

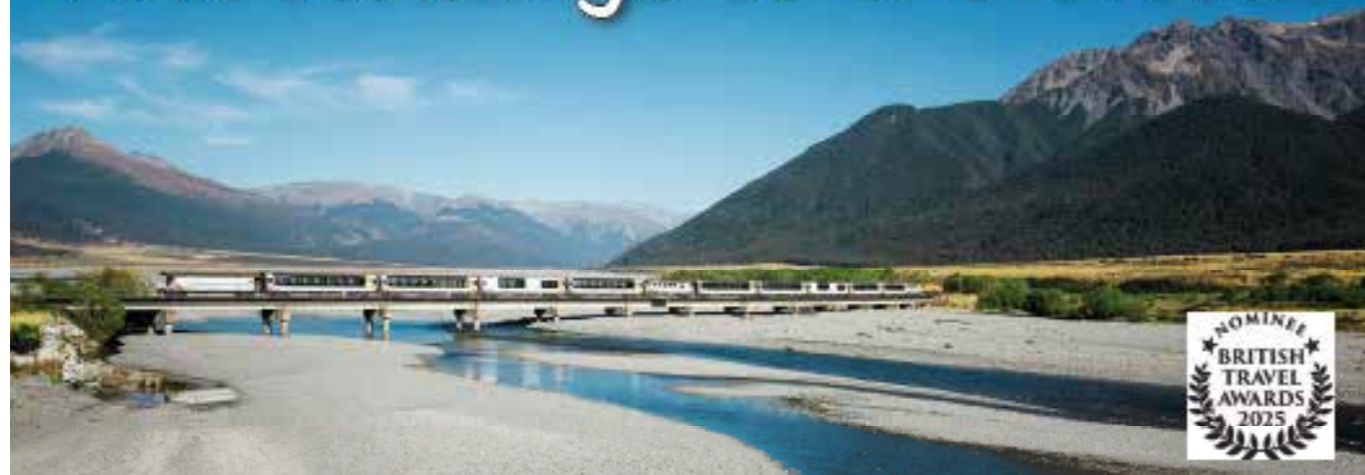


Exploring MORE

sharing a window to the world

Issue 4 May - June

Rail Holidays of the World



Discover the Journey, Embrace the Destination ~ 2026 Brochure Now Available

EUROPE

Baie de Somme Festival ~

Departs 24 April 2026 - 5 days from £1,150pp

Join us on this short break to enjoy this spectacular steam festival in northern France, staying in Abbeville, an important town in the Somme area and well known for the Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran.

Harz Explorer ~

Departs 30 May 2026 - 7 days from £1,665pp

Our escorted tours to the world famous Harzer Schmalspurbahnen (HSB) are particularly popular. With daily steam trains and over 140km of narrow-gauge line to explore the HSB is a delight and one not to be missed.

Scandinavia by Rail ~

Departs 4 June 2026 - 15 days from £3,375pp

This new tour journeys by rail to Copenhagen, via Germany, and on to Oslo. Ride on both the Dovre and Rauma lines - two of the most scenic railway lines in Europe - before continuing to Östersund and Stockholm in Sweden.

Denmark & Northern Germany ~

Departs 6 July 2026 - 12 days from £3,050pp

We journey to Denmark via northern Germany and include journeys on the Mollibahn and Rasender Roland. We will visit the Danish National Railway Museum, cruise on a paddle steamer and take a journey on Denmark's longest narrow gauge steam railway before crossing the Baltic Sea by ferry.

Swiss Mountains & Lakes ~

Departs 2 September 2026 - 14 days from £4,330pp

Spend two weeks touring and ascending the famous peaks of the Swiss Alps - by train! Enjoy the stunning views from the top of some of Switzerland's most impressive mountains courtesy of engineering excellence and gravity defying railways.

Behind the Scenes in Central Europe ~

Departs 14 September 2026 - 15 days from £3,145pp

Explore some of Europe's most beautiful areas by rail, combining the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany with journeys on scenic railways, chartered tram rides and museum and depot visits.

WORLDWIDE

The Very Best of New Zealand ~

Departs 4 March 2026 - 27 days from £9,495pp

We return to New Zealand with this epic 27-day rail tour exploring both North and South Islands. Experience iconic journeys on the Northern Explorer, Coastal Pacific, and TranzAlpine trains, cruise the breathtaking Milford Sound, enjoy special highlights and vibrant city culture.

Mexican Rail Adventure ~

Departs 5 March 2026 - 16 days from £8,120pp

Our exciting new rail tour of Mexico blends thrilling train journeys with rich cultural experiences. Ride the legendary Copper Canyon Railway in First Class, enjoy scenic journeys aboard the new Tren InterOceanico and Tren Maya, and soak up local flavour on the Tequila Express. Plus ancient ruins, canal cruises and city sightseeing.

BRITISH ISLES

Wales: Culture, Steam & Heritage ~

Departs 4 Sept 2026 - 11 days from £2,695pp

This comprehensive tour takes you to the must-ride independent railways of North and Mid-Wales, along with a relaxing canal boat cruise and a good dose of history.

Isle of Man Driving Experience ~

Departs 14 Sept 2026 - 8 days from £1,595pp

The Isle of Man is a hidden gem for steam travel and vintage transport. This tour will indulge your passion for old-fashioned transportation as you go behind the scenes of working railways and trams whilst touring this pretty island in style.



Order brochure and see all 2026 tours at www.ffestiniogtravel.com

* Tel: 01766 512400 * Email: info@ffestiniogtravel.co.uk * Book Online at www.ffestiniogtravel.com *



Ffestiniog Travel is owned by a charitable trust and profits go to support the world famous Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways every booking helps preserve the railways.



Exploring MORE

Troubling times for travelling

There's nothing straightforward at the moment for those planning to travel.

It's a sector in considerable turmoil as the possibility of peace in the Middle East delivers highs and lows with every news bulletin.

At Exploring More we are working on the presumption that every cloud has a silver lining - and things will return to some sort of normality soon.

And in the meantime we feature a splendid selection of travel ideas and destinations in this issue - if not for the immediate future then certainly worth making a note for the future.

