

FLAVOUR OF THE NATION

Exploring the Brazilian food scene, from Sao Paulo to Salvador

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GRIFF RHYS JONES

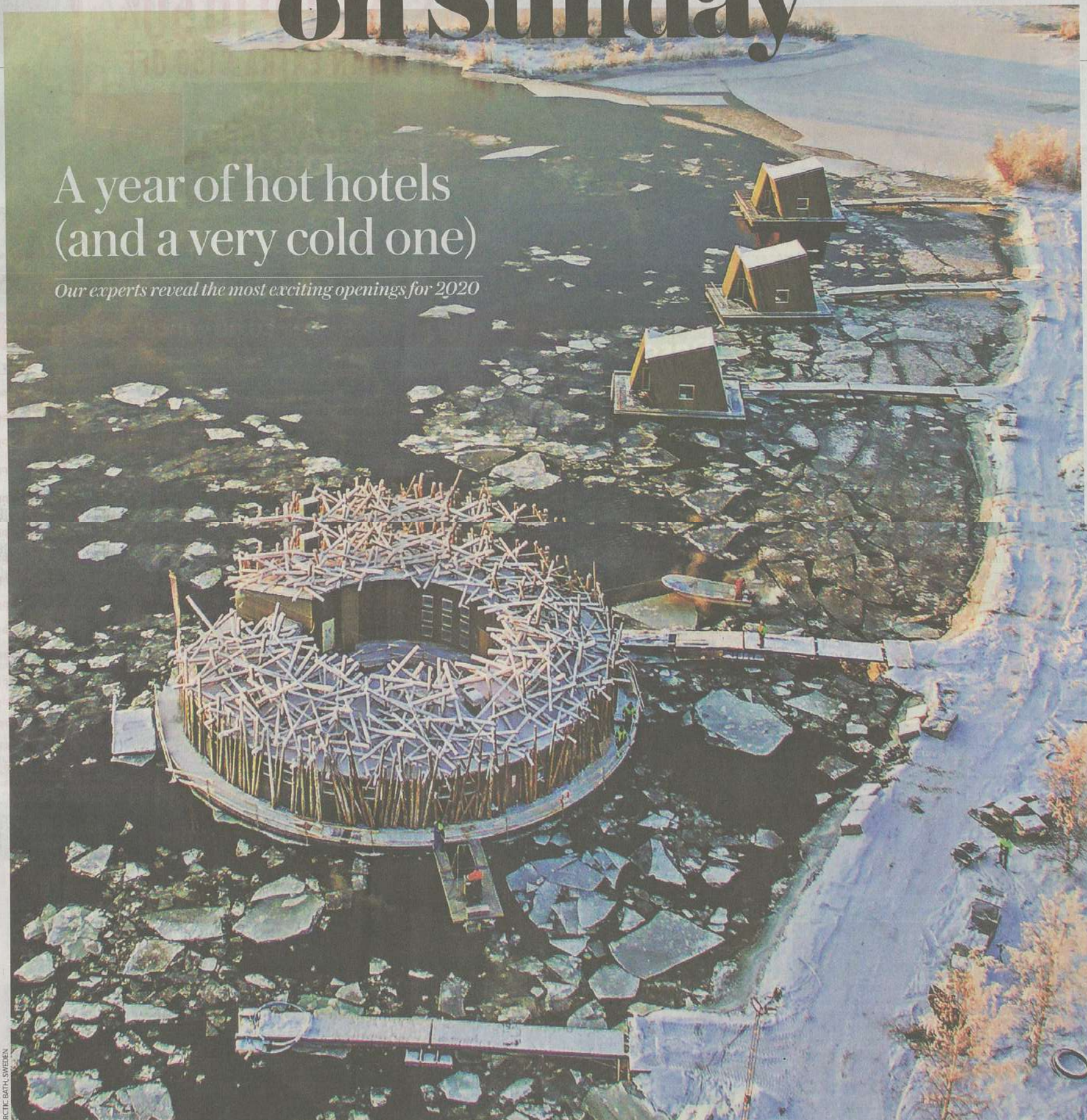
'Bungee jumping at the age of 65 is scary but a palliative for back disorders'

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Travel on Sunday

A year of hot hotels
(and a very cold one)

Our experts reveal the most exciting openings for 2020



ARCTIC BATH, SWEDEN

GRIFF RHYS JONES MR & MRS JONES



'Greta, Greta, I travelled only for work, I promise...'

