

My favourite destination



Offered a one-way ticket to anywhere, what's your destination choice? Five more leaders in the destinations industry point us towards their favourite places. Contact the editor if you have a destination to share

GOLDEN CAP, DORSET



David Quarmby,
former Chairman,
British Tourist Authority



Golden Cap, the highest cliff in southern England, is a magic place whatever the weather. I've paused - in boots and rucksack - to drink in the view of Lyme Bay, limpid in the afternoon sun, and the shimmering horizon of marching cliffs from Seaton past Lyme Regis, along and down to Bridport - and the strangeness of Chesil Beach, with pebbles rolled and graded and banked by the sea, stretching through to Portland.

I've scrambled up with family from Seatown, a steep mile walk to the odd flat summit, sandy with gorse and swirling in mist, on New Year's Day. We've leant against the wind, and taken an impossible team photo, propping camera on the not-needed triangulation pillar, falling about with laughter - and scrambled down in the driving rain again to welcoming pints in the Anchor.

Sometimes I just sit there

and look inland, at the intimate Dorset landscape of small hills and folded valleys, ancient copses and a derelict chapel. Farmers, fishermen, smugglers - all leaving something of their timeless story on the land and the beach. I stretch out, and hear only the sea breaking on the rocks below and the screaming gulls.

It's magic.



THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR



Nick Van Gruisen,
Managing Director,
The Ultimate Travel
Company



As the name of our company suggests, we specialise in travel to remarkable destinations. Selecting a favourite was not easy. In the end I plumped for the Galapagos Islands, off the coast of Ecuador: for their unspoilt beauty, extraordinary wildlife and the role they played in our understanding of evolution. For these are Darwin's 'enchanted isles'.

If I may so choose, we should explore my favoured destination at length and in comfort: two weeks with my friends and partners Augusto and Georgina Cruz aboard the schooner Beagle, all teak-decked, steel-hulled, 105-foot of her. Two weeks will allow us to reach the more remote western Galapagos, there to spy huge colonies of penguins and flightless cormorants and wend our way past dolphins and whales.

Even if we only had a week, we could swim with sea lions, snorkel with turtles and chat with blue-footed boobies. For here the birds and animals have no fear of man. Darwin wrote of the Galapagos as "A Separate Centre of Creation" because the species



here have developed apart from human beings and their dominant influence. From here, Darwin carried away the collections, notes and impressions that informed his subsequent publication of *On the Origin of the Species by Natural Selection* and thus a revolution in man's thinking.

This archipelago has now been declared a World Heritage Site and we are ourselves proud to support the Galapagos Conservation Trust. For its ravishing beauty and its historical importance, this destination has to be protected. Exploring the Galapagos is a highly individual experience and I for one want to keep it that way.



EL BULLI, ROSES, GIRONA & LA CREPA, ISOLA DOVARESE, ITALY



Nicholas Lander,
restaurant correspondent
The Financial Times



Unquestionably, El Bulli just outside Roses in north eastern Spain, a couple of hours drive north of Barcelona.

This is the summer only restaurant of chef/magician Ferran Adria who displays his culinary skills via menus that can comprise 20/30 small courses that have been conceived in the culinary laboratory run by his brother Alberto during the winter.

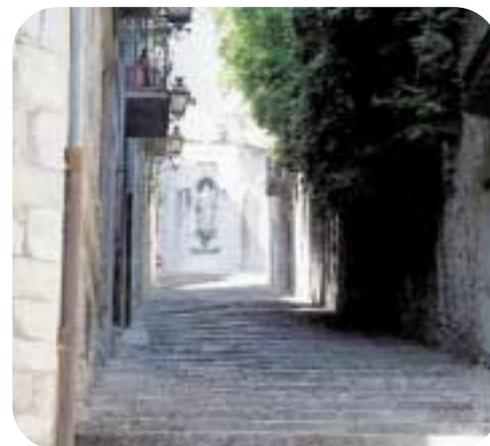
Sadly, El Bulli has become an unwitting victim of its own success. When it opened its on line booking service last January it received 7,500 requests for bookings in just 24 hours and no longer opens for lunch. But El Bulli is a must for anyone interested in the extraordinary world of flavour.

