



traveller

THE
INDEPENDENT

SATURDAY 5 JULY 2008

Gorilla tactics

Close encounters in Rwanda

**SPAIN
SPECIAL**

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INSIDE

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FAMILY TRAVEL

'Where can we honeymoon with a baby in tow?'

Q We are getting married this summer and our first child will be three months old. Before the unexpected arrival we had hoped for an exotic adventure holiday but are now reluctant. We want some privacy and some activity (likely to be walking now) but don't want to go long-haul and want it to still feel special. Usually our holidays are independent and involve climbing mountains or cycling so we are considering a villa somewhere with hills nearby. Do you have any suggestions? We are completely stuck for ideas.

J Sinclair-Gieben, via email

A Finding somewhere to stay in the middle of peak holiday season is a challenge, but there are a few solutions for your last-minute honeymoon. It may sound like an obvious choice, but Italy is an undeniably romantic option and there is still family-friendly accommodation available to choose from, even in high season.

A slightly off-the-beaten-track option would be to head to the picturesque and unspoilt northwestern region of Piedmont. Inntravel (01653 617 949; www.inntravel.co.uk) still has availability for some charming accommodation in self-catering *tufo* stone cottages within the small hamlet of Casale Monferrato. This pretty town is surrounded by vine-draped landscape, 60km east of Turin. A great destination for foodies, the gently undulating countryside is home to the famed Barolo red wine, truffles and spumante – a good excuse, if one was needed, to continue your celebrations.

Each of the one and two-bedroom apartments contained in the village cottages comes with a well-equipped kitchen – useful with a baby in tow – and there is an on-site swimming pool as well as a spa with Jacuzzi and sauna.

The area around Monferrato is well worth exploring, dotted with medieval villages, wine estates and historic towns such as Asti. Given its gentle topography, it is also ideal for exploring either by foot or bicycle. Bear in mind that given the time of year,

you would be wise to keep any kind of activity to a minimum and choose cooler times of the day like mornings and evenings.

If you don't feel like cooking every night, there is also an on-site restaurant serving local specialties or you can venture slightly further afield to one of the nearby towns and villages. The owners of the village, The Vellano family, have been making wine for several generations and also offer guests the chance to join regular wine tastings accompanied by local cheese and salamis.

A seven-night stay in a one-bedroom apartment, departing on 19 July, will cost £445 per adult, including one week's car hire. Flights are not included in the price. The nearest airports are Turin, served by Ryanair (0871 246 0000; www.ryanair.com) from Stansted or Genoa served again by Ryanair from Stansted and British Airways (0844 498 0787; www.ba.com) from Gatwick. Alternatively the train (08448 484 064; www.raileurope.co.uk) to Turin takes around nine hours from London-St Pancras via Paris.



Wedded bliss: the rolling hills of Tuscany are a romantic honeymoon setting FRANCO SILVI/EPA

With a new baby and wedding recently behind you, you might consider the other option of staying in a hotel.

The rolling hills of Tuscany deliver on romantic charm, dotted with small charming places to stay – a category The Marquis' House comfortably fits into. This 13th-century villa is set on a hill near Vicchio, east of Florence and has far-reaching views over the Mugello Valley and beyond to the Apennines. The hotel has a swimming pool and there are plenty of opportunities for hiking or rambling within the sprawling surrounding parkland. The estate produces olive oil and hosts regular tastings in a specially built "oleoteca" in the villa's basement. There is also a baby-sitting service on request, should you both feel

like you deserve a night out alone. It still has availability later this month for a seven-night stay booked through Hush Italy (0161 492 1392; www.hush-italy.com). The price of £445 per person includes breakfast, but excludes flights. The nearest airports are Florence, to which there are flights from Gatwick with Meridiana (0905 134 242; www.meridiana.it) and Pisa, which has flights from several destinations around the UK including British Airways, Ryanair and EasyJet (0905 821 0905; www.easyjet.com). A cot for your baby will set you back an additional \$65 per week and one week's car hire will cost around £145 with Holiday Autos (0871 472 5229; www.holidayautos.co.uk).

If you want to push the boat out, you could also com-

bine a week here with a few nights at the Villa I Bossi (00 39 0575 365 642; www.villai-bossi.com), another atmospheric villa-style hotel an hour or so from The Marquis' House, close to the beautiful town of Arezzo. Owned by the same family for more than 900 years, this is set in wooded grounds with a swimming pool and plenty of options for exploration with a host of historic towns and villages within close proximity. Double rooms cost £165 (£138) per night including breakfast. A cot can be made available for your baby at no extra charge.

Send your family travel queries to *The Independent Parent, Travel Desk, The Independent, 191 Marsh Wall, London E14 9RS*, or email crusoe@independent.co.uk

My holiday in India Noah Jones, aged 8

WHAT I DID

I went backpacking in Goa and Kerala with my mum. Me and my little brother had to carry all our stuff in a rucksack. We slept in beach huts and at night the sound of the waves kept me awake. We also slept on a Keralan rice boat. In the evening we saw kingfishers, parakeet and flying fish. In the morning I woke up really early and there was fog all over the water, it was beautiful. I wanted to swim in the river but I was too scared. Mum went first and I dived in. I opened my eyes and the world was completely green.

WHAT I LIKED

One day we rode on an elephant called Babu. I sat right

behind his ears – he stank! Babu dipped his trunk into the river, flung it back and completely soaked me.

WHAT I ATE

Curry and vegetables. And guess what? We ate it off a banana leaf instead of a plate.

Noah wins a £15 book token. National Book Tokens are sold and accepted in all UK bookshops



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Departures & Prices per person in a twin room

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2008 – Sundays

(Hotel San Pietro including half board)

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