THINK BIG

Make 2021 the year to check out the best overwater villas in the Maldives

page 4

BLUER PLANET

Cruise the Raj Ampat archipelago in the wake of naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace

page 6



KIRSTY GALLACHER

'I went on a school trip to Val d'Isère and was the only one who hadn't skied' page 7

I Savel on Sunday



Christmas isn't cancelled!

Well, not yet - but whatever happens in December, there are still hotels and self-catering options left which, restrictions permitting, will help you end the year on a happier note, says Fiona Duncan

sure, but with a full lockdown imposed upon all of us until at least Dec 2, Christmas is certainly going to be curtailed this year. And even once the national lockdown has ended, there are sure to be varying restrictions around Britain. As before, it is possible that household mixing will be forbidden for many and gatherings of more than six for all, but if we are stoic, imaginative and

different, Christmas. Since my husband and I are unlikely to be able to spend Christmas with our family, as that would make more than six, we have decided to spend it away - though admittedly not very far away - and it's a huge relief to have a plan in place, even though it all feels

On Sept 1 every year without fail, our dear cheese footballs, nuts and crackers? The

coming, what exact time would we be arrivcould sleep on a camp bed by the Aga and baste it as it slow-roasted through the night? Who would bring the Neapolitan chocolates,

t's not going to be the same, that's for flexible we can still have a memorable, if very departed mum would call my sister and me build-up was relentless and exhausting but "to talk about Christmas". Who would be the result, as a dozen or so of us crammed around the dining table, opening my mothing and leaving, who would sleep in which er's famously teasing table presents (the best bed, should we brine the turkey or cook it upside down this year, or perhaps one of us the other, that finally revealed a much appreciated and very generous cheque) was always memorable and joyous.

CONTINUED ON PAGE $2 \rightarrow$

I don't know about you, but I don't much want to sit in our New Forest house on Christmas Day, looking dolefully at my husband across a stuffed turkey breast for two, dreaming of what might have been, even if my attempts at recreating my mother's no-holds-barred, no-detailspared festivities have been poor substitutes for hers since she departed for her Christmas grotto in the sky.

So we've gone Awol and we've made a plan. We've booked ourselves into a lovely local café with rooms, a fun, informal and affordable place called Spot in the Woods that also has divinely cosy shepherd's huts, one of which will be ours on Christmas night. Meanwhile, six of the family one single son, one married son, his wife and their one-year-old plus my daughter-in-law's mother and sisterwill occupy our house. Three more my sister, her husband and their son have booked Thatched Eaves, a local luxury B&B, which is offering a Winter Glow Christmas hamper as well as a slap-up breakfast.

All very well, but will we ever meet? Can we meet? Yes, we will and we can (restrictions allowing), on Boxing Day, albeit suitably masked and distanced, on the ferry from Lymington to Yarmouth, from where we will walk on glorious Tennyson Down, pausing at the Needles Landmark Attraction en route, sadly Covid-closed this Christmas. Father Christmas won't be there in his grotto and the carousel will be stationary. but at least we can view the Needles from the Lookout Tower, get down to the beach, peer into the Sand and Sweet Shops and use the loos.

Having walked to Freshwater Bay and back to charming Yarmouth through Afton Marsh and along the Yar, we'll share turkey sandwiches and Christmas cake, and table presents of course, on the ferry home I'm hoping it will be a memorable day out and feel like a holiday; it will certainly be different.

As you can tell, Christmas for my family has always been about coming home. But while my mother firmly believed that bunking off at Christmas was as bad as not listening to the Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge at 3pm on Christmas Eve, or watching the Queen at 3pm on Christmas Day, for others it's a chance to escape, to have a break and to recharge the batteries. And even she would surely admit that the circumstances in 2020 mean that this is the perfect year to ring the changes In this guide to Christmas Not Being Cancelled (hopefully), we have collated our selection of hotels that, at the time of going to press, still have availability, and the same for selfcatering properties. We also round up festivals and events that, hopefully, will still go ahead. Where advance bookings are required, always check the booking policy, in case of cancellation or date change

Hotels always pull out all the stops at Christmas, but never more so than this year, when they will be heroically determined to give their guests an unforgettable experience despite the stresses and restrictions caused by LET IT SNOW the pandemic. Wherever you choose, Dreaming of a you'll find the highest standards and white Christmas at plenty of fun.



