

Sun AWARD-WINNING travel



Edited by **LISA MINOT**



THERE is finally light at the end of a very long tunnel. From October 24 you'll only need to do a lateral flow test on Day 2 after your trip abroad if fully vaccinated. And the

announcement yesterday that US borders will reopen to UK travellers from November 8 was the icing on the cake. Slowly but surely the world is opening up again.



MINI-BREAKS are back as we gradually regain confidence in travel. Bookings for one to six-day trips are up by 19 per cent since an end to the traffic-light system was announced, data from Holiday Extras shows. It comes as the Government finally confirmed the date returning travellers can switch Day 2 tests from pricey PCR tests to lateral flows, which start from just £19. From a week tomorrow, October 24, lateral flow tests will be acceptable. They can be

booked from private testing companies from October 22. The move was welcomed by the boss of major tour operator, Jet2. Steve Heapy said: "We are approaching an extremely busy half-term, so this is very welcome news for those due to travel. "Replacing Day 2 PCR tests with lateral flow tests is the right thing to do as it is cheaper, fairer and less complex. "We have experienced enormous demand in recent weeks and this welcome step will strengthen that demand even further."



OPEN . . . South Africa

BRITISH Airways will soon resume flights to winter-sun hotspots including South Africa and Mexico. From November 6 there will be five services a week to Mexico City, while flights to Cancun resume on October 22 and to Johannesburg in mid-December. Forty-seven countries came off the red list this week, meaning double-jabbed Brits no longer need to quarantine on return from these destinations. Holidaymakers booking with BA can get up

to £300 off packages to former red-list spots. A seven-night all-inclusive trip to the 4★ Allegro Playacar is from £794pp, including flights on selected dates in November. Meanwhile, budget airline Jet2 is increasing flights to winter sun destinations, the Canary Islands and Turkey, this month. There are now 7,000 extra seats on sale for services to Tenerife, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, and Dalaman from 10 UK airports, including Birmingham, Stansted and Manchester.

MOTORHOME NOVICE TAKES FAMILY TO LAKES

WINDING through the rustic landscape of the Yorkshire Dales, we admire pretty Pateley Bridge and the village of Ingelton from our motorhome's windows.

While I was behind the steering wheel, battling winds wobbling the van, my kids were chucking in the back delighted to be playing board games while safely strapped in around the dining table.

We had set off for the Lake District in our six-berth home for the next few days, a Chausson Flash boasting a kitchen and bathroom with shower and cassette toilet.

It sleeps four adults, or two adults with four kids, meaning there was plenty of room for myself, my nine-year-old daughter Lily and my son Clark, six, for our rain-soaked four-day ride.

I had never driven anything bigger than a car and only camped once – back in the Cub Scouts – so when I hopped into the driver's seat at Vaaroom's depot in Romford, East London, I was a bag of nerves.

How does the oven work? How do you empty the toilet?

To top it all, I had no plan beyond a vague idea that the Lake District might be nice.

As it turns out, that's the beauty of travelling by motorhome. You don't need a plan. We could go wherever we wanted... although parking our seven-metre monster could be a challenge!

Inside it was sleek and modern, with nifty cupboards slotted into the walls – providing more than enough space for all our holiday gear – and plenty of plug sockets.

A king-size bed hung above the cab while, in the back, two bunk beds slotted behind a roomy kitchen.

For adventurers, there is space for three bikes on an outside rack.

Beautiful beer garden

It is no surprise that demand for motorhoming holidays has soared this year. But it is not just the pandemic panic over foreign travel that's to blame.

TikTok and Instagram has seen a surge of youngsters living their best #VanLife, while TV programmes such as Channel 5's Motorhoming With Merton & Webster have inspired more than two million of us to hit the road this year.

We had driven our van to a campsite overlooking the peaceful Lake Windermere before setting off to explore the town of Bowness.

Narrow streets were chock-a-block with traditional tea rooms and tourists huddling outside The World Of Beatrix Potter. At this attraction Peter Rabbit, Mr McGregor and other loved characters are brought to life, like walking through the pages of Potter's books. She moved here after falling in love with the landscape while holidaying as a child and it is easy to see why.