Happy travels...

Your team

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Get in touch

Exploring More magazine is produced to compliment its sister website - www.exploringmore.co.uk - sharing news, features and story lines that inform, inspire and help the travelling public with the all important task of planning ahead

Exploring More magazine is free of charge and e-mailed to desktops everywhere. Make sure of a regular copy by getting in touch at the editor's e-mail below.

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David Pike

Editor

sharing a window to the world

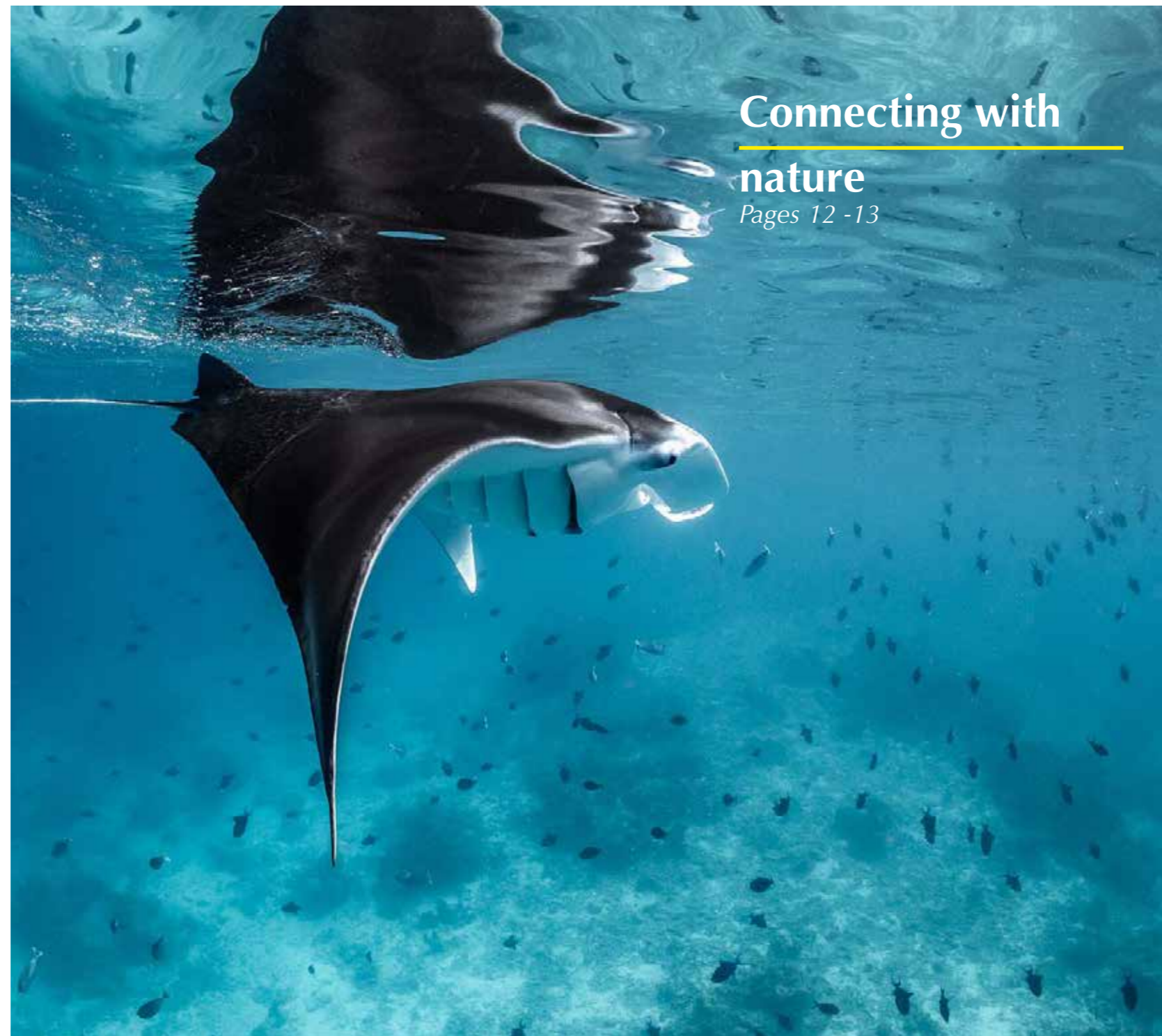
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Exploring
MORE

sharing a window to the world

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We would love to hear about your travel experiences ...

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Viking's new environmental champion

In these fuel conscious times cruise specialists Viking has released new information about the world's first hydrogen-powered vessel capable of operating with zero emissions.

Viking Libra has been "floated out" - the first time the ship has touched water - marking a major development milestone.

Scheduled for delivery in November 2026, the Viking Libra will spend her inaugural season sailing itineraries in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe.

The float out ceremony took place at Fincantieri's Ancona Shipyard as the ship moves into the final construction and interior fitting out stage.

Classified as a small ship, as are all Viking ocean ships, the Viking Libra has a gross tonnage of approximately 54,300 tons, with 499 staterooms that can host 998 guests.

It will have a propulsion system based partially on liquefied hydrogen and fuel cells making her capable of navigating and operating with zero emissions, allowing access to even the most environmentally sensitive areas.

"The float out of the Viking Libra represents another milestone for Viking and our continued partnership with Fincantieri," said Torstein Hagen, Chairman and CEO of Viking.

"From the beginning, our approach to ship design has focused on reducing fuel consumption, and the Viking Libra is our most environmentally friendly vessel yet.

"Investing in hydrogen was a principled choice for Viking, offering a true zero-emission solution, and we look forward to welcoming the world's first hydrogen-powered cruise ship to our fleet," he said.

... and a major expansion on the Nile

Viking's River Nile fleet is growing.

Viking Ptah and the Viking Sekhmet are set to debut in September and November 2026, respectively, joining the company's growing fleet of state-of-the-art ships in Egypt to sail Viking's popular 12-day Pharaohs & Pyramids itinerary.

Each ship hosts 82 guests in 41 staterooms and features several aspects familiar to Viking guests, such as a space-saving square bow, an indoor/outdoor Aquavit Terrace and elegant Scandinavian design. Together, they represent the most modern sister ships sailing the Nile River.