ADVICE

◆ As a result of the

introduced in England

this week, overnight

travel restrictions

At the Fife Arms in the Highlands of Scotland, for example, an Alpine UK TRAVEL Winter will be under way, with a fondue restaurant. Glühwein and roasted chestnut bars, a Christmas tea room serving stollen, mini-gingerbread houses and Sprungli hot chocolate, a whisky and chocolate bar in the library and a garden transformed into a magical playground for adults and

stavs and holidays away from primary At the Lord Crewe Arms in Northresidences are not umberland there will be roaring fires, allowed until Dec 2. cosy hideaways, hearty feasting and This covers holidays surprises under the twinkling tree, abroad and in the UK. A while at the Grosvenor Hotel in Stocknew five-tier system was introduced in bridge you can expect carol singing under the porte cochère on Christ-Scotland on Nov 2 and mas Eve, a string quartet and a star residents should check pianist on Christmas Day and a jazz their regional restrictions before

duo at its Boxing Day party. Self-catering means doing Christtravel. The Wales firebreak lockdown, mas your way, but somewhere new. We passed the gorgeous East Afton banning all but Farmhouse on the Isle of Wight when essential travel, is due we tested out our planned walk; we're to end tomorrow. For booked in elsewhere but have noted further information, see it for another year. As we are a largely gov.uk/coronavirus; Scottish family, The Old Millhouse in gov.scot/coronavirus Dalkeith would have been fun, with covid-19; gov.wales/ the promise of Hogmanay in nearby coronavirus Edinburgh at the end of the Christmas Week, and at the other end of the price scale, cosy National Trust Rose Castle Cottage in the Lake District

also appeals As for family events, there are still plenty around if you know where to look, from Santa Steam Trains to ice skating at Hampton Court. All is not lost: here's the definitive list. Wrap up warm and please don't let it rain!



A HOTEL FOR THE HOLIDAY

If you've never spent Christmas in a hotel before, this may well be the perfect year to try it. From sheer unbridled decadence to cosy country chic, here are 10 of our favourite options that still have availability.

SPOT IN THE WOODS NEW FOREST

This stylish B&B with five shepherd's huts features a lively café and tempting deli/shop. A large wooden veranda overlooks a secluded garden. Two and three-night packages are available, kicking off with welcome drinks and nibbles on Christmas Eve. ☐ Two nights from £660; three from £980 (spotinthewoods.co.uk)

LORD CREWE ARMS NORTHUMBERLAND

A lord-of-the-manor building, in a pinneat estate village, that oozes atmosphere at every stone-flagged turn. A reputation for honest British cooking, plus the rural location, makes it popular with walkers and foodies. For Christmas, expect Buck's fizz, board games by roaring fires and plenty of feasting. ☐ Two nights from £359 (lordcrewearmsblanchland.co.uk)

THE FIFE ARMS SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

The delight is in the detail at this wildly romantic, sublimely comfortable uniquely fascinating passion project from international art dealers Hauser & Wirth. It's going all out for Christmas this year, with cracker and wreath-making on Christmas Eve using foraged ingredients, and a stocking on the door of each room the next morning. □From £543pn (thefifearms.com)

THE GROSVENOR AT **STOCKBRIDGE** HAMPSHIRE

most comfortable and elegant place to (claridges.co.uk) stay; fun and thoughtful, traditional yet colourful. Yuletide celebrations will THE NED include a Christmas Eve afternoon tea

LONDON to enjoy while being serenaded (safely) by carol singers. ☐Three nights from £685pp (thegrosvenorstockbridge.com)

THE LYGON ARMS COTSWOLDS

Britain's most historic inns, on the door- with sauna and steam room. step to beautiful walks and with a ter- ☐ One night from £540; two nights

> ing treats for them. □From £345 per night (lygonarmshotel.co.uk)

BERKSHIRE

to be had.

