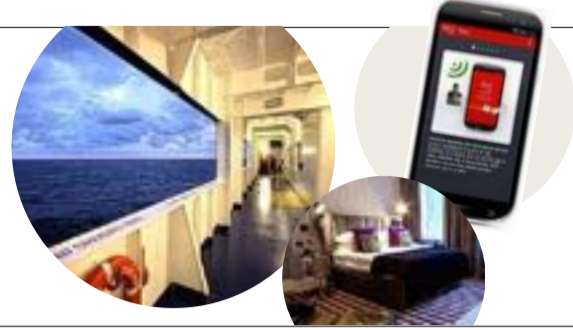


THE ROUTE
LD Lines opens a route from Poole to Santander in northern Spain today. The twice-weekly service takes 26 hours but there are 120 cabins, a bar, restaurant and a cinema. From £399 return for two with a car and cabin (ldlines.com).



THE APP
Virgin Media customers can download the new SmartCall app to use inclusive minutes on smartphones while abroad. The Wi-Fi enabled app only connects when there's no extra cost (customer.virginmedia.com/smartcall).

THE HOTEL
Malmaison relaunches its refurbished London hotel in Farringdon after a recent takeover of the chain. It has updated the rooms and introduced a steak restaurant. A new Dundee hotel opens next month (malmaison.com).

Globejotter



STAY THE NIGHT THE GUESTHOUSE, ARGENTINA

An authentic and affordable base in Buenos Aires

This antiques-laden house is within easy reach of some of the city's most colourful districts, says **Laura Holt**



INDEPENDENT TRAVEL
Lanzarote four-star all-inclusive
Seven nights from £339pp



Departures	Prices from
December	£339
January	£419
February	£449
March	£499
April	£499
May	£429
June	£459

Lanzarote is one of the Canary Island's best-loved hotspots, boasting a wide appeal and plenty of year-round sun. The price includes: Return flights from London, regional departures available at a supplement; Flight tax and fuel supplements; Seven nights' accommodation; Daily breakfast, lunch and evening meals; All-inclusive drinks; Luggage allowance.

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Prices "from" act as an indication only and are per person based on 2 sharing a room, subject to availability. Offers do not include transfers, travel insurance or flight meals. All inclusive drinks normally consist of locally produced alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The image used is for illustration purposes only and does not reflect your actual holiday experience. Luggage allowance may vary, please check at the time of booking. The above package holidays are fulfilled by agent number 58886 and ATOL number 5873 (Global Travel Group Ltd), whose booking conditions apply. Hotel rating is that of the supplier and may not be the official rating. We reserve the right to withdraw offers at any time. Travel restrictions, conditions and credit/debit card surcharges apply. Please ask at the time of booking for full details. When it's gone, it's gone.

The tree-lined squares, wide boulevards and cosmopolitan air of Buenos Aires often leads it to be labelled "the Paris of South America". But comparison with the City of Light can have its downsides, with the high standard of living often nudging hotel prices up. However, stray away from the ritzy neighbourhoods of Recoleta and Retiro and you start to get more punch for your peso. Sandwiched between San Telmo – the oldest *barrio* in Buenos Aires – and the working-class La Boca district, is the overlooked neighbourhood of Barracas. Here, you'll find The Guesthouse, hidden within a handsome 20th-century building. Inside, walls soar upwards to meet stuccoed ceilings; white curtains billow inwards from a balcony; and three bedrooms flow off from an antiques-laden lounge. For an affordable base in the Argentinean capital, this is the place to stay.

THE ROOMS
The Guesthouse stands within a traditional *casa chorizo*, the name given to long, thin, sausage-like houses in Buenos Aires. You enter up a steep flight of stairs to a mosaiced hallway, where assorted bikes stand below a rusting metal "Sprite" sign. The lounge is a riot of flea-market finds: there are 1950s Re-Trouvé-

style wicker seats, sling-back leather chairs and vintage advertising signs, all underpinned by battered wooden floors. To the side, there's an industrial kitchen and a sun-dappled dining table. The three bedrooms run along a partially open corridor to the back, that looks down on to a courtyard. On Sundays, you can often hear local *porteño* families dining below, the sound of their lazy afternoon echoing gently upwards. Each room is named after a nearby street. Ours, Caseros, had a whirring ceiling fan above, a bright striped headboard and a Soviet-style print, resting on a Fifties sideboard. We shared a bathroom with the next-door Piedras room, while larger Finochietto had its own polished-concrete en suite. Although the property is self-catering, you do have a host. Virginie Duponchel left Lille 20 years ago and lived in Miami and New York before moving to Buenos Aires in 2011. She