"Egypt is truly a phenomenal destination, distinguished by its remarkable history, enduring culture and the singular power of the Nile.

"We look forward to further expanding our elegant fleet on the Nile and welcoming travellers to experience this extraordinary region in the years come," said Torstein Hagen.



A green light for eco-friendly cruising ...

Above: The hydrogen powered Viking Libra .

New additions to Viking's Nile fleet (right).



Pharaohs & Pyramids

The 12-day, Pharaohs & Pyramids itinerary begins with a three-night stay at a first-class hotel in Cairo, allowing guests to visit sites such as the Great Pyramids of Giza, the necropolis of Sakkara, the Mosque of Muhammad Ali or the Grand Egyptian Museum.

Accompanied by a Viking Egyptologist, guests then fly to Luxor, where they visit the Temples of Luxor and Karnak and begin an eight-day round trip voyage on the Nile River. The sailing features a visit to the tomb of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings and excursions to the Temple of Khnum in Esna, the Dendera Temple complex in Qena, the temples at Abu Simbel and the High Dam in Aswan.

Finally, the journey concludes with a flight back to Cairo for a concluding night in the ancient city.

More

To make a booking or for more information call 0800 458 69 00 or go to www.viking.com

Get set for Celebration of Speed

The annual and much anticipated festival Celebration of Speed returns to the sweeping parkland of Lymstone Manor in Devon on July 8.

Sponsored by Dolcetti, this year's event brings a spectacular day of world-class cars, bike displays and virtual F1 experiences hosted by Ant Anstead, Jenson Button, Aaron Shelby and Jennie Gow, and Rob Smedley.

The event is complemented by excellent food from Michael Caines MBE and live music from headliner and international rock legends; Reef, supported by Noasis and Capital FM's Mistajam, all set against the stunning backdrop of the Exe Estuary.

From rare supercars and competition machines to brand new models and motorbikes, the grounds will become a curated showcase of performance, design and engineering excellence.

Festival Day on July 8 runs from noon until late with a packed programme of activity. Motoring guest hosts include automotive expert and TV presenter Ant Anstead, 2009 Formula One World Champion Jenson Button, Aaron Shelby (grandson of Carroll Shelby), renowned F1 race engineer Rob Smedley, and leading motorsport broadcaster Jennie Gow.

Visitors can step into the Racing Simulator Challenge to test their pace against fellow competitors and climb the leaderboard, while the Pit Lane will serve refreshments from Devon food and drink suppliers.

Across the estate, guests are invited to explore sponsor showcases and specialist displays featuring both modern performance cars and iconic classics.

As the engines fall silent and the sun sets, the atmosphere shifts and the Party in the Paddock roars into life - where the revs are replaced by rhythms and the paddock becomes the ultimate open-air stage.

Leading the charge are Reef, best known for their iconic hit Place Your Hands. They return re-energised and in formidable form, fresh from their UK Top 20 album Shoot Me Your Ace. Joining them are Noasis, the definitive Oasis tribute band and closing the evening in style is internationally renowned DJ, producer and broadcaster Mistajam.



More

Tickets now on sale and full information on a range of event options can be found at [Celebration of Speed's website at www.thecelebrationofspeed.com/](http://www.thecelebrationofspeed.com/)

A welcome new dawn for visiting China

New rules that allow UK citizens to travel to China without a visa have taken effect.

As of February 17, 2026, China expanded its visa-free policy to include UK and Canadian nationals, allowing them to enter for up to 30 days for tourism, business, or family visits

The new system runs until December 31 2026.

Travellers can take advantage of tour operator Distant Journeys new 23-day tour for 2026, that visits China for 10 days before moving on to Japan.

It's the first time the tour operator has offered a trip from Beijing to Tokyo, combining iconic destinations into one unforgettable tour of East Asia.

Both countries are renowned for their unique blends of ancient cultures and timeless traditions that intertwine seamlessly into modern life.

From the majestic palaces and dynasties of China to the tranquil shrines and modern marvels of Japan, the new tour is a celebration of culture, contrasts and unforgettable encounters.

In China, guests can walk along the Great Wall and stand in awe at Xi'an's Terracotta Army, before meeting Chengdu's giant pandas and discovering Shanghai's mix of colonial charm and futuristic skyline.

On arrival in Japan, fondly referred to as the 'land of the rising sun', they will uncover Osaka's vibrant spirit, and reflect at Hiroshima's moving memorials.

There is also the opportunity to wander through Kyoto's golden temples and experience the ritual of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. The tour ends in Tokyo, a city steeped in history, entwined with innovation.

The departure on October 8, 2026 currently costs £6,845 per person. Several departures in 2027 are also currently bookable.

Distant Journeys' tours include

- Return international flights from the UK
- Overseas transfers and transport in modern air-conditioned coaches,
- Quality accommodation in great locations
- Entrance and national park fees, all accompanied by an experienced Tour Manager or local guide.

Find out more at www.distantjourneys.co.uk



New service from Glasgow to Lisbon

Scotland's largest airline, easyJet, has launched its first flights from Glasgow Airport to Lisbon, one of Europe's most vibrant destinations.

Holidaymakers to Lisbon can explore the historic capital, renowned for its sunlit hills, colourful tiled facades, and rich maritime heritage. Foodies can indulge in Lisbon's celebrated culinary scene and join guided tasting tours through its historic neighbourhoods.

Seats are now on sale at easyJet.com and via the app from £39.99.

easyJet holidays also offers city break packages to Lisbon, with a range of three-, four- and five-star hotels available. Three-night trips start from just £234 per person.

Kevin Doyle, easyJet's UK Country Manager, said: "It's great to be launching our latest route, and package holiday options, from Glasgow to Lisbon."

Jonathan Ford, Portfolio Manager at AGS Airports, said: "easyJet's new Lisbon service is a fantastic addition to our route network and a welcome boost for our passengers as we look



ahead to the busy summer season."

