

26 JANUARY 2024

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Evening Standard

Travel Edition

Sex retreats,
gap weeks
and the new
ski tribes

Inside the
fresh hell of the
nine-month
cruise

Why we're all
obsessed with
TV's *Nothing
to Declare*

Jasper Conran's
My London



A CARIBBEAN LOVE SUMMIT AND THE RISE OF SEX RETREATS

Feel like a dirty weekend isn't going to cut it? Prepare to bring a third 'person' into your marriage with a sex retreat. You could go super-luxe, flying to the exclusive Aerial in the British Virgin Islands to partake in the **Elevate Love Summit**. It promises to work on the bedrocks of intimacy (communication, resolving conflicts, understanding your partner's emotional life; you know, the sexy stuff), as well as reigniting passion — all while eating delicious food, swimming in the preposterously picturesque aquamarine Caribbean waters and basking in the October sun.

If you're expecting something a little more personal, try a private retreat for an intensive four days of sexual healing courtesy of **Intimacy Moons**. Expect pre-retreat consultations, six hours of bespoke workshops with sexuality educator Marissa Nelson and two post-retreat sessions to keep you on track and, most importantly, satisfied. Settings vary: opt for the Conrad hotel in downtown Washington, DC, or ask for somewhere sunnier like Miami, Barbados or the Bahamas to embark on your 'studies'.



It's (already) time to get excited...

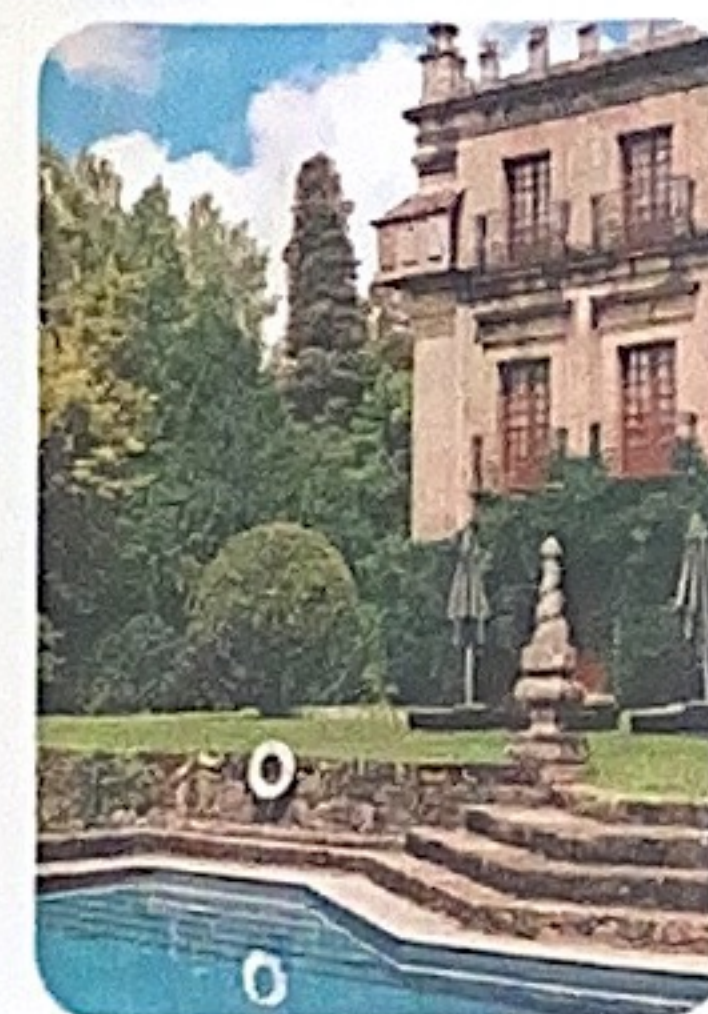
The return of package holidays. The never-ending drama of the nine-month cruise. How to ski like a cool nonna. Here's how to travel in 2024



PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

We're collectively burnt-out, strung-out and fed-up. The antidote perhaps is to tap into a deeper meaning via slow, considered experiences. A 10-day **Vipassana Silent Meditation Retreat** is a brutal (4am starts and 10 hours daily meditation) but soul-altering way to practise patience, solitude and serenity. With locations around the world (dhamma.org), your modern-day pilgrimage will be one of your hardest — yet rewarding — experiences. For a gentler immersion into the spiritual, the fashion world decamps to creative Claire Thomson-Jonville's **Out of State** retreats when the going gets too much. Last year's silent retreat in the Loire Valley was heralded as a post-Paris Fashion Week rite of passage. Stay tuned for the 2024 schedule. Commune with nature on a **George Scott Riding Safari** (three or five days) through the unspoilt Sierra Morena mountains in Spain, *left*. Just you, your horse and miles of grateful contemplation. Closer to home, **The British Pilgrimage Trust** lives by the 'Bring Your Own Beliefs' motto for its walking routes that they hope will also take guests on an inner journey as well as a physical one. Its collection of 'Sanctuary Routes' are particularly contemplative. For a luxurious pilgrimage, be one of the first to visit **Hôtel du Couvent**, a restored 17th-century monastery in the heart of old Nice. The walls still thrum with monks' chants.

ALAMY; WORDS BY DIPAL ACHARYA, EMILY PHILLIPS, JESSICA SKEETE-CROSS, ISOBEL VAN DYKE, JOE BROMLEY, SUZANNAH RAMSDALE, KATIE STRICK, AUCIA MILLER & MADELINE SPENCER



MOURNING PEOPLE

If death is the ultimate journey, then it's no surprise that a whole programme of travel has sprung up around helping us handle our grief. For those who have lost loved ones or need time to process, Portugal's **Paço da Glória** is a beautifully secluded 18th-century country estate in the lush Minho region that has been carefully building a community to support their residents in need of refuge — starting with its own resident death doula. The house itself is steeped in mysterious history, from ghosts walking the grounds to an otherworldly mist hanging above the river that runs nearby. For others, physical pursuits might be the salve needed to mend a broken heart. **Resurface** offers Surf Therapy as a remedy for depression and trauma, providing a profound connection with nature and creating new positive memories, with retreats in Morocco, the UK, US and across Europe. If you feel the need to get further away from the heartache, **Kamalaya** hosts an 'embracing change' programme in the verdant hills of Thailand, promising to rejuvenate mental health with a gentle focus on emotional healing via holistic practices such as acupuncture, cupping, herbalism and gem therapy.

A DECLARATION OF TV BRILLIANCE

What do you mean you don't have a 24-hour rolling screen showing Aussie TV hit 'Nothing to Declare'? The appeal, says our editor Ben Cobb (who is obsessed), is that deep feeling of unease we all experience as we go through the green aisle at customs. That looking-shadily-over-our-shoulder as if we'll be pulled up and shown that our carry-on is packed with contraband tortoises. The show is the perfect blend of humanity at its worst (jittery, sweating with fear) and crime drama (low-key 'Peru Twos' trying to explain away their cocaine-laden mirrors).

International smuggling is always less glamorous and more bound up in gaffer tape than you think.



IN PRAISE OF... THE LADIES SCOTTISH CLIMBING CLUB

Next time you're Lycra'd up and 270 degrees on the bouldering wall, spare a thought for members of the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club, the oldest all-women mountaineering club still in existence, who used to spend their afternoons scaling the crags in ankle-length frocks, smart jackets and lace-up heels — certainly a lot more chic than those funny little toe shoes you'll be invited to hire at most of the capital's climbing walls today (yes, even when they're sported by Harry Styles). The pioneering mountaineering society had just 14 members back at its founding in 1908 and boasts more than 100 today, though you'll need to be ice-axe proficient and able to navigate by compass in poor visibility to qualify. Meets take place on rocky ridges from Corsica to the Cairngorms, with excursions including kayaking and ski-touring.