I can't really remember memorable stuff, but I thought Instagram would help me. So, squatting next to a fake bamboo adorned with a single Christmas bauble in a rented flat in "Block B" somewhere in Salford, before playing a smile dog in

a Christmas musical. I reviewed my last year in travel. Useless. Alas, my snaps are all Uncle Griff's slideshow stuff. The beautiful ones mean nothing (yep, that was a nice red shed somewhere near Wanaka in New Zealand, wasn't it?) The modish, life-threatening selfies are just showing off. (What was I doing hanging backwards 200ft over Adelaide's Australian football ground, anyway?) If something properly exciting happened, I was by definition excited, hanging on for dear life, and I missed the "Insta" bit. As an inverted Scrooge, however, I do sense the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Future, the wan face of Nordic Greta, pointing an accusing bony finger at my excessive, self-indulgent carbon footprint. Greta, Greta, it was all just for my work, I promise.

"Oh yes, Greef, what were you doing in Megève?"
Well a bit of winter fun of course... But the rest was all learning.
"What? What did you learn, Greef?"
Let me think... I learnt that no businessmen fly business class anymore. It's more the "restless class": hordes of silver beavers/nomads/foxes clogging up the aisles, on equity release, emptying their bucket lists and taking 10 minutes to "get comfortable". (Forget oxygen masks, airlines should tell passengers how to sit down in less than five minutes.)
So... er. What else? In Cairns I learnt that you shouldn't take a penthouse suite in a hotel tower block. With one available lift shaft you will be stuck on the 30th floor for half an hour in the

post-breakfast rush. Sorry, I know these are not really on-message nostrums. But I did swim on the Great Barrier Reef, while I wept for the planet. Massive floating tourist pontoons belch toxic gases into the depleted atmosphere and they only go there as a direct result of those damned *Blue Planet* films.
I learnt that a 1,000ft bungee jump off the Kawarau Bridge at the age of 65 is scary but a palliative for back disorders. Skydiving, though, does your head in. Half an hour worrying about falling out of a tiny plane, and then you go and do it deliberately?
And don't do aerobatics. My battle-scarred, unseasickable stomach needed a day to recover from being turned upside down six times (to get a TV shot) in a Tiger Moth over Darwin Bay. And then I found out to my horror that it is possible to "loop the loop" in a glider too. Don't.
So, Greta, in conclusion, you are right. Young people shouldn't take 24-hour flights for two-second thrills and they need to be encouraged to spend their gap years reimagining the bathroom at home. For us oldies the best way to find Australia is by train. Oz is still a small-town, bush-living country. Rockport in Queensland had lovely Sixties frocks in the windows of its shops.



Fragile earth: the reefs are under threat

The rest of the year, I toured my minuscule one-man show around Britain and found that we have our own great train journeys. Leaving Newport, a little toy train to Shrewsbury heads in and out of Wales like Huw Edwards's accent, traversing the loveliest country in the world.
In England, you must church-crawl relentlessly. The great cathedrals of Winchester or Lincoln or Salisbury will bring you to your knees - not necessarily in praise of God, but out of respect for the relatively impoverished medieval people who put their heart, soul and effort into creating them. What do we do that is so selfless? So utterly, madly spiritual? Er... apart from demonstrate against climate change, of course.
And all of us, Greta, should make sure we explore those local beauties before we shoot off to a beach in Thailand. (Or Chile.) Don't you agree? Mrs Jones certainly does.
Follow Griff's European travels on Instagram @griffrhysjones and his trip to Australia and New Zealand on ITV The Place live year. The All Over The Place live tour continues in February. For dates, see socomedry.co.uk.

If something exciting happened, I was hanging on for dear life and missed the 'Insta' bit

Top 10

SPORT AND SPA HOLIDAYS

Nick Trent reveals the best active breaks for those who don't fly and flop

1 MULTI-SPORT MEXICO
Among the sporting activities on offer at Club Med's 503-room Cancún Yucatán resort on Mexico's east coast is an archery school, which uses targets set up among the palms. Tennis, windsurfing, volleyball and basketball are also included in the holiday price, with extra charges for golf and scuba diving. Recently renovated, the resort's Spa by L'Occitane has seven treatment rooms and offers an ancient Mayan ceremonial cleansing ritual called *temascal*, using steam to purify and cleanse the body.
Cancún Yucatán Club Med from £1,404 per person all-inclusive for seven nights with flights and transfers. Club Med (clubmed.co.uk).

2 SARDINIA SUCCESS STORY
At the vast Forte Village resort on the southern tip of Sardinia, focused "academies" offer tuition in tennis, swimming, boxing and fencing, as well as team sports such as basketball, football, netball, and hockey, plus endurance training for the triathlon. The reward for all this activity is to be found in the resort's Acquaforte Thalasso & Spa, where

facilities include a diagnostic health clinic and an ayurvedic yoga park.
Le Palme at Forte Village from £5,575 for a family of four for seven nights half board, based on a deluxe family bungalow, including flights and transfers. Kuoni (kuoni.co.uk).

