

What's the best holiday? If you believe in the power of the market, the answer is simple: the one that's booked out year after year.

If people keep returning, they're on to something good. To join them, though, you've got to book early. Really early.

Here are 2013's sellouts, which we're prepared to bet will be just as in demand next year. Book one now, and you've a year of gloating ahead. Enjoy.

CAMPING IN SUSSEX

When I first took the kids to Blackberry Wood, I swore we'd return. We haven't. We just can't get in. From Easter to autumn, every weekend, bank holiday and minute of the school hols at this woodland gets booked solid. The formula is simple: 20 pitches, each in its own glade; campfires allowed; woods and a stream to play in; a laid-back vibe; and that's it. The spring bank holiday is already sold out, but you can book for next summer. We're getting in fast, and we advise you to do the same. It costs £5 a night for a tent, adults £9 and kids £4.50 (01273 890035, blackberrywood.com).

SUSPENSE IN DEVON

Agatha Christie's gardener was a lucky man. First, he got to look after the greenery at Greenway, the author's gorgeous Georgian retreat high above the River Dart. Second, he got to live in the grounds at South Lodge, a superb house in the woodland garden, with views downriver to Kingswear. Now owned by the National Trust (0844 800

nice enough, a traditional stone place sleeping six, but the spot, on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, over the fab Whitesands beach, is a dream. Go for May or September, or put your name down for 2015 — Coastal Cottages (01437 772760, coastalcottages.co.uk) is keeping a waiting list. This year, weeks started at £500.

GITE IN NORMANDY

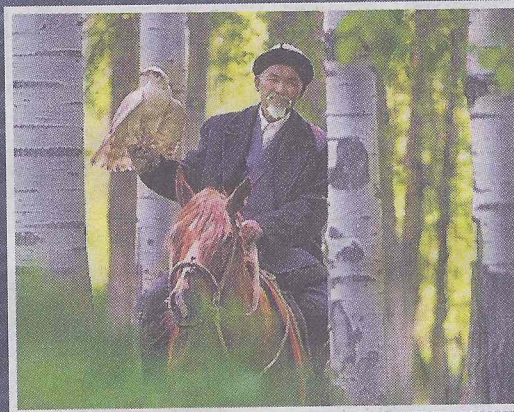
The hottest properties in France aren't highfalutin chateaux: pretty, good-value gîtes with a pool are what's really in demand. Something like Le Domaine des Tilleuls, a lovely half-timbered house surrounded by woods and fields, with a large pool in the roomy garden. Sleeping seven, it was fully booked this summer; and in October, when Brittany Ferries (0871 244 0744, brittany-ferries.co.uk; ref NE6020) releases dates for next year, it'll likely fill up again. A peak week starts at £1,460, including ferry crossings.

EXPLORING PUGLIA

Riviera Travel does the Italian standards — Rome, Venice, Florence — damn well, with great guides and seamless service. But it wasn't quite ready for the rush when it tried something new, venturing to Puglia (or, as they spell it, Apulia) to explore the troglodyte houses of Matera, the Phoenician town of Vieste and the villages of the coast. The eight-day tours went in a flash, and next year's are going fast. Book yours through The Sunday Times (01283 742382, sundaytimesriviera.co.uk); from £879pp, half-board, including flights from London.

IT'S A SELLOUT

The best holidays are booked up year after year.
If you want to grab one, the time to act is now,
says Stephen Bleach



views downriver to Kingswear. Now owned by the National Trust (0844 800 2070, nationaltrustcottages.co.uk), the main house is open to visitors, but South Lodge is reserved for renters. It's chock-full this year, ditto between March and September 2014 — but the trust allows you to book two years ahead, so do yourself a favour and grab your slot for summer 2015. Sleeping six, it starts at £1,633 for a peak week.

BEACHSIDE IN PEMBROKESHIRE

Bad news: Foxhole Cottage is already sold out for next summer. Not a week left in June, July or August. It's the location that does it. The cottage is

£879pp, half-board, including flights from London.

TRULLO IN ITALY

Trulli are traditional conical-roofed shepherds' houses, and badly renovated ones — there are plenty — can be cramped, damp and a bit primitive. Trullo Mandorla, by contrast, is owned by Ray and Annie Long, of the southern Italy specialist Long Travel (01694 722193, long-travel.co.uk), and they've made sure they'll be comfortable. The stone walls have been superbly restored by local craftsmen; the interior is smart and spacious; it sleeps four; it has two pretty terraces and a pool; and it's well stocked with wine from

Balazs Mohai/EPA; Frans Lanting/Getty

the neighbouring vineyard (there's an honesty box). This summer was booked out by January; an August week cost £1,350, including car hire. Fly to Bari or Brindisi, both about 40 miles away, with Ryanair, easyJet or British Airways.

GLAMOUR IN MONACO

You don't get to do this often: sail into Monaco on one of the world's most beautiful tall ships, just in time for motor racing's most prestigious event, the Monaco Grand Prix. Beat that, Roman Abramovich. You don't need an oligarch's money to do it, but you do need to book fast: it wasn't offered

in 2013, but in previous years the one-off cruise on the 170-passenger Star Flyer sold out months in advance. The week-long voyage casts off from Cannes on May 24 (the GP is on the 25th) and starts at £2,559pp, full-board, including flights from London, race tickets, two nights in a posh Monaco hotel and helicopter transfers to Nice for your flight home, with Star Clippers (0845 200 6145, starclippers.co.uk).

