

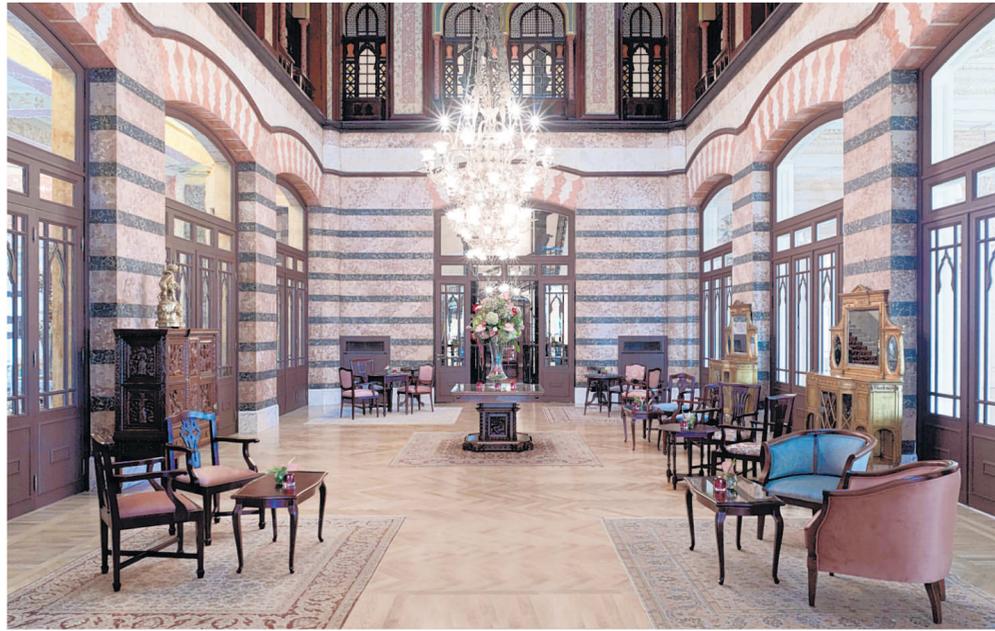
## The big six

## Heritage hotels in Istanbul

BY TRISTAN RUTHERFORD

## Pera Palace Beyoglu

Istanbul's *grande dame* hotel awoke from some much-needed beauty sleep late last year. Rooms are a medley of marble, antique dressers, classic portraits of the city and monogrammed pillowcases. The suites are in a class of their own: some overlook the Bosphorus, while the Agatha Christie suite is where the author supposedly penned *Murder on the Orient Express*. The hotel has a spa with an indoor jet-streamed swimming pool and Turkish bath. Pera Palace, Mesrutiyet Caddesi 52, Beyoglu (00 90 212 377 4000; perapalace.com). Doubles start at €230, including breakfast.



## Tomtom Suites Beyoglu

As European traders colonised the Golden Horn's northern shores, they left behind a legacy of grand embassies, churches and bourgeois residences. Tomtom Suites was a French law court annexe in the 1850s; evolving into a Franciscan nunnery; then bank archives. Since 2008 it has been a sumptuous mansion with Carrara marble bathrooms and an Ottoman library. The gardens of the Italian Consulate opposite ensure night-time tranquillity, and the top-floor restaurant overlooks the Bosphorus. Tomtom Suites, Tomtom Kaptan Sokak 18, Beyoglu (00 90 212 292 4949; tomtomsuites.com). Suites start at €200, including breakfast.



## Naya Buyukada Island

The Princes' Islands take their name from a grisly exile story: unwanted heirs to the Byzantine throne were blinded and shipped here a millennium ago. For the last few centuries these leafy islands in Istanbul's bay have been a place of ritzy retreat instead, the wooden mansions welcoming Wallace Simpson, Leon Trotsky and other eloping celebrities. On Buyukada Island, the seven-bedroom villa Naya was given an overhaul in 2010 by its German owner. Expect sparkly suspended trinkets, a plunge pool and a garden with sea view. Naya, Yilmaz Türk Caddesi 96, Buyukada Island (00 90 216 382 4598; nayaistanbul.com). Doubles start at €110, including breakfast.