BE MY GUEST
The Piedras room (main); antique signs and furniture in the quirky lounge (top right); and the Plaza Dorrego in San Telmo (bottom right)

works for the San Telmo Loft Company (which has various other rental properties in the area) and lives in a self-contained flat to the back. **OUT AND ABOUT**
Barracas itself is largely residential, with few major attractions. However, it's just a block away from San Telmo, the most colourful *barrio* in BA, defined by cobbled streets and colonial buildings. This is the ungentrified face of the city and all the better for it. On Sundays, the Feria de San Telmo street fair (feriadesantelmo.com; 10am-4pm) unfurls in the Plaza Dorrego, with tango dancers, storytellers, food carts and 300 antiques stalls. Also close by is La Boca – or "the mouth" – due to its location at the mouth of Riachuelo river. This is another neighbourhood that has eluded the attention of developers. Locals advise against walking in the area at night, but in daylight hours, it shouldn't be missed. Attractions include La

Bombonera (the Boca Juniors football stadium), a celebrated modern art gallery at the Fundación Proa (00 54 11 41041000; proa.org) and the Caminito, an open-air museum of pastel-painted houses, which Argentinean artist Benito Quinquela Martín used as his canvas in the 1950s. A great way of getting to grips with other areas is by taking the BA Free Tour (00 54 9 11 6395 3000; bafree tour.com), which meets twice-daily at 11am in the Plaza del Congreso for a tour of downtown and at 5pm in the Plaza San Martín to explore upmarket Retiro and Recoleta. **FOOD AND DRINK**
Buenos Aires isn't all about steak. There are boards of cured meats and cheeses – or *picadas* – at neighbourhood joint, Bar el Federal (00 54 11 4300 4313; barelfederal.com.ar) at Carlos Calvo 599; A\$78 (£8) for two. Or there are vegetarian quesadillas (A\$78/£8) and home-

made lemonade (A\$24/£2.50) at organic café Hierbabuena (00 54 11 4362 2542; hierbabuena.com.ar) on Caseros 454. If protein is required, some of the best beef in BA is served at El Nacional (00 54 11 4300 2887; espacionacional.com), a few blocks away on Perú 858, where *lomo de novillo* (beef loin) with a mushroom and cream sauce is yours for A\$115 (£12). Further afield in hip Palermo, there's also Parrilla La Cabrera (00 54 11 4555 3242; parrilla lacabrera.com.ar), which is ranked among Latin America's best restaurants, thanks to its hefty slabs of kobe beef (A\$99/£10), atmospheric interior and convivial waiters. **THE ESSENTIALS**
The Guesthouse, Piedras y Caseros, Barracas, Buenos Aires, Argentina (00 54 11 4307 0828; santelmo1oft.com/the-guesthouse). Piedras and Caseros cost US\$30 (£20); en-suite Finochietto is US\$40 (£27).

GREAT GETAWAYS

JUST DESERTS
For a spot of walking and winter sun, Inntravel has a trip to Spain's arid Almería region – home to Tabernas, the only semi-desert in Europe – for £399pp. Departing on 15 November (flights extra), the self-guided break includes four nights' B&B in two hotels in the white village of Rodalquilar and the fishing port of San José. One lunch, luggage and airport transfers from Almería also included (inntravel.co.uk).

EXOTIC ISLES
Journey Latin America has a range of trips to the Galapagos Islands. A five-night hop to Quito and the volcanic archipelago costs £2,425pp, including a night in the capital and four cruising aboard MV *Santa Cruz*, plus transfers, return flights to the islands and Iberia flights from Heathrow via Madrid before 20 December (journeylatinamerica.co.uk)

WHITE CHRISTMAS
Hurtigruten has a two-for-one offer on cruises up the Norwegian coast over the festive period. The 12-day "Classic Round Voyage" trip, for example, departing from Bergen on 19 December (flights extra) costs £1,177 for two – or £589pp, full board. As well as calling at Tromsø, Kirkenes and the Lofoten Islands, you'll also visit a local Norwegian church for mass on Christmas Eve (hurtigruten.co.uk)

CAPE CRUSADER
Fleewinter has an 11-night self-drive to South Africa departing any day before 10 December for £1,992pp. Accommodation includes country lodges, tented camps and a five-star retreat, with time in Kruger National Park and a hop over to Swaziland. South African Airlines flights from Heathrow are included, with car hire, most meals and game drives (fleewinter.com).

SOMETHING TO DECLARE



BLUE-SKY THINKING
Stephen Bayley's recurring dream is of island isolation

Still searching for the perfect holiday? Dream on

Stephen Bayley



As travel irrevocably becomes more beastly, so the literature of imaginary and forgotten places steadily enlarges. Two of my favourite books of recent years have described and catalogued real territories, present and past, whose existence trembles on the incredible. The first is Norman Davies's *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-forgotten Europe*. The second is Judith Schalansky's *Atlas of Remote Islands*. In each, the frontier between fact and fantasy is disturbed.