PARTY IN CROATIA

All 10,000 tickets for this summer's Hideout festival were gone by January, with sales helped along by headliners

Chase & Status and SBTRKT, killer boat parties and the beauty of the surroundings — it's held on Zcre beach, on the blissful island of Pag. Combines nicely with a lazy holiday on Croatia's scenic coast, too. Tickets for all three days cost £99 this year. If you don't want to miss out, go to hideoutfestival.com and register for 2014. Fly to Zadar, 40 miles away, with Ryanair.

WAGNER IN GERMANY

Applicants to Bayreuth's Festspiele can wait as long as 10 years to get tickets for the Wagner festival in July and August, such is the excess of demand over



There's room for one more at the Hideout festival, in Croatia, but not for long. Left: saddle up the Peloponnese

GOLF AND SPA IN MEXICO

Virgin's direct flights to Cancun are regular summer sellouts. Couple those flights with a hotel set in 55 tropical acres on the Riviera Cancun, with 15 restaurants, a beach, a Jack Nicklaus golf course, a dive tank and two fitness centres, and you've a hit on your hands. An all-inclusive week at the Moon Palace Golf & Spa Resort starts at £1,265pp, flying from London (0844 557 2853, virginholidays.co.uk).

OVERLAND IN CENTRAL ASIA

Bishkek, Samarkand, Bukhara, Ashgabat: if your soul doesn't stir at the names, this trip isn't for you. Following the central section of the ancient Silk Route, through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, is the bestseller for the overland specialist Dragoman (01728 85102, dragoman.com), and most trips sell out nearly a year in advance. It's a commitment — four and a half weeks, staying in local houses and yurts, and crossing the Kyrgyz mountains. The tour starts at £1,620pp, excluding flights (about £880 with Turkish Airlines) and a £500 kitty.

GORILLAS IN RWANDA

Permits to see gorillas in Rwanda sell out nine months in advance. But we'd book even sooner, because this might just be the most amazing long weekend away ever: golden monkeys, helicopter rides, volcanoes, trekking in the remote Virunga Mountains and tracking gorillas in the Parc National des Gorilles. The four-day trip starts at £1,095pp.

supply for the world's best-known opera jamboree. But if you book before the end of October, the opera specialist JMB Travel (01242 221300, jmb-travel.co.uk) says it can find you tickets for 2014, when performances will include Lohengrin and the entire Ring cycle. How? We asked, but they were rather tight-lipped. As a guide, this year, three nights, with two top-category tickets, pre-performance buffets, and flights from London, started at £1,995pp, B&B.

CYCLING IN DENMARK

The Danes cycle. The Danes have long, gorgeous beaches. The Danes are the

happiest people on earth. These facts must be related, so it's no surprise that a six-night spin along the Danish Riviera with Inntravel (01653 617000, inntravel.co.uk), past fairy-tale castles and along immense strands, sold out for this summer just after it was released. Next year's trip starts at £1,065pp, including stylish hotels, some meals, bike hire and luggage transfers, but not flights. Airlines flying to Copenhagen include SAS, Norwegian and easyJet.

BOUTIQUE PELOPONNESE

After a riot-blighted 2012, Greece came back with vengeance this summer,

with the smart set dodging the islands and heading for the rediscovered charms of the Peloponnese. Which may explain why Citta dei Nicchiani, an 18th-century tower house in Mani, converted into a chic seven-bedroom hotel, was completely full the whole summer. To be honest, though, this place would fill up anywhere. Dripping with character, crisscrossed with beams, the evident heritage touched off with smiling service and family cooking: it ticks every box. Booked direct, a double room for three nights starts at £200, B&B (cittadeticchiani.com). Fly to Kalamata, 65 miles away, with easyJet.

FAMILY SAIL IN GREECE

Three or four family groups on a traditional wooden caïque; a cruise around the Greek island of Evia; swimming and snorkelling for the kids; long lunches at local tavernas for you; a smattering of culture (a Venetian castle, an ancient temple)... Is this the ideal family holiday? Enough people thought so for the trips to sell out early this year, and they're already heavily booked for next summer. Sailings last a week and start at £267 for adults and £222 for children, including flights from London, crew and some meals, through Explore (01444 499 0901, explore.co.uk).

(020 7426 9888, blacktomato.com).

THE NORTH POLE

Pack your spirit of adventure, board the 50 Years of Victory, a nuclear-powered Russian scientific ship and the world's largest icebreaker, and head north, north and further north, until everything else in the world is south. You'll take a helicopter trip over the Arctic, you'll cruise in Zodiacs, you'll see the animals of Franz Josef Land... you'll come home and brag. A lot. Always a sellout, the 14-day trip starts at £17,035pp with Quark Expeditions (0808 120 2333, quarkexpeditions.com). Fly to Helsinki with Finnair or BA.