This summer travelling through the rich farmland in the triangle bordered by Cremona, Brescia and Mantua I left my heart at La Crepa in the small, walled town of Isola Dovarese.

The town and restaurant are pure Fellini. The building dates back to the 15th century and now operates as a cafe, ice cream parlour, restaurant and wine store all run by two

brothers, Franco and Carlo. Polenta topped with local pike; a savarin of rice topped with fresh peas and Parmesan; tortellini in brodo with a glass of the local Lambrusco; a thin stew of foiole, the leanest cut of tripe, 27 month old Provolone and, finally vanilla ice cream topped with balsamic vinegar. Yet again pure magic.

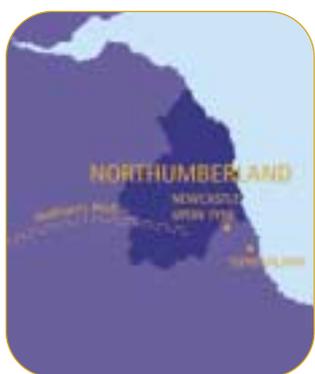
El Bulli, Roses, Girona, 0034.972 150457
La Crepa, 0039.0.375-396161



CAUSEWAY HOUSE, NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK



Hilary McGrady,
Arts & Business Northern
Ireland



Desolate landscape, draughty accommodation and sore feet may not be everyone's idea of a recipe for a favourite destination but in my book, a 18th century thatched, Landmark Trust house built on the edge of Hadrian's Wall gets my vote every time. The Landmark Trust is an independent UK building preservation charity, they restore historic buildings and rent them out in order to raise more funds for further restoration. In all of their houses they aim to capture at least some of the original ambience of the building and give the occupier some insight into the historical significance of their surroundings. For this pleasure you may have to endure some discomfort, (in our case stone floors and ill fitting windows) however by and large the privilege of staying in such unique and refreshingly different surroundings makes it all worthwhile and in many ways comes as a welcome relief from so called 'modern' living.



There are 169 Landmarks ranging from lighthouses to follies. In this context Causeway House in the middle of Northumberland National Park is a fairly modest example made wonderful by its access to many miles of breathtaking Hadrian's Wall (hence the sore feet), easy drive distance to impressive Newcastle (make sure there is an exhibition on when you visit the Baltic) and an overriding sense that time has done little to change this place. Long may it stay that way.



LOVOCA, SLOVAKIA



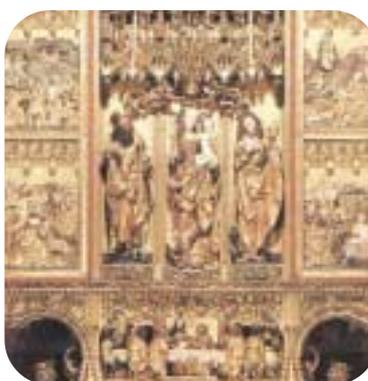
Jonathan Griffin, Director,
Britain Abroad
Task Force



This is an impossible task for two reasons. All my real favourites are places far away from tourists where I can begin to share a sense of place with the local people. And each year, I discover a new favourite to add to my list. Here is one I re-discovered this year.

Levoca (Lev'ocha) is a small walled town in Slovakia which would be regarded as ordinary in Italy or France. Apart from the innocent charm of the buildings, the unpretentious welcome of its people and the lack of tourists, its main asset is the work of Master Paul, a sculptor from the turn of the 16th century.

Three years ago I saw his magnificent carved and painted wooden altar piece. An altar rail and an officious guide prevented us from getting close enough to see it in detail. This year, I returned to see it at the end of a stiflingly hot day. A full mass was in progress in a language I did not



understand. The prayers were unending. Slipping to the front of the congregation, three of us knelt for fifteen minutes on a cold hard stone floor just so that we could get close to the altarpiece and see it properly lit and in use for its original purpose. Sheer heaven! Pilgrimage was the first form of tourism. For me it remains its finest.