There is plenty to keep adrenaline junkies occupied, with paddle-boarding and canoe hire at Windermere as well as the dizzying Tree Top Trek high-ropes adventure park.

Just three miles outside Bowness, this spot is home to some picturesque walking routes. Sadly,



READY . . . Lily and Clark are set to go



CAVE DWELLERS . . . Lily and Clark go underground

Action van



WHAT'S NOT TO LAKE . . . breathtaking views of the Lake District

STAYING/GETTING THERE: The Chausson Flash costs from £50pn for trips in November and December. The standard excess and deposit on all motor homes is £2,000 although Vaaroom recommends additional cover to reduce the excess and deposit to £250. An additional security deposit of £250 is also taken.

OUT & ABOUT: Tickets to The World Of Beatrix Potter cost £23 for a family of four

the rain put paid to our plans for a pony ride through the hills, so we set off on a three-hour cruise across Windermere.

The kids gawped at green hills and the vast expanse of open water as we travelled ten miles from the southern Lakeside port up to Ambleside and back.

Our van was parked in Staveley for the night and although so much adventure lay within a few miles of our campsite, including the tempting

GO: MOTORHOMING

or £8.20 per adult and £4.20 for kids aged three-plus. See hop-skip-jump.com. Windermere Lake Cruises has trips from £10 per adult and £5 per child. See windermere-lakecruises.co.uk. The White Scar Caves has family tickets for £34 or adult tickets for £12 and child tickets for £8. Seewhitescarnave.co.uk.

Chocolate Factory in Hawkshead, the best part of our motorhome trip was discovering less familiar spots.

From our campsite we wandered through sheep farms and past roaring rivers, until reaching the Mill Yard, a trendy renovated mill filled with quirky cafes and boutique shops such as the Blind Chocolatier, which sells artisan chocolate bars.

After tucking into homemade steak and Cumbrian ale pies from the Eagle & Child Inn – which has one

of the most beautiful beer gardens I have ever seen – we had time for one final adventure.

We had seen signs for the White Scar Caves when we passed Ingleborough and were desperate to have a peek inside the craggy mass of limestone rock.

Before you knew it, we had donned our hard hats and were making our way through the dark tunnels during a brilliantly informative guided tour.

Lily had wanted to see a waterfall and this cave, discovered in 1923, did not disappoint.

We ended the trip feeling refreshed but satisfied from all our adventures. Motorhoming is not cheap – you have to factor in diesel and camp fees on top of rental.

But the sense of freedom, while seeing the beauty Britain has to offer, more than covered the cost.

MARK HUDSON



STYLISH . . . guest room

THE HUX HOTEL
Kensington High Street, central London

WHAT'S IT LIKE? A new boutique hotel moments away from Kensington Palace. Many of the 24 rooms and four suites in the slim townhouse look out towards Hyde Park.

The hotel has brightly coloured walls, hanging plants and a menagerie of taxidermy animals. Hux owner Ben Patrick assures me the animals are ethically sourced and displayed in a respectful manner.

The quirky decorations won't be everyone's cup of tea, but they certainly make for an unforgettable stay.

ROOMS ANY GOOD? They are compact but have everything you need for a comfortable night. My room had a double bed with views of Hyde Park.

EAT HERE OR GRAB A PIZZA? Kensington High Street is brimming with great restaurants. Try Akira on the first floor of Japan House for some of the best Japanese cuisine in London.

If you want a heartier meal, Maggie Jones's does a British set menu with plenty of old-school favourites from bangers and mash to steak and chips. Two courses will set you back £22.

Just make sure you get back to the hotel to experience their live music nights and cocktails.

WHAT ELSE? With live music three nights a week – all accompanied by cocktails and sushi – it's a fun, glam way to spend the evening.

SO YOU'D GO BACK? Absolutely. The Hux has everything you want in a London hotel – great rooms, a fantastic location and a unique atmosphere.

WHAT'S THE DAMAGE? Small doubles start at £150, breakfast is not included. See huxhotel.com.

CATRIONA GRAFFIUS



QUIRKY . . . the lounge

