

Taking off



▲ SIMPLE SPRAY

Sometimes, the simplest ideas are the best. Lifeventure's bottle shower, presumably not aimed at the luxury travel market, is a universal shower head that fits on to most plastic bottles and ensures a steady flow rate for washing on the move. There's a hanging cord for attaching it to a nearby tree or similar and . . . well, that's about it. A two-litre bottle is enough for a two-and-a-half minute shower, apparently. Just don't complain to us when the water's cold. €12, lifeventure.com

LONGBOARDING IN LUXURY

Not too posh to paddle? The luxury Maldives resort of Gili Lankanfushi has opened a surf school on the North Malé Atoll, one of the best surfing spots in the Indian Ocean. Run by Tropicsurf, it offers expert instruction for all ages and levels, complementing the five-star experience of the resort, where you can retire to a villa and dine on gourmet cuisine in the evenings, waited on by a butler. Villas cost from €1,240 per night, while surf lessons are €112 an hour. gili-lankanfushi.com



WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIONS ►

The Freshwater Detective, aka Professor Ken Whelan, has teamed up with Delphi Resort to create a weekend workshop experience at Aasleagh Lodge in Leenane, Co Mayo: an off-piste adventure exploring the ice roads and hidden river valleys gouged out by glaciers millennia ago. He will point out the presence of predators such as otters and mink, discuss how herons, cormorants and seals interact with 10,000-year old populations of sea trout and salmon, and you will hopefully come face to face with some of the most fascinating creatures around the Connemara waterways. You will also learn to read a river corridor, a river channel or a lakeshore. Three weekend Freshwater Detective courses will run on August 26-29, October 7-9, and November 18-20. The price is €349 per person including two nights B&B at Aasleagh Lodge, two lunches and one dinner. aasleaghlodge.ie



◀ WOODEN IT BE NICE

Blackberry Wood in East Sussex looks as it sounds, like the setting of an Enid Blyton novel. Here, accommodation includes a fairytale treehouse with a sky-high turret and terrace, a double-decker London bus with a soft-play area (which converts into a second bedroom), a helicopter and a curvy cabin. The campsite is in South Downs National Park, about 15km from Brighton, and costs from €96 per night based on two adults sharing, while children aged 3-15 can be added for €6 a night (prices apply between September 12 and October 31). Return flights from Dublin to Gatwick start at €34 per person with Ryanair, based on a September 14 departure. blackberrywood.com



UNDERWATER SCOTLAND

Just reading about this one made us chilly, but then we're soft: more adventurous types will be tearing off to the northwest Highlands and plunging head first into Scotland's first-ever snorkel trail. It features nine beaches and bays on the coast of Wester Ross and Sutherland, with a supporting leaflet showing the best spots and what you can expect to see. Note: dead man's fingers and bladderwrack are marine life rather than conditions you might pick up. scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk



◀ OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Rügen is a small, friendly, laid-back island off Germany's Baltic coast, with Iron Curtain roots but eccentric charm. With 600kms of sandy shoreline and reliable sunshine, it's one for hobby cyclists in particular, with a full-circle route of country lanes and quiet paths sporting views over towering chalk cliffs and quaint fishing villages. Bizarrely, there is also a ghostly holiday camp commissioned by Hitler. A self-guided one week cycle tour starts at €1,130pp based on two sharing, including seven nights' B&B in two three-star hotels and two four-star hotels, five dinners, route maps and cycling notes, luggage transfers between hotels, cycle hire with accessories, and return crossings from Schaprode to traffic-free Hiddensee and back to Stralsund. The holiday is available May 7-October 9. inntravel.co.uk