Davies tells us about mysterious places such as Alt Clud, Tolosa and Litva... all once as much a part of Europe as Brussels and Milton Keynes are today. Meanwhile, Schalansky has mapped and described Southern Thule, Fioreana and Annobón, islands she has never visited. This omission does not stop the book having a compulsive, voyeuristic quality which is deeply pleasurable.

History and geography have their mysteries, but so too does literature. Ruritania and Narnia, of course. But who is to say that they are less real than Professor Davies's disappeared countries? Then there is our singular, or perhaps shared, dreamscape. Carl Gustav Jung had elaborate dreams about Liverpool, a city which, not surprisingly, he had never actually visited. Of course, Jung would be better placed than me to explain the sources of his nocturnal Merseyside fantasy.

I often wonder what our dream-time destinations tell us about our beliefs, preoccupations

and fears. Quite a lot, I imagine, which is why I am so interested in my own. I have a recurrent dream, always experienced in great detail, about a place where I have also never been. At least, not in this life.

Significantly, it is an island (I like comprehensible territory). It's always daylight and the weather is good. There are not many people about, other than some scowling generic Welshmen or Mediterraneans. It's low-tide. My location is always the same: just outside of town (which I suspect is a place very revealing of a psychological state). There is a cheerful café-pub-trattoria-bodega-taverna (again, perhaps I am an edge-of-frame type). This I never quite see nor access and I tend to leave the island by a form of transport about which my dream is not specific. Always, there is a residual sense of yearning for something lost, or a sense of disappointment about something not fully realised. Says it all, really.

There's a new science, although some would say pseudo-science, called epigenetics. This concerns how we know things which we have not obviously learnt, the assumption being that our DNA carries memories of languages and places. This is why people sometimes take a knock to the head and wake-up speaking Frisian. If I am analytical, my dream island is probably a conflation of Moelfre in Anglesey, where I spent some enjoyable childhood holidays, and Skopelos in the northern Aegean where I am often found nowadays. So maybe Jung's Liverpud was an epigenetic episode as well. Perhaps an ancestor of CS Lewis actually lived in Narnia.

If we could summon-up epigenetic data at will, a great deal of travel would become redundant. Why? Because, like sex, the best travel really happens in the head. But don't worry, dream on. It's not going to happen.

TALES FROM THE TREES CROWNLEY WOOD, DEVON

Trees move with the tide in this creekside woodland

Through a curtain of sycamore and holly, the water of Bow Creek dazzles with sunlight. The tide is coming in quickly. Soon the sea-river will lift the boats marooned in the estuary mud back into life and it'll be too late to get back to the pub via the stepping stones. Reluctantly, I concede it's time to move. Everything moves here, actually. From the dappled late-afternoon

sunlight in tree canopies, to the rooks crowding and croaking in the beeches, this corner of Devon almost demands recalibration to more elastic rhythms. Descending the hill to reach the waterside hamlet of Tuckenhay, it feels as if you're entering a different realm. This tributary of the Dart hangs with age. There is the sense of escape. Small wonder that the late Keith Floyd bought the pub here



Tide in: Bow Creek running through Crownley Wood

in the 1980s, naming it "Floyd's Inn (Sometimes)", as part-retreat, part-OTT madhouse. Floyd also had a hand in the survival of Crownley Woods, just across Bow Creek. When developers had their eye on it for housing, he stepped in, bought the little wood and donated it to the National Trust. And thank goodness he did. I walk, tracing a contour, through a gloriously quiet and unmanaged woodland. Sessile oak, ash, beech, sycamore and horse chestnut explode from the banks. The screech of gulls echoes from the creek below and there is a large splash from something in the water.

There is some talk of seals coming up this far to chase fish, but by the time I reach the muddy edge, only a yacht drifts lazily in its mooring. Along a path strewn with lemon-yellow sycamore leaves and sweet-chestnut husks, I reach a grassy glade and what looks like a vast, new-beamed roof on wooden struts, a ready-made wildlife watching and packed lunch point. My return to the pub is not driven by watch, but water. The geosanders are rising with the tide and I hurry over the stepping stones back to a lit fire and riotous sunset over wood and river. ● Crownley Wood is in the hamlet of Tuckenhay, five miles from Totnes

in Devon. By road, follow the A381, signposted to Kingsbridge (and Dartmouth). Turn left at the signpost for Ashprington, Tuckenhay and Bow Bridge. Trains run hourly from London Paddington to Totnes via First Great Western (08457 000 125; firstgreatwestern.co.uk). Stay at Keith Floyd's old riverside pub, now newly renovated and back to its old name, The Maltsters Arms (01803 732 350; tuckenhay.com). As well as its cosy en-suite bedrooms, this brilliant, buzzing venue does a fantastic line in fireside snugs, local beers and great food.

Rob Cowen