The airline is the largest in Scotland and serves four Scottish airports, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness and Aberdeen, offering over 100 routes to 66 destinations in 22 countries across Europe and North Africa, and has flown over 119 million customers since operations began.

To find out more visit easyJet.com

Algarve's new A-list holiday retreat is something to write home about

A new luxury retreat celebrating Portugal's rich literary and wine heritage has arrived in the Algarve.

Wine & Books by the Sea Algarve Resort, the latest opening from Portuguese hotel group PBH, is set within the protected landscapes of Reserva Natural dos Salgados, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

After establishing itself in Porto and Lisbon, the Wine & Books concept, designed to showcase Portuguese culture through a unique hospitality experience, represents an investment of €12 million in the brand adaptation project.

The five-star resort is 5 miles from the resort town of Armação de Pêra and features 250 rooms and suites across six categories, including spacious suites and connecting pool-view rooms designed for families and groups.

Set within landscaped grounds featuring hundreds of palm trees overlooking the beach, the resort offers four outdoor pools, two indoor pools, a gym, spa and kids' club, alongside dedicated event spaces - positioning the property as a new benchmark for luxury hospitality in the Algarve.

"The Wine & Books Hotels signature aims to convey what Portugal is and what it means to be Portuguese, through literature, gastronomy and national wines," says Carlos Saraiva, Chairman of PBH.

Portuguese culinary heritage is at the heart of the new development.

A highlight is Balcão da Tascá da Memória - bringing back classic recipes from the past and reinterpreting them for the 21st century.

The interior architecture and decoration project was led by architect Joana Saraiva, Board Member of PBH, in a concept inspired by nature and designed to harmonize with the surrounding landscape.

For more information visit www.winebookshotels.com/en/algarve/



Momentous ancient monuments with magnetic appeal

by David Pike

They are mystical, mysterious and magical.

Scotland's standing stones, monuments from times past, are proving to be increasingly popular with the visiting public.

As the longest day of the year (June 21) approaches more people are seeking meaningful ways to mark the Summer Solstice.

And while thousands flock to Stonehenge each year, Scotland's ancient standing stones offer a more peaceful alternative, with the added bonus of spectacular scenery and fewer crowds.

VisitScotland reports that searches for "summer solstice" have jumped by 136% in recent months, and interest in "standing stones" in Scotland has risen by 101% over the past quarter.

Tapping into this growing trend, VisitScotland has launched a refreshed guide to the country's most atmospheric stone circles, helping travellers experience the Solstice in places that feel truly off the beaten path.

From weathered stone circles on remote islands to mysterious alignments in wild glens, these make for the ideal locations for those looking to welcome the sun in a more reflective way. Here's a selection of the best:

Kilmartin Glen, Argyll - 3000 BCE

The ancient area of Kilmartin Glen in Argyll is home to more than 350 ancient monuments, including both the Nether Largie Standing Stones and the Temple Wood Stone Circle. The Nether Largie Stones are among the most significant prehistoric monuments in Scotland and thought to align with key astronomical events

Machrie Moor Standing Stones, Isle of Arran

Recently named as an official UNESCO Global Geopark, the Isle of Arran boasts one of the most remarkable ancient landscapes in Britain. Situated on the west coast of the Isle, Machrie Moor is home to six stone circles, each with its own formation, age and story.

Sueno's Stone, Moray Speyside

Towering at nearly seven metres tall, Sueno's Stone is Scotland's tallest and most intricately carved Pictish monument. Situated on the eastern edge of Forres in Moray Speyside, this monumental cross-slab dates from the late 9th or early 10th century.

Clava Cairns, Inverness - 2000 BCE

Only a 20-minute drive from Inverness, Clava Cairns is one of Scotland's most hauntingly beautiful prehistoric sites. This well-preserved Bronze Age cemetery complex features ring cairns, passage graves and standing stones, nestled in a quiet woodland setting.

Achavanich, Caithness - 2000 BCE

In the far North Highlands lies Achavanich, one of the most enigmatic and distinctive prehistoric sites; an unusual horseshoe shaped arrangement with stones positioned with their broadest faces turned inward toward the centre, an orientation rarely seen in other stone circles across Scotland or beyond.



More

To find out more about Scotland's standing stones, please visit:

www.visitscotland.com/things-to-do/attractions/historic/standing-stones

Stones gallery (clockwise from top)
 Ring of Brodgar - Orkney
 Clava Cairns - Inverness
 Kilmartin Glen - Oban
 Calanais - Isle of Lewis

ECT offering a special Verdi performance

A classic offering from tour operator ECT Travel has been announced for the autumn - an immersive six-day, five-night tour to the Parma Verdi Festival in the company of award-winning opera critic, Charlotte Valori.

At the heart of the tour - from Thursday, October 8 to 13 - are tickets to three Verdi operas: *Alzira* at the Teatro Regio, *Aida* at the Teatro Verdi in Busseto (Verdi's birthplace) and *Nabucco* at the Teatro Regio.



Valori will enrich guests' understanding and enjoyment of these masterpieces with engaging introductory talks ahead of each performance.

"A festival dedicated to a composer is a unique opportunity to focus on, and connect with, the work in a very personal way and this festival will bring us all a little closer to Verdi the man, as well as Verdi the artist," says Valori.



Based in the elegant city of Parma, the programme includes a guided city tour alongside visits to key Verdi sites, including Casa Natale di Giuseppe Verdi and the Casa Barezzini Museum, offering rich insight into the composer's world and inspirations.

And as an Italian, Valori is also looking forward to feasting on the white truffles that will be in season!

Find out more at <https://ecttravel.com/>

Come swim with us during Manta month

Following the success of last year's inaugural event, **Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives** is proud to confirm the return of **Manta Month** this September.

Now firmly established as an annual highlight on the international conservation calendar, Manta Month unites guests, families, and the global travel community in celebrating and safeguarding one of the ocean's most graceful species – the manta ray.

Throughout the month-long programme, guests are invited to embark on guided excursions to renowned manta hotspots, led by the resort's expert marine team.

These immersive experiences provide first-hand encounters with manta rays while deepening understanding of their behaviour, migration, and vital role in the marine ecosystem.