◀ A FINE STRETCH

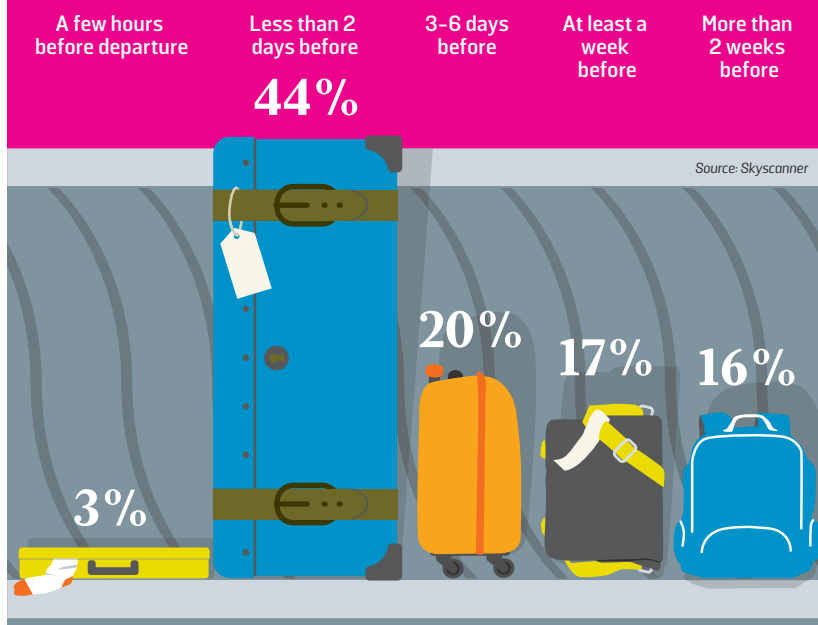
Mix sailing with yoga and local gastronomy on a luxury cruise in Croatia. The eight-day itinerary includes yoga practice, sailing on a luxurious nine-cabin, traditional Croatian-style wooden gulet, cycling, paddle-boarding, Mediterranean cuisine and island-grown wines. You can visit family farms and vineyards for tastings, hike and mountain bike, or just go for a swim in the crystal blue coves off Dalmatia. It costs €2,230 per person including eight days on a luxury gulet, meals, wine, yoga and paddle boards. You can leave August 27 or September 3. exoticvogaretreats.com

ICONIC ITINERARY

Ermoupoli, capital of the Greek island of Syros, is one of those sites your camera will love: rainbow-painted buildings clinging to hillsides, cobbled backstreets, and a smattering of churches. It's one of the stops on Thomson Cruises' seven-day Iconic Islands cruise from Corfu to Kefalonia, Syros, Santorini, Bodrum and Crete. Seven nights full-board, including flights from Dublin, costs from €1,142pps. To book, call 1800 927 404. thomson.co.uk

DO THE MATHS: PACKING HABITS

The proportion of travellers who pack for their holidays...



BURNING ISSUE

Q How much can I milk the free toiletries during a hotel stay?

A Yes, we know they're made by a company established in Mayfair in 1946. And they come in smart, travel-sized bottles. But is that reason enough to stockpile them like they're vessels of liquid gold? Arguably, yes. Unless the hotel is on the stingy side, chances are the half-used ones will be dumped, anyway. And you can be certain that the presence of those swanky lotions has been used to ramp up the nightly rate. If you're the sort who shamelessly hoards free stuff, you're unlikely to be forking out for many hotel stays, so go on, make the most of it. Let's not forget, though, that these are the second most interesting miniature bottles you're going to find in your room. But you have to pay for those.

VINO DE SANTIAGO

How far would you walk for a good glass of wine? The second section of the Camino de Santiago, along the French Way, starts in the city of Pamplona via the photogenic pilgrim sculpture at Alto del Perdón, pictured, the mountains of Navarra and the red earth vineyards of La Rioja, passing medieval bridges, castles, churches and picturesque villages. The stops are something to look forward to: at Bodegas Irache have a quick sip at the free wine fountain, and finish your walk at Logroño, capital of the Rioja wine region, and try the local tapas. The standard five-night trip starts a €497pp half board. caminoways.com



