

GETAWAY

LATE BREAKS
GREAT DEALS ON
LAST-MINUTE
HOLIDAYS



CUT-PRICE SINGLES TRIPS TO ZANTE
SINGLES specialist Friendship Travel says it has slashed the cost of a week for single travellers on Zante to half price from some regional destinations.

Flying on August 22 to the Apollon Hotel in Tsilivi is £478 from Newcastle, £496 from Manchester, £478 from Liverpool or £499 from Stansted.
Fly on August 29 and pay £448 from Manchester, £415 from Liverpool or £435 from Gatwick. As well as breakfast every morning, five dinners with wine are included in the package. Call 0289 446 2211, or visit friendshiptravel.com to book.

AUTUMN IN THE CANARIES
ENJOY the sun in Gran Canaria, staying for seven nights, half board, at the five star Seaside Sandy Beach Hotel, from £739pp including flights from East Midlands on September 4, based on two adults and one child sharing. See loveholidays.com or call 020 3897 1179.



HIT THE SLOPES IN AMERICA
WHISTLER is consistently rated as one of North America's top ski resorts.

Inghams is offering a seven-night holiday, self-catering, at the four-star Whistler Peak Lodge from £1,673pp based on four adults sharing. The price represents a saving of £316 per person.
Also included is a free room upgrade from studio to deluxe studio (when booked before August 31) as well as return flights from London Heathrow to Vancouver and airport transfers. The package is valid for travel departing December 20, 2019. For information and to book, visit ingham.co.uk/ski-holidays or call 01483 938 047.

The Witch guide to family fun!

ADRIAN CAFFERY gets spooked on a trip to the Wookey Hole caves in Somerset

THE eccentric old woman who lived alone in a cave aroused the suspicion of villagers. They suspected witchcraft and started blaming her for everything from ill health and failing crops to wi-fi outages and Brexit.

Hearing their pleas for help, the Abbot of Glastonbury Abbey sent Father Bernard into the witch's lair, armed only with a Bible, a candle and a chalice.

After a skirmish in the cave's entrance, he bravely followed the witch down a path the villagers called Hell's Ladder, from whence no-one had ever returned.

The witch blew out Bernard's

NEED TO KNOW

ADRIAN CAFFERY and family were guests of Wookey Hole. A special summer package costs from £139, based on two adults and two children staying one night in a family room. It includes continental breakfast, one day entry into Wookey Hole Caves and Attractions, fun packs for kids, and evening entry into the mill and children's play area. Room only costs from £85 for a family of four. There are also luxury lodges with hot tubs and views of the Mendip Hills, ideal for longer stays. For more information visit wookey.co.uk or call 01749 672243.



candle then taunted him, but the monk listened carefully to the sound of the river that flowed through the caves.

He blindly made his way to the water's edge and filled his chalice with water, which he blessed to make holy, then sprinkled it throughout the chamber. There was a sudden almighty scream, followed by silence. Bernard managed to relight his candle and saw the witch had been turned to stone...

This is the tale of the Witch of Wookey Hole, and visitors to the Somerset attraction can still see the sorceress staring out across the River Axe. Some naysayers will tell you the story is make-believe, that the stony witch is really a big stalagmite with a crooked 'nose' and, yes, it does sound a little fanciful.

But the discovery in the caves of a woman's skeleton alongside an alabaster ball - now on display at a museum in Wells - lends the tale some credence.

Well, apart from the wi-fi and Brexit, that is.

There are many highlights on a 45-minute guided tour of the Wookey Hole caves.

The Witch's Parlour, one of the five chambers you visit on the tour, was carved out by a swirling whirlpool and is the UK's largest natural underground dome. Sci-fi shows Blake's 7 and Doctor Who have been filmed there and it's a somewhat unusual venue for a wedding ceremony, able to hold 100 guests.

In the 70ft high Great Hall are the remains of broken stalactites, shot down in the 1800s by the poet Alexander Pope. They can be seen today in his grotto in London. Another impressive chamber, called The Great Cathedral, is 100ft high, its green water is 70ft deep and its vast walls are red with iron oxide. The final chamber, featuring rocks balanced on a razor edge, was only opened to the public in 2015 after a 70m long tunnel was blasted out with dynamite.

If you follow your nose you'll come across a long room full of Cheddar cheese cylinders, all wrapped in cloth and covered in lard to keep them air-tight.

The caves are perfect for maturing cheese because the temperature is a constant 11 degrees throughout the year and there is high humidity.

The Wookey Witch wasn't the first person to live in the caves.

Archaeologists have discovered that Palaeolithic Man (40,000 BC) would have hunted bear and rhino in the valley and brought their prey back to the caves to eat.

Its recent history is also interesting. In 1935, Wookey Hole was home to Britain's first diving attempt with breathing equipment, and in 2004 divers reached a depth of 249ft, setting a British record. Museums devoted to both the history of the caves and the diving expeditions are housed in a 19th century paper mill, which used the power of the River Axe.

The mill stages daily demonstrations on how paper was once made by hand there and it is home to a range of other family-friendly attractions. You can visit the witch's living room where a spell has turned everything upside down. From here, through a bookcase, you enter a 4D Cinema showing a short Ice Age film.

There's also a theatre where a circus troupe performs juggling, wire walking and magic every weekend and daily during Somerset

school holidays.

Well, not quite every weekend because on the one we visited, the circus had pitched up at the Glastonbury Festival down the road.

Best of all is the Victorian 'seaside pier' filled with vintage fruit machines, fortune telling machines, penny falls and games which all operate on old English pennies.

Continuing the Victorian theme, there's a winding mirror maze. No matter how many times they did it, I never tired of watching my kids walk into the glass panels.

Also at Wookey Hole, Dinosaur Valley

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

WELLS: Two miles from Wookey Hole, England's smallest city is full of historical streets and buildings. Check out the cathedral, with the largest gallery of medieval sculpture in the world, and the lovely, moated Bishop's Palace and Gardens.

GLASTONBURY: Home of the famous festival and steeped in Arthurian legend, this town is a 20-minute drive from Wookey Hole and offers up iconic landmarks such as Glastonbury Abbey, Glastonbury Tor and the Chalice Well.

CHEDDAR GORGE: Britain's biggest gorge has dramatic cliffs rising up 450ft and stunning show caverns, where Britain's oldest complete human skeleton, Cheddar Man, estimated to be over 9,000 years old, was found in 1903.



The Wookey Hole caves, left and above



The witch stalagmite

HOLIDAY DEALS

ESCAPE PLANS

We select our pick of destinations on offer from travel agents

Riviera Maya



MEXICO: TUI offers seven-night holidays to Riviera Maya staying at the 4+ RIU Playacar, all-inclusive. Prices from £815 per person when booked online, based on two adults sharing and includes flights departing from Manchester airport on September 1 and transfers. To find out more about this holiday or to book, go to tui.co.uk, visit your local TUI holiday store or download its app.

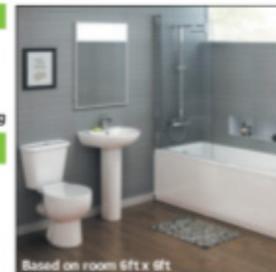
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