Awareness sessions feature the moving story of a manta rescued near Kandooma, underscoring the importance of ongoing conservation.

Families will find opportunities to engage across generations, with children's manta-themed crafts and beach activities, while the broader community is encouraged to join reef and island clean-up efforts. Discarded materials from these clean-ups are creatively transformed into striking manta sculptures, reinforcing the theme of regeneration.

A \$5 donation from each manta pendant sale at the resort boutique will be donated to The Manta Trust, extending Kandooma's support for international manta research and protection projects.

"Kandooma Manta Month has grown from a special event that recognised one day in the calendar into a recognised annual celebration.

"It is more than an opportunity to see manta rays up close – it is about inspiring awareness, responsibility, and action, ensuring these majestic creatures and their ocean habitat thrive for generations to come," said Sharon Garrett, Director of Marketing & Sustainability, Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives.

Ideally located in the South Malé Atoll, just 40–45 minutes by speedboat from Velana International Airport, Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives is surrounded by some of the country's top ten dive sites. The well-being of the ocean is central to both the guest experience and the resort's sustainability journey, ensuring that conservation is woven into leisure and discovery.

Guests can select from a wide variety of accommodation, including Garden and Beach Villas, spacious two-storey Beach Houses, and popular Overwater Villas. Families are well catered for and a full programme of watersports, diving, and island leisure make Kandooma exceptional for relaxation and adventure.

For more information or to book a stay during Manta Month, please visit: www.maldives.holidayinnresorts.com



The perfect balance between active holidays and relaxation

Travel experts Susy and James Hobart believe in looking at the sunnier side of life.

Since founding BeyondBeach in 2000 they have developed an exceptional portfolio of active summer and winter breaks across Greece, Portugal and the French Alps.

BeyondBeach is dedicated to create personal experiences - family-run offerings including sailing holidays, beach clubs and Alpine adventures - in locations away from the mainstream.

Plans include adding another Greek club in 2026 and expanding fitness and special-interest weeks.

Lixouri Bay Beach Club, Kefalonia – BeyondBeach's flagship location for the past 8 years and has exclusive use of a family-run hotel with private beach access. The large, yet shallow, light-wind beach is perfect for beginners. All water sports are included with daily group tuition: sailing, watersports, yoga, fitness, road biking and volleyball.

Stira Bay Beach Club, Evia – Opened in 2024, this club features stronger winds suited to intermediates, with secret coves and snorkelling spots nearby.



Sailing Holidays from Kefalonia - Flotilla Holidays – Intimate groups of up to six boats sailing the Central Ionian route towards Lefkas via Ithaca and Kalamos, with friendly lead crew providing support and local expertise. June to September.

Winter in Portugal - Feel Viana Beach Club, Cabedelo, Portugal – Operating October to April, 45 minutes from Porto airport.

The active pack includes guided biking, surf lessons, SUP tours and yoga or Pilates sessions, with optional spa access and Kids Club.

Alpine Holidays - Alpine Club, Vaujany, French Alps – Summer alpine adventures (mid-July to late August) include white-water rafting, treetop adventures, kids' club, and endless trails for biking, hiking and running. And when the snows start to fall ski operations gear up.

Find out more at <https://www.beyondbeach.com/>

Bringing the past back to life in AlUla

Time travelling teamwork is bringing history to life in Saudi Arabia.

The link up involves The Royal Commission for AlUla and the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, a partnership to deepen research and protection efforts at this historic site and guide its development through a comprehensive heritage-led approach.

A specialised team of archaeologists, conservators, architects and engineers are leading the project to study the town's urban character and emphasise its historical significance.

Their efforts will lay the groundwork for long-term preservation programmes that safeguard its architectural and artistic features.

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage.

Covering a vast area, covering 22,561km², and including a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains, ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

AlUla's natural settings and historic offerings make it a region of growing importance to the Saudi tourism sector and the travelling public.

Dr Abdulrahman Al-Suhaibani, Vice President of Culture at the Royal Commission for AlUla, said: "AlUla Old Town is one of the Kingdom's most meaningful heritage assets.

"Our collaboration with Pompeii strengthens our ability to safeguard this history while enhancing the way we share it with the world. By deepening our understanding of the site and elevating how its stories are presented, we are creating a more immersive and insightful experience for visitors.

Dr Abdulrahman Al-Suhaibani, Vice President of Culture at the Royal Commission for AlUla, said: "AlUla Old Town is one of the Kingdom's most meaningful heritage assets.

"Our collaboration with Pompeii strengthens our ability to safeguard this history while enhancing the way we share it with the world," he said.



ALULA

For more information, please visit:

experiencealula.com

Introducing Burgundy's Route du Cassis

You probably know Burgundy's world-class wines, but there's another local treasure waiting to be discovered - the blackcurrant.

Between Dijon and Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy has unveiled a new foodie tourist itinerary, the Route du Cassis, or Blackcurrant Route.

Stretching over 55km, the route makes Burgundy's iconic blackcurrant a cultural symbol in its own right, uniting heritage, flavour and wellbeing. This appealing new trail dives into the history and know-how behind this little fruit, grown in the region since the 17th century.

The story begins where tradition takes root: at the Cassissium in Nuits-Saint-Georges where workshops, tastings and expert-led sessions offer an engaging introduction to the fruit's history.

In Dijon, the Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie et du Vin adds another layer to the experience, showcasing a territory where craftsmanship is handed down the generations with pride and precision.



As the road winds towards family-run farms such as Ferme Fruirouge or Maison Lejay-Lagoute, visitors encounter growers. Ferme Fruirouge grows organic berries and makes fruit jams and butters, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks (including the famous Crème de Cassis de Bourgogne IGP Bio).

To complete the journey, two stand-out hotels offer refined retreats. Hôtel Bellevigne in Chambolle-Musigny, nestled among prestigious vineyards, and Hôtel Richebourg in Vosne-Romanée.

For British travellers drawn to authenticity, thoughtful experiences and easy-to-reach escapes, the Route du Cassis delivers a compelling alternative to long-haul travel.

It blends culture, landscape and gourmet pleasures with that unmistakable French elegance so admired across the Channel.

