



BANK ON BANSKO FOR SKI DEALS

BANSKO has reclaimed its crown as the cheapest family ski resort, according to Post Office Money.

Its Family Ski Resort Report, produced with Crystal Ski Holidays, found prices at the resort have dropped since last season, making the Bulgarian destination the best value by far of 25 European locations surveyed.

The report compares the cost of six days' ski and boot hire; lift passes and ski school; plus six days' lunch and drinks for two adults and two children. It aims to give a snapshot of what a week on a Pound-stretching ski holiday should cost.

At £1,530 for the week, Bansko has overtaken last year's winner – Bardonecchia in Italy – to regain the top spot. A week in Bardonecchia came in at £1,622 this time. Prices dropped by 0.3



per cent in Bansko but a 9.8 per cent rise at the Italian resort means a family of four can expect to pay nearly £100 less in the Bulgarian favourite. However, Italy emerged as the best-value country this year when it comes to its wide range of low-priced ski resorts. Bardonecchia is one of four Italian resorts in the top five. Third place was Sestriere (£1,725), fourth was Passo Tonale (£1,736) and fifth went to Claviere (£1,759). La Thuile (£2,075) also featured in the top ten.

Pop Digital Instant Camera by Polaroid, from £164

THE instant camera has gone digital.

Polaroid's new Pop camera not only prints out images on the go, it now comes with all the perks of a digital camera, including 1080p video, a self timer, image stabilization, digital zoom and an automatic flash. A bright touchscreen display lets you frame, shoot and edit photos. While the inbuilt Polaroid app allows customisation of your holiday memories with filters, borders, silly stickers and emojis.

There's also a micro-SD card slot for up to 128GB storage and a wi-fi connection to a smartphone – which means you can share your photos and videos instantly. The camera also has an auto-focus and a built-in flash. A bright touchscreen display lets you frame, shoot and edit photos. While the

essential



SAY HI TO HAWAII

A MEASLY 62 – that is how many large Hawaiian takeaway pizzas you could buy for the same price as this incredible luxury 17-night Hawaiian island cruise.

Travelbag is offering the bucket-list adventure from just £1,189pp, including return flights with United Airlines from London to Los Angeles. You set sail aboard Princess Cruises' Star Princess, stopping at Hilo on Hawaii, Honolulu on Oahu, Nawiliwili on Kauai, Lahaina on Maui and Ensenada in Mexico. Book by November 30 to sail on January 27, 2020, at travelbag.co.uk. Or call 020 3139 7026.

bargain

hot spot

JORDAN is 28C – perfect for a seven-night half-board stay at the 5H Movenpick Tala Bay in Aqaba. The hotel has its own private beach on the Red Sea and costs from £885pp including flights from Gatwick on Nov 19. See travelrepublic.co.uk or call 020 8974 7200.

GLOBE'S TOP BARS UNVEILED

THE world's best hotel bars have been revealed – and six of them are in London. The Shangri-La at The Shard and The Dorchester are among the 44 winners of Forbes Travel Guide as well as The Connaught, The Langham, The Savoy and Hotel 41. They were judged on the creativity and variety of drinks, the service, snacks and interior. Other winners included the

Jumeirah's Burj Al Arab, Al Qasr and Mina A'Salam in Dubai, Le Bristol in Paris and 11 hotel bars across the US. The guide's CEO Filip Boyen said: "We've seen hotel bars evolve enormously in our 60-plus years of operating. Hotel bars are now destinations in their own right and have the ability to transform a hotel experience." See forbesttravelguide.com/collections.

hot spot

IT'S a pleasant 22C down in the ALGARVE – seven nights' self-catering at the 5H Grand Muthu Oura View Beach Club in Albufeira is from £193pp including flights from Stansted on November 30. See loveholidays.com or call 020 3870 6844.