Nowhere does Christmas in London quite like Claridge's. The art-trip, and tickets for the Hampton Court deco grand dame is offering a three- Palace Ice Rink. night package that as well as breakfast □ Two nights £3,000 and Christmas lunch (excluding alco- (mitrehamptoncourt.com) hol), includes a bottle of champagne on arrival, in-suite Christmas trees and a Prices are based on two sharing, host of magical touches: children's sto- unless stated otherwise rytelling, mince pies and carrots for Father Christmas and his reindeer, a Rachel Cranshaw

visit from the man himself, stockings for all, and a horse-drawn carriage ride A HOME FOR

This historic fly-fishing hotel is now a ☐ Three nights from £3,315

rific spa. Christmas Eve here **from £980 (thened.com)**

will also see socially dis four-legged guests will be welcomed with a tree bear-

verdant acres on the banks of Tower. the Thames in Berkshire, is □Two nights from £830 truly something special. For a (handpickedhotels.co.uk/ blowout end to what has stanbrookabbev) been an indisputably dreadful year, enter Cliveden's THE MITRE three-night, all-inclusive House Party, with festive

☐ Three nights allinclusive from £3,900 (clivedenhouse.co.uk)

CLARIDGE'S LONDON

For a capital Christmas with a twist, for **ROSE CASTLE COTTAGE** mer Midland Bank turned party palace
The Ned is hosting a one or two-night

LAKE DISTRICT sleepover package, the latter with £150 Christmas is all about giving, so why not credit to spend as you please, and both give back to the National Trust this seaoffering either Ned's Festive Feast or son with a stay in this remote cottage? Cecconi's Christmas Day lunch. Swim it Set above the picturesque Tarn Hows, The renowned Lygon Arms is one of off in the pool, then recover in the spa the only interaction you're likely to

tanced carol singers, and STANBROOK ABBEY WORCESTERSHIRE

Christmas Eve carols will be extra spe- in the outdoor heated hydro pool - this cial here, in the original church at the old stone house on the Esk in Dalkeith is centre of the hotel. You'll wonder why on the money (in all senses) and includes you haven't concluded every Christmas a bar room for your evening dram. Day breakfast with a falconry display. □ Sleeps up to 10, £6,107 for week This National Trust property, Later, work off the five-course tasting dating back to the late 17th lunch with wine pairings with a 140century and set among 376 step climb up the Grade II-listed Bell

afternoon tea, carol singers, The recently opened Mitre, by the peoand plenty of five-star fun ple behind Beaverbrook in Hampshire. is housed in a building dating back to 1665 to accommodate the courtiers of Charles II. "Stay like a King" is the apt name of its Christmas package, including, in addition to all meals (even a Bollinger afternoon tea), a service at The Chapel Royal in Hampton Court Palace, gourmet hamper for Christmas Day night, Boxing Day yoga or Thames boat

around Mayfair with hot chocolate and marshmallows. THE HOLIDAY

To end 2020 on a happy note, book your oubble into a self-catering hideaway.

have is with the hardy Herdwick sheep. □ Sleeps four, £674 for four nights from Dec 24 (national trust.org.uk)

OLD MILLHOUSE MIDLOTHIAN

For a posh Christmas - where you can start the day with a glass of champagne from Dec 20 (oldmillhouse.co.uk)

EAST AFTON FARMHOUSE ISLE OF WIGHT

Shropshire, below: This 18th-century farmhouse in an Area carol singers at of Outstanding Natural Beauty has the The Ned, above



