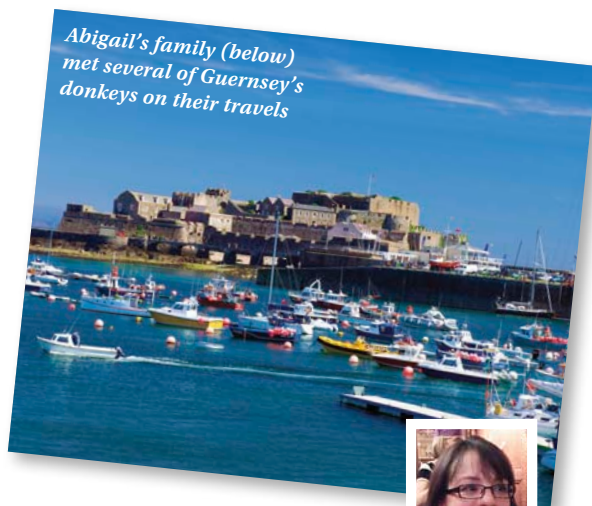


BY CATHERINE COLE

My Great Escape: Glorious Guernsey

Abigail Watkins from Derby achieved a lifelong dream on a family trip to the island of Guernsey



Abigail's family (below) met several of Guernsey's donkeys on their travels



PERSONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABIGAIL WATKINS / © EYEBYTE/ALAMY



Catherine has danced in Rio, been microlighting in South Africa and hiked the mountains of Oman

Tell us about your favourite holiday (send a photo too) and if we include it on this page we'll pay you £50. Go to readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us

BOOM! THE NOON GUN AT CASTLE CORNET was so loud that we were warned to cover our ears.

I'd brought my four children to Guernsey to visit my sister. Castle Cornet used to be an island, but it's now connected to Guernsey by the harbour breakwater. During the Second World War it was occupied by German troops, and the kids' appetite for horrible history was fed by the fact that during a lightning strike in 1672, the Governor was thrown as far as the battlements, unharmed but still in his bed.

It's a great place to dress up: my daughter was happy to put on a princess outfit and parade up and down the many steps, though the boys wouldn't dress up—even as knights. During a Tudor artefact treasure hunt at the castle, we met a bride marrying in the grounds. We slipped through the champagne-sipping wedding party feeling rather underdressed—except my daughter, of course! We also visited the Little Chapel, a lovely miniature building in the centre of the island that has a spire decorated with seashells and broken china.

We did some donkey spotting too. Islanders embrace the donkey as a symbol of Guernsey, and 40 fibreglass donkeys

are positioned at spots around the island. We were intrigued by the creative patterns on the five donkeys we found—the children especially liked the rainbow-striped one.

But the highlight was achieving a lifelong dream of horse-riding along Vazon Beach one morning. We had it to ourselves apart from a couple of dog walkers. It was great fun, and a good way to get another perspective on the island and to enjoy the views, the beach and the sea at a gentle pace. Of course, being able to share it with my family made it unforgettable.

GETTING TO GUERNSEY

Return flights to Guernsey from London Gatwick with Aurigny start from £79pp (aurigny.com; 01481 822 886).



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POSTCARD FROM... ISTANBUL



At the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Istanbul is one of Europe's most storied cities. Uniquely, it's split across two continents by the glittering Bosphorus, and both the European and Asian side are very different in character. This is a city where modern (the vibrant Taksim Square and surrounding Beyoglu entertainment quarter) sits happily with old, with tiled minarets and mosques scattered down cobbled streets. A visit to former Ottoman residence Topkapi Palace is a must, as is exploring the Byzantine Hagia Sophia and stunning Blue Mosque—probably the most recognisable of all Turkish architecture.

INSIDE ISTANBUL

Corinthian Travel's six-day Istanbul itinerary starts from £1,445pp, including accommodation, transfers, some meals and entrance fees (020 3583 6089; corinthiantravel.co.uk).

Things To Do This Month



DUBLIN IN TWO MINUTES

■ **DO:** St Patrick's Day on March 17 is when the country lets its hair down. To celebrate the Irish patron saint, there's a multitude of festivals, events and light shows over several days, culminating in a huge parade on the day itself (stpatricksfestival.ie).

■ **STAY:** The Merrion boasts a central location but is spacious, has beautiful Georgian features and is home to Ireland's only two-Michelin-starred restaurant. Double rooms start from €275 (around £215) per night on a B&B basis (merrionhotel.com; 00 353 1 603 0600).

■ **EXPLORE:** Trinity College is a peaceful place to explore over a morning before all the students get out of bed. The campus library is also home to the famous Book of Kells, a Latin manuscript depicting the four Gospels of the New Testament (tcd.ie; 00 353 1 896 1000).

LONG/SHORT HAUL: WALKING HOLIDAYS

SHORT: Montenegro

Spring is the ideal time to explore Montenegro's mix of shimmering seas, mountain lakes and quaint old towns. Headwater's seven-night walking tour starts at £1,078pp, including accommodation, transfers, guide and most meals (headwater.com; 01606 827 239).



LONG: Japan Tread the ancient Nakasendo Trail and explore Tokyo with Macs Adventure. Eleven days starts from £1,595pp, including accommodation, some meals and some transfers (macsadventure.com; 0141 530 5460). 🏠



TRAVEL APP OF THE MONTH

Roamer. Free, iOS, Android.

While using your mobile phone abroad isn't as costly as it used to be, no one wants to arrive home to a huge bill. Roamer allows you to make and receive cheap calls abroad using a wi-fi connection or by linking to a local Sim card (roamerapp.com).