LIVE BARBIE DREAM IN MALIBU

BARBIE'S Malibu Dreamhouse is up for hire – with guests able to stay for £46 a night. The Airbnb rental, with views of the California coast, has been launched to celebrate the iconic doll's 60th anniversary. It can be booked for four guests, who can enjoy an infinity pool, complete with pink inflatables, along with a pink, radio-shaped DJ

set. Inside there is a dressing-up room with Barbie outfits such as the Eighties workout gear, astronaut suit and a variety of pink dresses. A hobby room also lets guests try painting or sewing. There is Barbie's office with pink, marble and gold furniture, as well as an open meditation terrace, sports court and a cinema. The experience also offers a hair

makeover, cooking lesson and even a fencing lesson. A behind-the-scenes tour of the Columbia Memorial Space Center is also included. The home is only available to rent for two nights. Its launch is in collaboration with the Dream Gap Project, to 'give girls the resources and support they need to believe they can be anything'.

BEST PLACE FOR GREAT ITALIAN GRUB? TRY BEACH PARADISE KOH SAMUI

MAJESTIC ...
Wat Plai Laem temple on Samui at sunrise

TASTE OF PARADISE ...
Dishes from Peperero, The Social, Chi and posing on a swing

EXOTIC ... coconut cocktail

MAJESTIC ...
Wat Plai Laem temple on Samui at sunrise

IDYLIC ... relax at Tamarind Springs Forest Spa

Picture: Tamarind Springs Forest Spa

You only get an 'ooh' with Thai food

SIPPING an Aperol spritz and working my way through a board of rich salami, pancetta and plum-sized olives, I felt like I was in a chic Italian city.

But no, I was in Koh Samui, the Thai paradise island better known for its Buddhas and beaches than its high-end cuisine. Until now, that is.

Paolo Migliorini, owner of Peperero, is passionate about sourcing and serving up authentic Italian cuisine. He tells us the cold cuts are direct from his home town Piacenza and are far superior to those from its more famous neighbour, Parma. My husband and I polish off the whole lot. Bruschetta with burrata whets our appetite for the main event – duck ragu with thick,

Martin Selby serves up a global menu. So you can have a runny scotch egg (I couldn't resist), tuna tartare tacos and Sri Lankan fish curry followed by peanut butter creme brulee – if you can fit it all in. When we visit, the place is buzzing. Couples and groups of friends flock there every night – for the food, the cocktails and for fodder for their social media. The Social Samui is made for Instagram, although getting a selfie on a hammock over the sea just as the sun sets, and without spilling my drink, was way beyond me. It's the same story over at uber-cool Chi, a restaurant with its own infinity pool. You can grab a frozen pornstar martini and hop up on a swing by the bar. Then simply pout, pose – and post to Instagram! You can watch movies from a sun lounger on Thursdays and join in the all-day beach club parties on Fridays – just like

the Towie crew did when they upgraded their annual Marbella vacation earlier this year. It is serious grown-up fun, with a serious menu, all curated by French owner Gaetan Bertin. This is where to come for modern Thai cuisine. The coconut shrimp in shot glasses and chicken massaman were divine, and all served with style. The house special fish pot is

to die for. Nearby in the Fisherman's Village, you can sip beers on beanbags on the beach while fearless fire-jugglers provide the entertainment. The next day we opted for the Blue Fire cooking class. Chef Pai showed us how to whip up three classics – Tom yum soup, (very, very) spicy beef salad and pad Thai. It is so much easier when the ingredients are prepped and weighed ready – and you don't have to clean your own pans! Chopping lime leaves and the inch-thick lemon grass stalks (try fitting

was so physical, I'm sure I burned calories. I thought I'd fall asleep but it was truly invigorating and got the blood circulating again. I've ever made – though no match for the real deal served in the hotel's Edgewater restaurant. Sitting under an almond tree overlooking Hanuman Bay, we had the Samui Seafood Flavour menu – Tom Yum Talay soup, sea bass red curry and prawn in tamarind sauce with an excellent Thai rosé. Delish. Aside from massages and sun-lounging, the days are easy to fill in Koh Samui, with excursions to see the famous Big Buddha, island boat trips, kayak-

ing and snorkelling on offer. You can head down the east coast and take a peek at the Grandfather and Grandmother rocks – it's, erm, fairly obvious which one's which. And it is worth spending several lazy hours chilling in the Tamarind Spa. It is set in a forest and you wander along stepping-stone paths to discover steam caves and plunge pools hidden between trees and boulders. You can stand by a waterfall doing your best Timotei impression (if no one's looking) and take a light lunch of spring rolls and tofu cakes between dips. We left Koh Samui well fed, well refreshed and ready to recreate our own Thai feasts back at home. I just need to convince the husband to replace the dining chairs with swings, and we are all set. EMMA CLIFFORD

