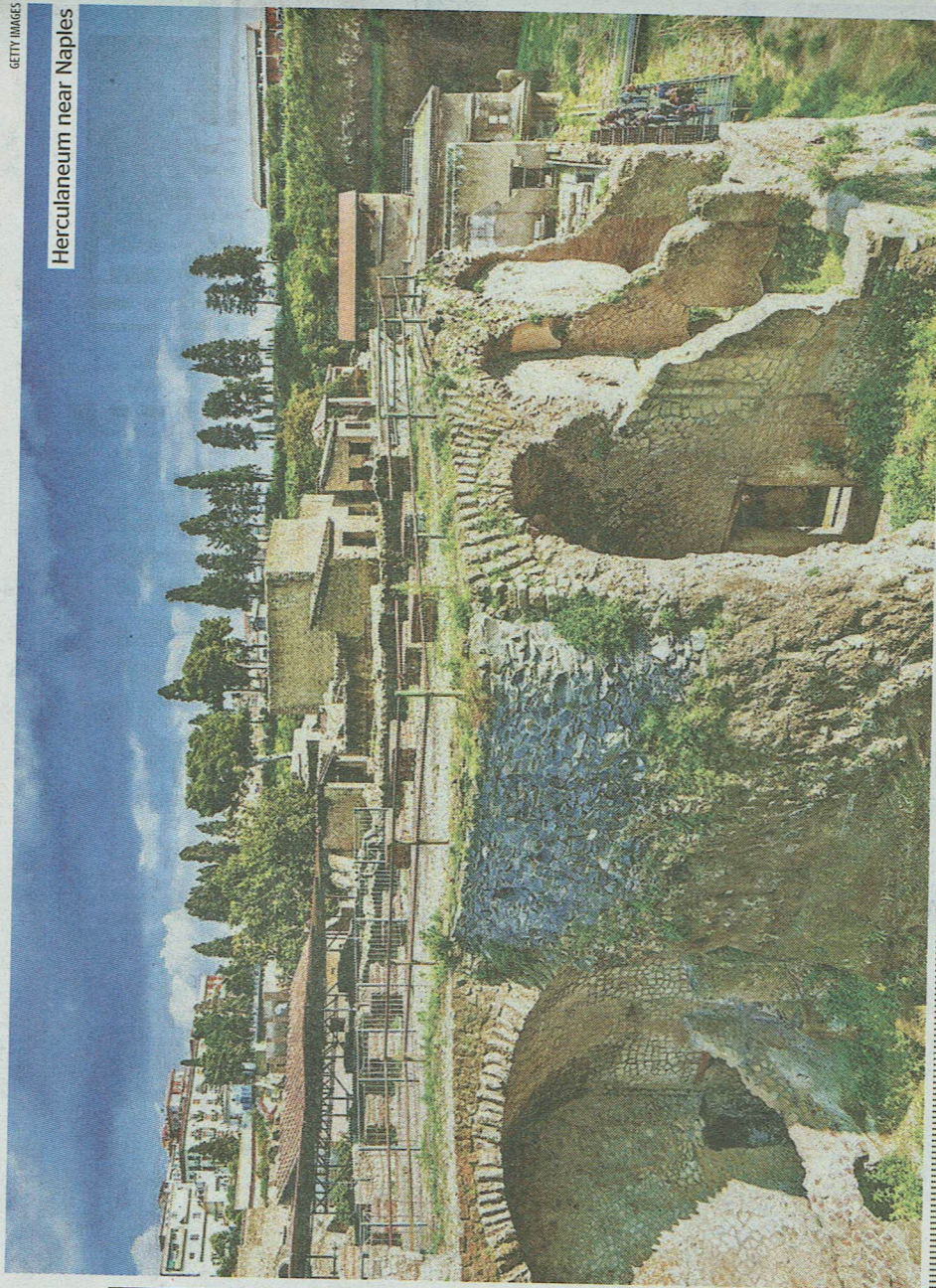


GETTY IMAGES

Herculaneum near Naples



Travel tips



Saga sets sail on Europe's rivers
Saga is to launch river cruises on Europe's waterways in 2021. Already popular for ocean-going voyages, the over-fifties specialist announced this week that it has ordered its first river vessel, *Spirit of the Rhine*, which will feature 95 cabins, all with balconies and floor-to-ceiling windows. Facilities will include a spa and gym, two restaurants and a bar. Bookings go on sale on December 2 (saga.co.uk).

See South Korea in style

Scenic, the luxury cruise line and tour operator, is launching what it calls the first five-star tour of South Korea. The new 11-day guided tour will take in the country's highlights, including Changdeokgung and Deoksugung palaces. There will also be a visit to the demilitarised zone with views of North Korea, and a cooking class. The tour costs from £6,245pp, including flights. There are various departures next year and Scenic is offering free business class upgrades for the first 60 people to book. Each tour has a maximum of 24 people (scenic.co.uk).



Fondue after dark on a gondola

Skiers in the French ski resort of Vaujany will be able to tuck into fondue in a gondola this season — but only after dark. The new Enversin d'Oz gondola, with its Porsche-designed cabins, will be transformed on a handful of nights into a pop-up restaurant with tables and plenty of wine. Expect magical views as the stars illuminate the peaks. Dates are still to be confirmed (oz-vaujany.com).