## Villa Denise Arnavutkoy

Villa Denise is a 200-year-old yali, one of the pretty wooden houses that line the Bosphorus's shores. It has five rooms decorated with jewel-toned fabrics. The owner can arrange for guests to be taken on a tour of the city in a classic car from his collection. Villa Denise, Birinci Caddesi 50, Arnavutkoy (00 90 212 287 5848; villadenise.com.tr). Doubles start at €110, including breakfast.



## W Istanbul Besiktas

This swanky hotel started life as the dormitories of the nearby Dolmabahce Palace. The building bends around a huge courtyard which most of the chic guestrooms – think goose-down pillows and rainforest showers – overlook. W Istanbul, Suleyman Seba Caddesi 22, Besiktas (00 90 212 381 2121; wistanbul.com.tr). Doubles start at €243, room only.



## I'zaz Lofts Beyoglu

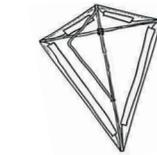
The new face of Istanbul is summed up by I'zaz Lofts, a chic suite-only concept hotel. It's housed in a bourgeois apartment block next to the old British Embassy, amid a warren of boutiques and hip hotels. Each of the four designer suites boasts fine linen, fresh flowers and a draped-off Ottoman houndoir. I'zaz Lofts, Balik Sokak 12, Beyoglu (00 90 212 252 1382; izaz.com). Suites start at US\$110 (£73), room only.



## Get Back Great Britain

## Up where the air is clear

A monthly series following Rob Cowen and Leo Critchley as they reconnect with the simpler things in life



## Part 2 Flying a Kite

Most of us have felt the joy of sending a kite soaring, but making one yourself – and getting your own piece of DIY to fly – takes the fun to new heights.

The iconic diamond kite is simple enough to build using materials found around the house. Lash two pieces of gardener's bamboo together (90cm by 70cm) to form a cross and cut grooves in each of the four ends. Make two extra nicks in the ends of the crosspiece so it looks like the top of a Phillips-head screw. Tie a piece of string just below the central join and pass it along the crosspiece's length, over the horizontal grooves and pull taut, to bow the crosspiece about 6 or 7cm.

Now run string around all the ends of the canes to create a diamond-shaped frame, before placing the kite on to a large plastic bin liner. Cut around it and gaffer tape this "sail" into place over the string frame, so that the side that bows outwards is covered.

Make holes for a halter at the top and 20cm from the bottom and attach 100cm of string, tying it

around the central cane. All you need now is to tie some running line (about 30m) one-third of the way down the halter and hoist it into a breeze.

Britain is Europe's windiest country and, as we found walking over the soft, shoe-sliding dunes on to Camber Sands in Kent, it is also blessed with many breathtaking beaches that double as runways. Under a cloudless blue sky, we took it in turns to be launcher and flyer, shouting ourselves hoarse each time the kite caught the wind and snaked its way into the atmosphere.

Soon we learnt that pulling the line gained altitude and slacking allowed manoeuvring. The darting diamond was staying airborne for 10 minutes at a time and we found our attention devoted to the slender path of string as it rose upwards. Nothing else mattered. People spend years trying to achieve meditative states that allow them an out of body experience. This was the perfect short cut.

Building and flying a kite goes deeper than feeling the wind on our faces, it ties this fascination with the earth's natural powers to another innate human instinct: to control it. Despite huge, shop-bought kites being flown expertly nearby, parents were being directed over to watch us, Kent's own version of the Wright Brothers. The delight of the homemade was conta-



Life's a breeze: Kent is blessed with breathtaking beaches, including Camber Sands. ROB COWAN

## Top spots to fly a kite

**Holkham, Norfolk** Delightfully secluded, and part of England's biggest nature reserve, pines and grasses give way to expanses of sand that offer plenty of space for running around. Just don't get run over by a horse.