HEAD FOR

THE HILLS

Woodlanders in

festive feast in, while Christmas films can be enjoyed in the cinema room. Sleeps up to 12, £3,269 for Dec 21-28 (eastaftonfarmhouse.com) **GRAIG DDU**

kind of kitchen you'll want to prepare a

MONMOUTHSHIRE Known as "the cottage in the woods", this charming hideaway in Llanthony Valley has everything you need for a restorative Christmas break. It's suitable for a couple or close friends who want to do little more than read, walk and forest bathe - you can see the pines as you take a dip in the bath. □ Sleeps two, £850 for a week's stay

WINDLEY

over Christmas (sawdays.co.uk)

NORTHUMBERLAND The wild, elemental beauty of Northumberland is so suited to our Christmas fantasies that places usually book up months in advance, particularly on the coast at Bamburgh, where its namesake castle looms. Still available, Windley is a very cool 1950s-styled cottage opposite the village's Grove. □ Sleeps four, £1,555 for Christmas

week (crabtreeandcrabtree.com)

ROCKHAVEN MANOR CORNWALL

The grand mahogany staircase that greets you on arrival at this grand Georgian residence is like something from an American Christmas movie, and that's not where the Christmas idealism ends. There are open fires in both the lounge and dining room - leave one free for Father Christmas. □ Sleeps up to 12, £3,620 for Dec 21-28 (latitude50.co.uk)

DANDRIDGES MILL OXFORDSHIRE

Fully accessible, this one-floor apartment in the village of East Hanney is great for multigenerational bubbles. The open-plan living area means the cook need not miss out on the fun as they prepare lunch, and there are lots of nice walks nearby in the countryside ☐ Sleeps up to eight, from £3,800 a week over Christmas (luxurycotswoldrentals.co.uk)

WOODLANDERS **SHROPSHIRE**

With a wood burner inside this luxury wooden cabin in private woodland plus a wood-fired hot tub in the garden, his cosy home away from home is well named. A gorgeously romantic hide away for two, there's even a skylight for stargazing from bed. A 15-minute walk will bring you to a country pub for Christmas Eve drinks Sleeps two, £1,462 for Dec 21-28 boutique-retreats.co.uk

LAVENDER COTTAGE SUSSEX

This Tudor cottage in the chocolate-box village of Alfriston is an easy escape for those looking for a more traditional Christmas. It has an inglenook fireplace, exposed beams and a slightly ramshackle but warm feeling. It's a quick toddle to the pub or the South Downs. □ Sleeps four, £830 for Dec 24 week (amberleyhousecottages.co.uk)

ALBA BEACH HOUSE CORNWALL

There are still family

Britain this year, from

Christmas markets to

The following offer a

across Britain allowing),

but being prepared and

is essential.

com), Sheffield

co.uk) and Swansea

Bath (bathchristmas

you can order online.

Throughout December.

SANTA'S GROTTO

MILTON KEYNES

spaced grotto, an

& FRIENDS.

WITH PETER RABBIT

The great man will halt his

sleigh at mega-mall Centre

MK in 2020. There's plenty

of space here for a socially-

including Potter characters

immersive experience

such as Squirrel Nutkin

and Mr Toad, Kids will

decorate biscuits with

advance booking advance

CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Most Christmas markets

are cancelled this year, but

to open, including Cardiff

(cardiffchristmasmarket.

(swanseacitycentre.com).

hosting virtual markets so

there are a few still hoping

events being held around

fairy light-festooned trails.

Raise a Christmas Day glass from the balcony of this pink cob cottage that overlooks Porthmeor Beach. Put on your wetsuit for a swim, and play board games around the living room wood burner or admire the view from the window seat.

□ Sleeps eight, £4,950 a week over Christmas (uniquehomestays.com) Sally Coffey

THE BEST EVENTS FOR FAMILIES THIS CHRISTMAS

frisson of hope (restrictions | ROYAL ALBERT HALL,

(sheffieldchristmasmarkets. | Christmas carols, the

market.co.uk) and the Peak | show, My Christmas

com/christmas-market) are | Events Dec 9-Jan 2; tickets

LONDON

Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, and get

Dec 2-Dec 24; adult £4.99, child

from £12.50: centremk.com

CHRISTMAS AT THE

London's gilded, red-

velvet Royal Albert Hall

for 149 years, and it's

thrilling that it plans to

open this festive season.

capacity, RAH will present

the Royal Choral Society

glorious Nutcracker, Guy

Christmas and the family

from £15; royalalberthall.com

Seating half its usual

and Handel's Messiah.