Six Senses expands in Turkey

Six Senses has opened an outpost in the prosperous Sariyer district of Istanbul. The 45-room hotel is born out of two former 19th-century mansions — Kocatas and the next-door Salt Pasa — with three restaurants and a spa that have views of the Bosphorus strait. The property is the wellness group's second in the country, after the opening of Six Senses Kaplankaya last year. Room-only doubles cost from €350 a night at Kocatas Mansions (sixsenses.com).

Travel doctor



I have wanted to go to Herculaneum and Pompeii for many years. I'm now in my eighties, so I'd better get a

Airways from Gatwick and you can book return transfers from £180 with mydaytrip.com.

Q I am free from family responsibilities this Christmas — a chance to have some quality me-time! I live in northern Spain, but would like to spend three or four days relaxing somewhere else in Europe, preferably near hills or coast. My budget would be about £900. Carol Wilson, via email

A I suggest you pack your snow boots and head for a hotel such as Hotel Miramonte in Astoria, Oregon. The

stars. Three nights' room-only from December 23 in a double with a balcony costs from £597 through i-escape.com, including a bottle of wine in your room. Fly to Salzburg.

Q I have been a regular traveller to Goa over the past few years, usually travelling on Thomas Cook flights. As far as I am aware they were the only direct flights available without having to book a package, and the cost was always reasonable. Since the company's demise I have been unable to find anything remotely comparable for



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Visitors flock back to Nicaragua

Tourism to Nicaragua is "recovering very rapidly" after the political unrest of 2018, which resulted in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) blacklisting the destination. Anasha Campbell, the country's minister for tourism, says visitor numbers are up by almost 30 per cent compared with last year. The FCO lifted its ban in February.

Ben Clatworthy

Travel doctor



Q I have wanted to go to Herculaneum and Pompeii for many years. I'm now in my eighties, so I'd better get a move on. My grandson, aged 20, will come with me. However, my energy levels are not quite what they were, so I would like to stay somewhere that's easy to get to and with easy access to both sites. Is there transport between them? I am only looking for about three nights, but can't seem to find any short breaks that would cover this.

Mary Bowen, via email

A Stay in Sorrento and it's only a 20-minute ride on the Circumvesuviana train (which runs from Sorrento to Naples) to Pompeii. The entrance to the site is just across the road. Herculaneum (Ercolano is the station stop) is 20 minutes farther on, but I certainly wouldn't recommend trying to do both in a day. Herculaneum is small and easily explored on your own, but Pompeii is so large and labyrinthine that it's worth taking a tour to get the best of it (as long as you're happy to be on your feet for several hours without a break). Guides will also know which buildings are open on the day you visit and the best routes to take to get the maximum amount of shade. Walks of Italy (walksofitaly.com) tours are usually entertaining and its groups quite small; its Best of Pompeii tour takes three hours and costs £53pp.

If you don't fancy a tour, you may want to buy a Campania Artecard (campaniartecard.it), which covers local transport and admission without queuing to two or three sites. Three nights' B&B in a double room with sea view at the Hotel Bristol (bristolSORrento.com) would cost £398 at the end of April. Flights to Naples at a

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A I suggest you pack your snow boots and head for a hotel such as Hotel Miramonte in Austria's Gastein valley, overlooking the Alpine spa town of Bad Gastein. Its owner, the Viennese architect Iker Ikrath, has shaken up a traditional chalet hotel, adding modernist details and designing rooms that are relaxed and stylish. If you don't want to ski, you could join cross-country snowshoe tours, sink into a thermal bath or book an ayurvedic massage in the spa before dozing in hanging beds with treetop views. Four-course dinners are served around communal tables and there's a terrace with a fire pit for cocktails under the

Don't put up with this Paltry payout after honeymoon blunders

compensation, but are very annoyed. Amy Thompson, via email

That hotel room sounds hideous, but the issue might have been resolved had you complained at the time. The issues with Elephant Hills and the Borneo transfer, however, were entirely due to mix-ups and admin errors, according to a Travelbag spokesman, and, given that the trips cost £12,000, you were offered a paltry sum. You have now been offered £1,200 and a profuse apology for the problems you had.

Contact us...

If you have a gripe, suggestion or question about holiday travel, write to Travel Doctor, The Times Travel Desk, 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF, or email traveldoctor@thetimes.co.uk. Please include contact details. If you have a dispute with travel company, try to resolve it before contacting us. Do not send us original documents.

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Q I have been a regular traveller to Goa over the past few years, usually travelling on Thomas Cook flights. As far as I am aware they were the only direct flights available without having to book a package, and the cost was always reasonable. Since the company's demise I have been unable to find anything remotely comparable for length of flight or price. Can you help? Haydn Roberts, via email

A You'll be relieved to hear that you can still fly nonstop to Goa with Thomas Cook's rival Tui (tui.co.uk). But it will probably come as no surprise that fares this winter are not cheap: £1,338 was the best-priced return I could find in January. In future, it's worth remembering that charter flights often don't show up on cheap-flight comparison sites such as Skyscanner. Julia Brookes is the Travel Doctor