**Barafundle, Pembrokeshire** Counted among the most beautiful beaches in Britain, on a fine day you would be

forgiven for thinking you had been spirited away to the Caribbean. Ideal for flying kites and perfect for building sandcastles and bathing in some of the cleanest water around.

**Joss Bay, Kent** Set below the iconic white cliffs, at the height of summer this broad sandy beach can get very busy, but as an intrepid kite-flyer you can

take advantage of cloudier, windier days when the sun-bathers are not out in force.

**Bamburgh, Northumberland** If you want a stunning horizon to go with your freshly minted kite, Bamburgh is the place to be. The sweep of the shore and the magnificent castle standing proudly atop a vast basalt outcrop may even distract you from your flying line.

gious and more than one toddler had their dad promising to make a kite when they got home.

Surfing thermals had led us in criss-cross patterns towards the sea and we were surprised at how far down the beach we had come. Our bags were ensconced in scrubby dunes half a mile back along the shore, but having just spent such an uplifting few hours, there was no weary trudge before us.

On the way down to the shore, we'd picked up ice creams and watched a game of beach cricket. It featured all the best elements: an overly cunning bowler failing to get spin on the ball and the fiercest-looking batsman being dispatched by a small child. When we left carrying our kite an hour later, they were still going, but with an eager Labrador in the party and a rising sea. We knew that play would be curtailed soon enough, either by act of God or act of dog.

The south coast of England is famed for its proud cliffs and broad beaches but, by building and flying a kite, there is another playground waiting above. One that can really lift the spirits.

Rob Cowen and Leo Critchley's book describing their journeys around Britain will be published in spring 2012 by Hodder. For more information, follow them on their blog at [getbackuk.com](http://getbackuk.com)

## Open Jaw Where readers write back

## You don't have to tell all to get results

## Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires

Following our return from a recent ski holiday in La Thuile with Neilson, we were so fed up with an excursion arranged by Neilson to a neighbouring resort which had resulted in four hours on a coach and involved the police being called out to divert our double-decker that could not get under a road bridge, that we decided to

post our CSQ direct to Neilson with an account of the experience.

Neilson rang us and have now refunded the amount spent on the excursion – a satisfactory result. Incidentally, we gave no information about our mobile phone contract, house insurance or make of underpants but despite this lack of info, the CSQ was read and acted upon – good for Neilson. Richard Prowse



Poles apart? It can pay to fill in the end-of-trip form

After completing the tatty paper CSQ in the room at the Holiday Inn Express in Cambridge (which was, incidentally, "Good" but not "Excellent") and not re-

ceiving an apology for the 10 minutes it took to check-in, I was offered another opportunity by e-mail. I replied suggesting they provide me with a free night and then I might be more motivated. They have not replied. Martin Haworth, Gloucester

We are all encouraged to give complete strangers too much information about ourselves. Every time you are asked for information about yourself think about it and if the information serves no useful purpose to you, do not provide it, and say why you refuse – ie it is intrusive. "Ommeiserum"

## More on airport security

Just read your article about Stansted and Luton. Living "Oop North" I am fortunate enough to avoid those understaffed palaces of delight. The Manchester airport authorities have gripped the problem and, when we went out a week last Sunday, there were about 16 security paths to go through and a large number of staff. It still takes time to get through, but it's getting better. One thing that would help is the handing out of a robust bag as passengers approach the point for them to start putting watches, coins, mobiles etc in as they move forward. Andrew Perry

With a 10.55am easyJet flight from Luton to Montpellier, I was intending to take the 9am train to Luton Parkway from Kentish Town arriving at the airport circa 9.45. Following your article I will now take a much earlier train which also requires a change at St Albans. At least I have a regulation plastic bag which I was required to buy when I last passed through Luton. Sandra Hunt

## Britain by B-road

Please don't clog up our rural roads. Let the fools stay on the motorway if they can't figure it out for themselves. "Spiralise"