More information at <https://www.france.fr/en>

Outstanding road trip adventures - Canada is calling

Taking to the open road in a vast, unspoilt and spectacular country such as Canada must surely rank as one of the top travel adventures.

For those inspired to make the journey of a lifetime, Journeyscape is a recommended companion.

Specialists in tailor-made travel across North America, Journeyscape has unveiled new research identifying the best provinces in Canada for an unforgettable trip.

Analysing recreational vehicle (RV) friendly factors - including camp ground density, fuel prices, average road-trip duration and social media popularity - the study highlights where travellers can enjoy the most scenic, accessible and rewarding journeys.

British Columbia

British Columbia tops the list as Canada's ultimate RV destination. Home to towering mountains, pristine lakes, abundant wildlife and vast pollution-free skies, the province offers some of the most spectacular scenery on Earth. Travellers can tick off bucket-list locations including the Canadian Rockies, Whistler and Pacific Rim National Park.

Featured Journey: Pacific North-West and Canadian Rockies by Motor-home

A 3,000-km adventure combining Washington State's volcanic peaks with Canada's Okanagan Valley vineyards and the majestic Rockies over 17 days. From £3,150 per person.

Alberta

Alberta's dramatic landscapes make it another standout province for travellers. From the turquoise lakes and hiking trails of Banff National Park to the Waterton Lakes, Columbia Icefield and the otherworldly Canadian Badlands, Alberta offers endless variety. The province is also home to major cities including Edmonton and Calgary.

Featured Journey: Alberta's Rockies and Rodeo Adventure by Motor-home

This 12-day, 1,500-km tour begins in cowboy country, travelling through Dinosaur Provincial Park and the Badlands, before heading north to Edmonton and into the heart of the Canadian Rockies. Highlights include Jasper, Maligne Lake and the iconic Icefields Parkway. From £2,020 per person.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia, a maritime gem off the coast of New Brunswick, is renowned for its rich marine wildlife—whales, dolphins, seals and more. Visitors can explore Halifax's historic waterfront, the Maritime Museum, and the province's deep connection to the Titanic story.

Featured Journey: Scenic Splendour of Maritime Canada by Motorhome

This 15-day, 1,800-km exploration of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, features rugged coastlines, charming lighthouses, whale-watching, national parks and iconic drives such as the Cabot Trail. From £2,020 per person.

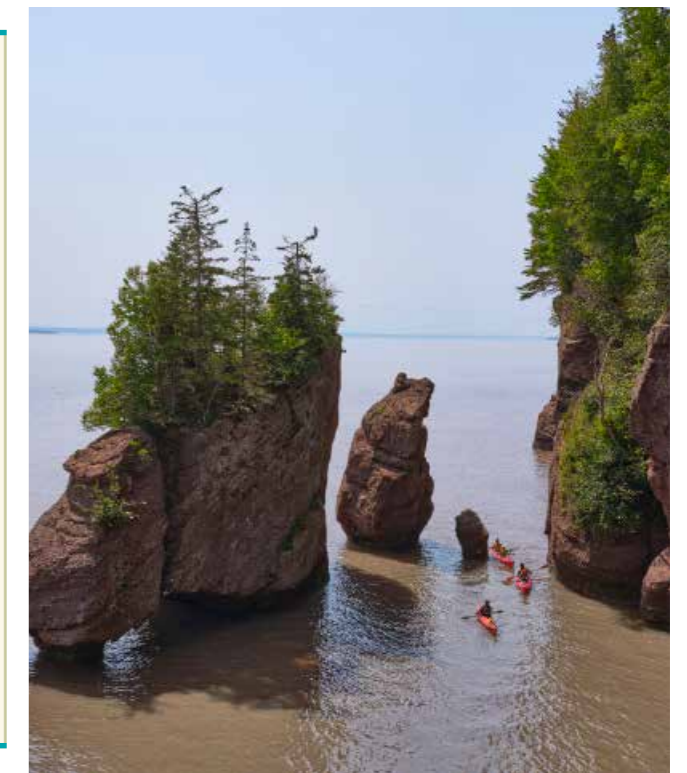
All holidays quoted include good-quality, fully equipped RV vehicles and choice of recommended campsites and RV sites.



More

Renowned for spectacular and innovative travel experiences, Journeyscape focuses on journeys that reveal the heart of a destination – from rich cultural encounters and remarkable wildlife viewing to vast, cinematic landscapes in some of North America's most important wildernesses.

For more information, visit journeyscape.com



A Grand way to discover the joys of Catalonia

Catalonia reputation as a global cycling destination has been boosted with the launch of the Grand Tour Catalunya Gravel.

A comprehensive 2,500 km journey, it invited cyclists to discover 42 stages that showcase the region's natural beauty, cultural richness, and culinary heritage.

Catalunya Gravel offers five sections:

- Barcelona to Tarragona: 481 km
- Tarragona to Lleida: 460 km
- Lleida to La Seu d'Urgell: 491 km
- La Seu d'Urgell to Figueres: 404 km
- Figueres to Barcelona: 652 km

Each section is broken down into stages and presents unparalleled flexibility.

Cyclists can create their own adventure based on fitness, interests, and schedule; exploration Catalonia's identity through cycling.

The route presents a dramatic contrast of landscapes.

Cyclists will tackle Pyrenean climbs approaching 2,000m, traverse black pine forests, alpine meadows, and stone-built villages, and descend to the stunning cliffs of Cap de Creus and the beaches of the Costa Brava and Costa Daurada.

Major rivers such as the Segre and the Ebre offer serene inland passages, including the scenic Ruta dels Llacs in Lleida.

Whether seeking a physical challenge or a leisurely cultural ride, this journey promises a transformative experience through one of Europe's most diverse regions.

And it's as much a feast for the senses as a sporting challenge. Riders can savour local gastronomy and wines en route.

Ancient olive groves, volcanic landscapes in La Garrotxa, and the iconic Montserrat mountain enrich the journey, while historic towns like Besalú, Roman Tarragona, and Dalí's surrealist heritage provide cultural immersion.