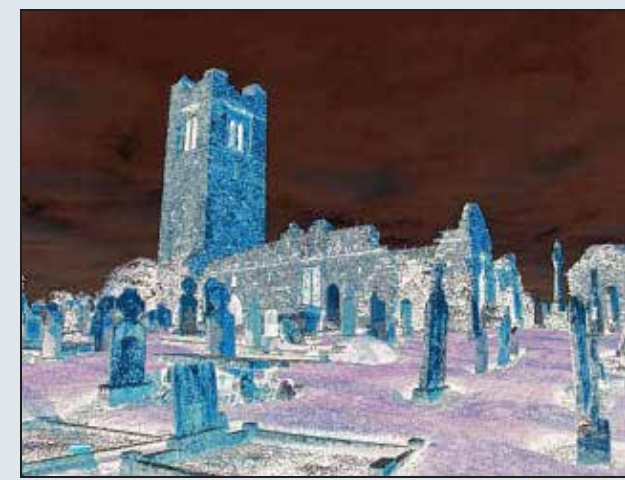


LOOKS COULD CHILL... masked Puca festival character

ORIGINAL IRISH FRIGHT NIGHT

AS claims go, it is a bold one. We may all think Halloween is a Stateside import but the Boyne Valley, on Ireland's east coast, is pitching itself as the REAL birthplace of the fright-fest. This year it plays hosts to the first annual Puca festival, which celebrates the origins of Halloween in Ireland. The festival wants you to forget customs as you know them, such as trick-or-treating and apple bobbing. Instead, you are encouraged to get back to the true meaning of why we celebrated it in the first place – honouring the dead and welcoming in the new season. Puca is a Gaelic word, which translates as 'ghost'. It is also the name of one of several mythological characters that will be brought to life in the three-day event between October 31 and November 2 at three historic locations: Trim, Drogheda and Athboy, all within easy reach of Dublin. It kicks off with the lighting of the Samhain Fires in Athboy, a tradition dating back thousands of years when druids would light fires to signify that the forces of winter and death were conquered. Next, the spirits will go through the streets of Trim and up to the ramparts of Trim Castle, used as the location for York Castle in Mel Gibson's blockbuster movie Braveheart. The castle is brought to life every night with digital projections and live music. A Puca-themed food and craft market also keeps your appetites satisfied. The gorgeous Trim Castle Hotel, where we stayed, is a stone's throw from the action and has amazing views of the castle from its rooftop bar. But if the Halloween festivities do not tickle your fancy, Boyne Valley still has plenty to offer, including Newgrange, a mounded tomb made from 200,000 tons of rock and said to predate both the Great Pyramid of Giza and Stonehenge. If, like me, you fancy yourself as a bit of a gin aficionado, then Listoke Gin School is right up your alley. It is just north of Drogheda and the only gin school in Ireland, offering the chance to create your very own tippie as well as sampling Listoke's brands, (£82pp). Meanwhile, whiskey isn't the only native spirit of Ireland, as you'll find if you dare to visit the £38million distillery in Slane. It is in the grounds of Slane Castle and also offers tours. And don't miss the Hill of Slane and ruins of the friary church. While the Puca festival is sure to tempt many for the thrills and chills, with so much else to appeal alongside that legendary Irish hospitality, you will be staying for the craic. BRADLEY ALEXANDER

GO: BOYNE VALLEY
GETTING THERE: Daily Aer Lingus flights from several UK airports from £32.99 one way. See aerlingus.com.
STAYING THERE: The 4 H Trim Castle Hotel, from £75 per night. For details see trimcastlehotel.com. The 3 H Westcourt Hotel Drogheda has rooms from £52. See westcourt.ie.
OUT AND ABOUT: Festival details at pucafestival.com, listokedistillery.ie/gin-school. MORE INFO: See discoverboynevalley.ie.



SPOOKY... Hill of Slane and ruins of friary church