. kenya-airways.com/uk/

MORE INFO
magicalkenya.com

the opportunity to learn about the culture, history and life of the Maasai tribe.

I joined a camp excursion to visit the neighbouring Maasai village where tourists are welcomed by the entire community – chief included – who perform traditional songs and dances.

They talk about their day-to-day lives before opening their homes, which are built by women.

If you don't have the time to go out as far as the Maasai Mara, the Nairobi National Park is around four miles from the capital, so within 20 minutes of touching down at the airport you can be on your first game drive.

With a backdrop of city skyscrapers, its wide open grass plains are home to lions, rhinos, leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, buffalos, giraffes and diverse birdlife.

They're all quite happy where they are and don't go roaming into the city on a Friday night.

The Nairobi Tented Camp is the only camp within the park and is another true wilderness experience. I stayed in one of the nine safari-style tents, complete with shower and loo. Water is heated over a log fire.

The camp offers game drives and excursions to the Elephant Orphanage and the Giraffe Centre, as well as the Karen Blixen Museum, the farmhouse once owned by the Danish author who wrote the memoir *Out of Africa*.

After three days and nights of action-packed safari, it was time for a change of pace. The east coast of Kenya shares the same warm, clear waters as the Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives – and its beaches are just as fabulous.

Often voted the country's most beautiful, Diani Beach has white sand, palm trees and beaming blue sea, and it's just a short plane ride away from the Maasai.

I stayed at The Sands at Nomad, an award-

winning boutique resort set within 26 acres of coastal forest.

There are 30 luxurious rooms and seven beach cottages, all unique in design with traditional Swahili carved furniture, air con and private bars. Some even have their own Jacuzzis.

There's also a spa, a la carte dining, a Thai restaurant and pool bar, perfect for relaxing with a Kenyan Tusker beer. The hotel makes the most of its beach location by offering PADI diving courses, windsurfing, kayaking and deep sea fishing.

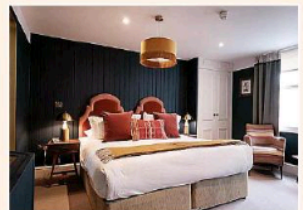
The town itself is bustling with nightlife options, with easy-going bars and restaurants. One night I ended up at a disco at a Diani Beach backpackers hostel and



WARM WATERS
 Kenya boasts beautiful beaches

Hotel of the week

BY ANIL DAWAR



The White Star Tavern Southampton

WHERE AND WHY Set in the heart of Southampton's vibrant nightlife district, the award-winning and recently revamped White Star looks and feels like a comfortable traditional tavern on its ground floor with its pub bar and solid wood tables.

But venture upstairs and this five-star hotel gives more than a passing nod towards its past and historic links to the Titanic.

It was once owned by the White Star Line which ran the transatlantic liner and accommodated many ships' passengers before they set off on their voyages.

White Star offers 17 rooms – or cabins as the hotel calls them.

The two my wife, daughter and me shared had large, comfy beds, impressive en-suite bathrooms with monsoon showers, and high-end touches in the coffee machines, TVs and fittings. They didn't have portholes but there was a cruise ship feel. Despite being above the pub and on a busy street there was no noise.

ON THE MENU The food was head and shoulders above what you'd get in a traditional pub. Head chef Manuel Hernandez Garza's background in Mediterranean food shines through.

For dinner my daughter and I shared the platter of flat bread, dips and grilled halloumi made with locally produced buffalo milk (£17).

The roasted red pepper dip was divine, as was my wife's Wykham Park Farm asparagus and mozzarella (£7.75).

Our mains, Chalcroft Farm beef burger (£15.25), Dover sole with prawns in brown butter sauce (£21) and Simon Rogan's shepherd's pie (£16.50) were so filling we were unable to attempt a dessert.

Breakfast was varied with full English (with veggie options) and other standards including egg and ham, avocado on toast, cereal, pastries and fruit salad.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE The hotel is in Oxford Street which claims to be home to the city's best bars and restaurants. It is five minutes' walk from the docks and marinas.

We took in a Saturday night show at the Mayflower Theatre. The production of *Singing In The Rain* starring Strictly's Kevin Clifton was as good a song-and-dance fest as you would hope to see in the West End.

Earlier the three of us spent two hours in Southampton's SeaCity Museum to see its excellent Titanic Story exhibition.

WAKE-UP CALL Double cabins start at £120 a night B&B. whitestarvsn.com