There will also be

Barker's Big Band

has celebrated Christmas

a gift in the grotto.

CHRISTMAS AT THE

With light sculptures,

motion-activated lasers

greenery like fireworks,

and a glittering walkway,

Edinburgh's light show in

its botanical gardens is in

its fourth spectacular year.

There's also the essential

cockle-warming mulled

Nov 26-Jan 3: adult £19. child

wine and hot chocolate.

£13; rbge.org.uk

Alnwick Garden's light trail and skating at Hampton Court

that burst around the

BOTANICS, EDINBURGH

in Cornwall is

SANTA STEAM TRAIN,

Risk-assessed and socially

distanced, Santa Claus is

coming to town by train

Central Railway, where

each bubble will occupy their own compartment

Various dates after Dec 2;

four-person carriage £69;

HAMPTON COURT ICE

Many of the UK's seasonal

Hampton skates on, with

location. With river views

Hampton Court, this year

the ice rink is larger than

ever before, in order to

make space for socially-

Dec 5-Jan 3; adult £16, child

£11.50; hamptoncourt.com

NORTHUMBERLAND

Alnwick Garden, where

ensure more can attend.

There is even a Father

Dec 4-31; Adult £11, child free;

Christmas grotto in a

wickgarden.com

Abigail Blasi

awaits visitors to the

extended their trail to

this year they have

A magnificent light show

ALNWICK LIGHT TRAIL,

distanced pirouettes.

rinks are closed, but

its rink in a peerless

and a backdrop of

gcrailway.co.uk

RINK, LONDON

this year on the Great

LEICESTERSHIRE

CHRISTMAS beach lovers, left

Rockhaven Manor handily placed for

TRAVEL SOLUTIONS BY TELEGRAPH MEDIA GROUP

KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

also told me about not being able

to access the public library as a child; about Rosa Parks, who had a

name like hers; about how her

brother was in prison, without

saying why. Then she recited

tones, like a hvmn.

portions of Martin Luther King's "I

have a dream" speech in resonant

As we neared the border with

'ennessee, she told me about

Memphis, where she now lived;

about "how life wasn't easy for a

big black woman in America":

about how it was better to be a

talented white man like Elvis Presley, whose home Graceland,

she pointed out, was not far from

Rosie alighted in Memphis. It

was in the days before email and

mobile phones so there was no

hugged each other tightly and I forgot to say thank you for

everything. A few minutes later,

she returned, out of breath. "You

still here," she said, pleased. She

pressed into my palm a necklace,

wearing: a gold strand with a locket

and nothing inside. "It's from my

mother but I don't have children. I

one who listens to me."

want you to have it. You're the only

I tried to resist but she spun me

around, circling it around my neck

she said, laughing. "I've been doing

it up all my life behind me, but can't

ntinued my journey wearing

to time, a companion of sorts. The

bus came to a standstill in Nashville

Rosie's necklace, fingering it time

where I was stuck for a few more

days. It turned out the snowstorm was a record-breaker; in North

Carolina, where I was bound, there

wait out the storm in Denver and

catch the first flight, rather than

take to the open road, but then I

would never have met Rosie and

experienced all her kindness. And

this that we go travelling, and why

When the weather cleared, I was

had been 14ft snowdrifts

we will travel again

hardly knowing her mother, who was | probably have been just as quick to

just been sworn in for his first term as | it is for chance encounters such as

inally on my way. It would

fiddling with the clasp. "Funny,"

do it up in front of my eyes." I

which I had barely noticed her

talk about staying in touch. We

where we were. "He's dead though, I quipped, and she smiled.