3 SPACIOUS SICILIAN SPA
Rocco Forte's flagship spa and treatment pavilions at his La Verdura hotel in Sicily are centred around an open air courtyard, with four thalassotherapy pools and spacious relaxation areas. If you can prise yourself away, there is also an 18-hole championship course designed by Kyle Phillips - probably the world's best golf course architect - as well as a less-demanding nine-hole layout.
Verdura Golf & Spa resort from £439 per person for three nights B&B including two rounds of golf and club hire. Excludes flights and transfers. Golf Breaks (golfbreaks.com).

4 BRILLIANT BIKING IN OMAN
On Oman's northern Musandam Peninsula, a two-hour drive from Dubai, five-star Six Senses Ziggy Bay fronts on to a long sandy beach backed by rocky foothills. It's excellent mountain biking country, and

three-hour excursions into the Al Hajar mountains are among the range of sports on offer. Participants can hire a guide, bike, helmet and gloves while non-cyclists can relax in the top-notch spa, surrounded by palm trees, with its Arabic-style hammams and ice cave.
Six Senses Ziggy Bay from £2,000 per person for seven nights B&B, sharing a pool villa, including flights and transfers. Mountain biking from 150 rial (£300) for two guests. Scott Dunn (scottdunn.com).

5 TRIATHLON TRAINING
Serious amateur athletes who want to hone their skills are catered for in a dedicated triathlon training camp at five-star Almyra hotel in Paphos. Guided by expert coaches, the tailor-made programme includes open-water swimming, pool diagnostic sessions, road cycling and long-distance running on a variety of gradients. Less active partners - or exhausted participants - can also opt for treatments in Almyraspa, which has two pools and a sun deck overlooking the sea. The treatments are based on marine and herbal ingredients.
Seven-day camp from £1,240 per person B&B for seven nights, excluding flights and transfers. Relax and Restore spa package (eight treatments over four days) from €395 (£335). Almyra (almyra.com).

6 ACTIVE IN ANTIGUA
Carlisle Bay hotel on the south coast of Antigua offers unlimited sailing and windsurfing, and also has nine tennis courts (three are floodlit for playing in cooler evening temperatures), with coaching available. Once you have worn yourself out on the court or the water, you can retire to a spa with six treatment rooms, sauna, plunge pool and gym staffed with personal trainers. It's a hotel that works for families and couples - there is a quieter enclave of beachside suites reserved exclusively for adults.
Carlisle Bay from £3,165 per person for seven nights B&B, including flights and transfers. Powder Byrne (powderbyrne.com).

7 TOP TENNIS
Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean on Florida's east coast, the 404-room Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort is a top choice for golfers and tennis players. The complex of 23 tennis courts has attracted, among others, Andre Agassi, Martina Navratilova and Martina Hingis. There are two 18-hole golf courses and a spa that provides deep-tissue sports massages, as well as a range of signature Bavarian quartz and Persian salt-based treatments.

Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort from £134 per person per night, room only, in a deluxe ocean-view room. Three-day tennis camp from \$339 (£302). North America Travel Service (northamericatravelservice.co.uk).

8 TURKISH RETREAT
The pine forests and olive groves of the rocky Datca Peninsula, found near Marmaris and an 80-mile drive from Dalaman airport, provide an idyllic setting for the D Maris Bay hotel. Its Mytha spa includes 10 treatment rooms, a well-equipped gym and holistic workshops while on-site sporting activities focus on sailing and scuba diving plus three tennis courts with professional coaches.
D Maris Bay hotel from £1,111 per person for seven nights B&B, including flights and transfers, based on a classic room with a sea view. Jet2 Holidays (jet2holidays.com).

9 GREAT SPORTS IN GREECE
Two 18-hole layouts, Bernhard Langer's Dunes and the Robert Trent Jones II Bay Course, are the big sporting draw at the 445-room Westin Resort Costa Navarino on the west coast of the Peloponnese, but as well

as golf, you can also play tennis, basketball and volleyball. You can round it all off with olive oil and herb-based treatments at the Anazoe Spa with its wide-ranging menu of massage options, and a focus on osteopathy and thalassotherapy.
Westin Resort Costa Navarino from £809 per person for seven nights B&B, including flights and transfers. Tui Holidays (tui.co.uk).

10 COASTAL CROATIA
For active families with parents who also like to relax, Neilson's Alana Beachclub on the Croatian coast offers sailing, windsurfing, mountain biking and tennis as part of the holiday price, and there's a spa. In school holiday periods, children's clubs for up to 17 years also organise games of volleyball and rounders, with a Hot Shots club for keen sailors and windsurfers. Treatments in the spacious spa come at extra cost - there are six treatment rooms, a hydromassage whirlpool and resistance swimming pool. It's mostly adults only, but under-18s can use the spa facilities at designated times.
Alana Beachclub from £715 per person for seven nights half board, including flights, transfers and four evening meals. Neilson (neilson.co.uk).

GETTY IMAGES, CHRISTOPHER HEANEY