More

For more information, visit <https://grandtour.catalunya.com/en/ride-the-grand-tour-of-catalonia/>

Video link: <https://youtu.be/ReFc4yVDikI>

Celebrating a proud recreational record - and you are invited

This summer, Ramble Worldwide, the original walking holiday specialist with a charitable ethos, is offering a programme of free guided walks across England and Scotland to celebrate its 80th birthday.

Launched in 1946 as Ramblers Association Services, the holiday-planning arm of the Ramblers' Association, the organisation was founded at a time when access to the countryside was limited.

Its mission was simple yet powerful: to open landscapes, mountains and coastline routes to people who longed to explore at their own pace, supporting walkers by providing assembled tours and guest house stays.

What started as post-war rambles quickly evolved as Ramble Worldwide became a pioneer of the package holiday, with the first tours exploring eastern Denmark, the Baltics, Alps, Arctic Lapland and Portugal, involving a week of challenging hikes.

The tours expanded to more accessible walking holidays with the introduction of its airline subsidiary Wings in 1955, offering packaged holidays with hiking grades of all levels.

Over the last 80 years over 1.5 million explorers of all abilities have discovered the world with the walking holiday specialist.

Now, Ramble Worldwide offers over 300 tours to 52 countries, including 78 tours in the UK, welcoming around 10,000 walkers each year to join tours graded from easy to challenging.

Free guided walks programme

Ramble Worldwide has created a special programme of free, short, guided walks throughout August in 12 locations across England and Scotland, offering over 400 walkers the chance to discover their local surroundings from a fresh perspective.

The easy graded walks span a variety of regions, including Norfolk, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Yorkshire Dales, Lake District, Warwickshire, and the cities of London, Canterbury, Durham, Bath and Glasgow.

Each walk, of two-to-four-hour durations, will be led by experienced guides, offering participants the chance to immerse themselves in local nature and heritage, and connect with like-minded people in a relaxed and sociable setting.

To book a place on the free, circular guided walks visit: | Ramble Worldwide

For more information on Ramble Worldwide visit www.rambleworldwide.co.uk or call 01707 331133.



Celebrating our spectacular national parks

Brits are heading outdoors in record numbers and new research has pinpointed where we're most inspired to stop and take a photo.

New analysis from memory curation app **Popsa** has identified the most photographed national parks in the UK, using millions of real customer images to reveal the landscapes dominating camera rolls in 2025.

Topping the list is the Lake District, which ranks as the UK's most photographed national park by a significant margin. Known for its dramatic fells, reflective lakes and ever-changing light, the park continues to capture the imagination of visitors, with iconic locations such as Tarn Hows, Buttermere and Catbells proving particularly popular.

In second place is the South Downs, where the striking white cliffs of Seven Sisters and rolling chalk hills offer some of the most recognisable coastal views in the country. The Peak District follows in third, with its contrasting landscapes, from gritstone edges to limestone valleys, continuing to draw photographers year-round.

But beyond the top three, the data reveals a more surprising picture.

Some of the UK's most vast and dramatic landscapes, particularly in Scotland, appear further down the rankings, suggesting they remain relatively under-photographed despite their scale and beauty. Parks such as the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs rank mid-table, hinting at their remote locations and lower visitor density.

At the same time, a quieter trend is emerging. National parks with International Dark Sky status, including Northumberland and Exmoor, are increasingly attracting photographers looking beyond traditional landscape shots, with night sky photography on the rise.

According to Liam Houghton, CEO and Founder of Popsa, the findings offer a unique insight into how people actually experience the UK's landscapes.

"What's interesting about this data is that it doesn't just show where people go, it shows where they feel compelled to capture a moment. The places that dominate aren't just beautiful, they're memorable in a way that makes people want to hold onto them," he said.

He added that accessibility and visual variety play a key role in what gets photographed: "Locations like the Lake District combine dramatic scenery with relatively easy access to viewpoints, which makes them ideal for photography.

"But there's also a growing appetite for something different, whether that's quieter, less crowded landscapes or completely new experiences like night sky photography," he said.



The UK's Most Photographed National Parks

- Lake District National Park - 100
- South Downs National Park - 79
- Peak District National Park - 53
- New Forest National Park - 38
- Eyri (Snowdonia) National Park - 32
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park - 28
- Cairngorms National Park - 27
- Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park - 26
- Yorkshire Dales National Park - 24
- Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park - 20
- North York Moors National Park - 19
- Dartmoor National Park - 17
- The Broads - 10
- Exmoor National Park - 9
- Northumberland National Park - 4

** The data was compiled by analysing anonymised location data from millions of photos uploaded to Popsa by users in 2025, using location metadata to identify images taken within UK national park boundaries, and ranked them based on total photo volume. Each park was then assigned a "photo index score", reflecting its relative popularity compared to others.*

For more insights, tips and inspiration on how to make more of your memories, including creating personalised photo books visit <https://popsa.com/perspectives/>

Lithuania - a green and pleasant destination

Often overlooked for more established European travel destinations, Lithuania is one of the most underrated places to go for a much-needed reset: a country known for exceptionally clean water, fresh air and vast authentic natural landscapes, filled with accommodation from campsites and resorts.

Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, was granted the title of the European Green Capital 2025 by the European Commission, for its environmentally friendly atmosphere.

Vilnius has some of the cleanest air among European capitals, which is largely due to the fact that approximately 61% of the city is covered in greenery, including parks and forests.

While Vilnius itself is a great place to start, Lithuania is full of wellness resorts and various recreational activity centres countrywide.

Druskininkai: A city built on spa traditions

The spa capital of Lithuania and also the oldest health resort in the country. The name itself comes from the Lithuanian word "druska", meaning salt, an allusion to the mineral wellness treatments offered at its local spas.

Indulge in Active Rest at UNO Parks

Once you've had enough relaxation (or perhaps beforehand, to make your relaxation feel more earned), check out Lithuania's UNO Parks.