shootings on the street in

MICHELLE JANA CHAN

The bus ride

that brought

me close to a

very different

t was my first year at college in the US and I'd

in Colorado. I'd been

moving between ski

night skiing at Keystone with its

West-style saloons and vintage

floodlit snowy slopes; and the Old

an exhilarating week, but when I

arrived at the airport in Denver, all

the talk was of a snowstorm on the

'Where's the furthest you can fly me

east?" The check-in agent looked at

Dallas sounded more south than

ound my way to the Grevhound bus

station in downtown Dallas, hoping to

"You don't know about the storm?"

east but I took up her offer, flying into

east coast. My flight to Raleigh-

I pleaded with airline staff:

Texas, while hatching a plan to

continue my journey overland. I

buy a one-way ticket out of there.

that far east. Can get you to

again to New York. And my

exarkana. Maybe Memphis."

the handler asked. "No buses going

I'd long harboured the dream of

travelling by Greyhound across the

dad's adventures in the 1960s from

Boston to the west coast and back

grandfather's tale about how he and

my grandmother had once taken too

long at a comfort break, emerged to

find the bus gone, only to be bundled

flashing, to catch up with the bus and

romance of these stories, I boarded,

shuffling down to find my seat beside

into a state trooper, blue lights

their luggage. Charged by the

US. I remembered hearing about my

Durham was cancelled.

her screen: "Dallas.'

clothes stores in Winter Park. It was

towns and still recall the wide open pistes of

Breckenridge; the chilly

spent spring break skiing

America



Open roads - and open hearts

Rosie alighted in

Memphis... we hugged

each other tightly and I

forgot to say thank you

her lunch, fast food bags strewn

about. She shifted her weight as I

slipped in, introducing herself as

That was where our journey

together began. Rosie adopted me

with untold kindness: buving me

food, giving me tissues for the public

reprimanding people in the aisle for

bumping me; covering me with her

But what I remember most was

unreservedly. She told me about

earning a wage looking after four

white children; about her strict

president, a white man from the

how she shared her life story with me,

being raised in rural Arkansas; about

grandmother. I heard about protests

movement; about Bill Clinton, who'd

state we were travelling through. She

she'd joined during the civil rights

restroom; making a pillow on her

shoulder for me to sleep;

sweater when I napped.

her fried chicken.

Rosie, and giving me the rest of her

Chick-fil-A. Gratefully I ate the rest of

a large, pink-lipsticked woman eating



Madeira, the Pearl of the Atlantic

Departures from March to November 2021

Blessed with a mild climate all year round, Madeira is known as 'the island of eternal spring'. The remote isle is rich in subtropical flora, classic Portuguese architecture and rugged cliffs pounded by waves. As you sit back on scenic drives, you'll soon see why Winston Churchill loved Madeira so much.

What's included

◆ Seven nights' four-star accommodation with breakfast and four dinners

◆ Return flight from the UK plus transfers

◆ A programme of tours and excursions

- ◆ A friendly and informed tour manager
- ◆ Covid-19 cancellation protection
- Happy by day two or Riviera Travel will bring you home with a refund
- ◆ 24-hour UK-based assistance throughout your holiday



telegraph.co.uk/tt-madeira 💠 Call 0330 173 2504

Terms and conditions: *Free date change up to 45 days before departure is only valid for entirely new bookings made between September 1 and December 18 2020 and can only be used once. Transfers from a 2020 booking and private tour bookings are excluded. Any existing Riviera Travel holiday may be amended to another date free of charge up until December 31, 2020. Calls are charged at local rates. Lines are open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm. Prices are based on two sharing and correct at time of printing. Supplement may apply for single rooms. Travel insurance not included. Holiday provided by Riviera Travel (Co no 1869298), ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430 protected, a company wholly independent of Telegraph Media Group Limited. Terms and conditions apply. For full deposit details and all terms and conditions, visit telegraph.co.uk/tt-traveltcs. See the Data Protection Notice in today's Personal Column.