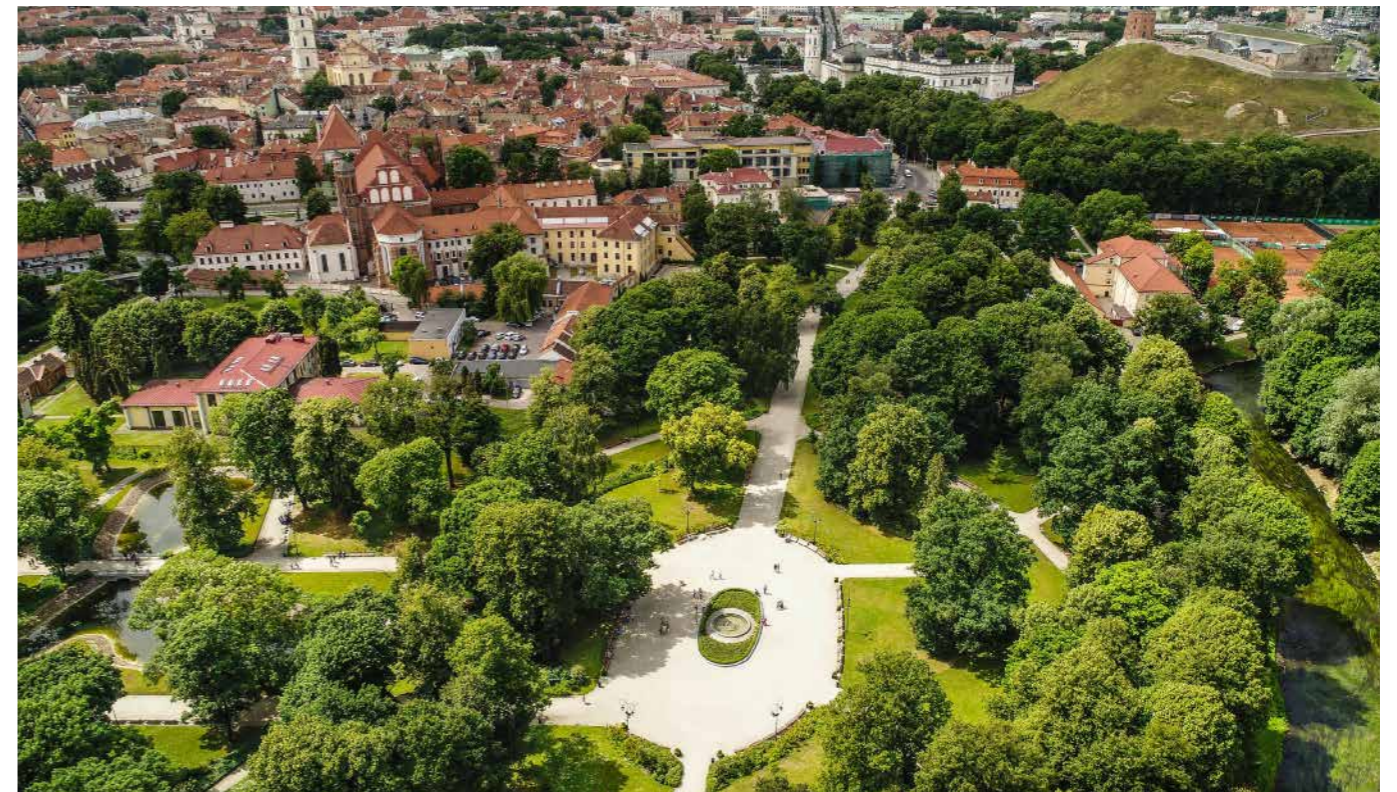
Situated in three different locations (including the aforementioned Druskininkai), essentially natural playground complexes built into actual forests, using Lithuania's impressively tall and sturdy trees as pillars for the obstacle courses.

Visitors spend their time manoeuvring through a series of high-altitude obstacles, rope bridges, and climbing nets suspended high in the forest canopy.

The zip-line "flights", where you glide hundreds of meters across rivers or through the woods, are often cited as the highlight of the experience.

With varying levels of difficulty, every visitor can choose the level that's right for them.

For more information, please visit: www.lithuania.travel/en



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Stepping back in time at Durham

Durham Town Hall has been central to Durham's history since 1350 and has opened its doors to the public following refurbishment work.

Now everyone can discover its rich history and hidden stories. Audio guides, interactive information points and short films help visitors explore this extraordinary building and the remarkable individuals who helped shape the city.

Learn about the powerful Prince Bishops, the evolution of local government and the historic and ongoing roles of the Mayor and the Mayor's Bodyguard.

Since the 14th century the Trade Guilds and Freemen of Durham have met in the Guildhall, a tradition they continue to this day. Other displays showcase colourful local characters such as Joseph Boruwlaski (1739-1837), the three foot tall 'Little Count' who retired to Durham in 1790 after performing at the grandest royal courts of Europe.

Memory of a Journey exhibition

Date: Saturday 23 May 2026 to Sunday 31 May 2026

Time: 10.00am to 3.00pm

Free entry

A spectacular display of over 10,000 decorated peg dolls on display together for the first time. Memory of a Journey is a legacy project of S&DR200, the events programme which last year helped celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the world's first passenger train journey from Shildon to Stockton in 1825.

Taking inspiration from the memory of their favourite train journey, thousands of children and adults from across County Durham and Tees Valley took part in workshops to personalise their own peg doll, giving each a unique character. Standing side by side in mass ranks awaiting our inspection, this exhibition is the first time that the full collection of the peg dolls created through the project will be on public display.

Tied to each doll is a brown luggage label containing the name of its maker and a hand written message relating to the journey that the doll represents.

Make your own peg doll drop-in sessions

Date: Monday 25 May 2026 to Friday 29 May 2026

Time: 10.30am to 2.30pm

Make your own peg doll inspired by our Memory of a Journey exhibition. Free to attend, all materials supplied.



More

Contact Durham Town Hall

Email durhamtownhall@durham.gov.uk

Telephone 03000 267 955

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Here's a sample of what to look forward to...



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Shepherds, Cornwall - Tel: 07774 211039



Bray Cottage, Yorkshire - Tel: 01484 681369



Great Western Lodge, Shropshire Tel: 01694 724814

For more information and getting in touch

Email: feedback@premiercottages.co.uk

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