

'For me, the Ritz in Paris was the height of elegance during the Eighties'

First holiday memory?

Going into the water in Brighton with my mother and nanny, splashing about. I was about four and we were evacuated there, and to many other places, such as Ilfracombe, Bognor Regis and Chichester, which I don't remember.

Favourite place in the British Isles?

London. It's my home and where I grew up. It's the buzziest, busiest city in the world – certainly more than Paris, Rome or Los Angeles. I love the taxi drivers, the newspapers, the camaraderie of Londoners and all the different areas – a favourite is around Belgravia, where I live.

Best holiday?

All the times I spend at my villa in the south of France. I import friends and we play cards, poker and Scrabble. We swim and watch any one of the 500 DVDs I have. I love that house. It's very rural and cut off from everybody.

What have you learnt from your travels?

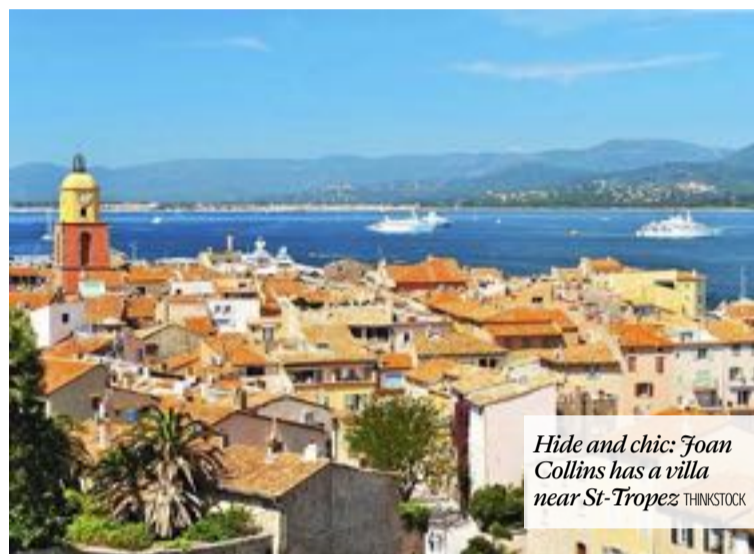
Always over-pack. I always do it, it's a running joke between my husband, Percy, and me. But a couple of years ago, we were going to Paris for four or five days and the weather was supposed to be beautiful. It was May, so I decided what I was going to wear on Friday, Saturday, Sunday etc.

It poured with rain and was freezing cold and I hadn't taken extra sweaters or boots, as I normally would. I had to buy more things to protect myself from the weather. Now, I do the complete opposite of what all the magazines say.

Ideal travelling companion?

Percy. He takes care of everything, so I don't have to worry. He makes all the bookings, he organises the car, he's totally in control and knows what's going on. He does all the things most men are supposed to do, but many don't.

We were just in Barbados and it was absolutely divine. I've loved it ever since I first went there and made a movie called *Island in the Sun* with Harry Belafonte and Joan Fontaine. This time, I performed my one-woman show at the



Actress and author, Joan Collins, is an ambassador for door-to-door luggage service, First Luggage (firstluggagevip.com).

Holders Festival, but we also stayed for 10 days in a glorious house with a wonderful sea view.

Holiday reading?

I like Ken Follett books. I've just finished one of his. I like Peter James too, he's got a new one coming out this month and has a series about detective inspector Roy Grace. I love biographies and autobiographies. The last one that I read was *Mr S: My Life with Frank Sinatra*, written by his valet, George Jacobs.

Where has seduced you?

I fell for France when I was a teenager and first went there at 14. We went first to northern France, then to Juan-les-Pins for family holidays and I've now graduated to St-Tropez. It's the culture, the food, the light, the atmosphere and the people. I spend three or four months a year in my house near St-Tropez. My French is appalling, but I find it very civilised and a lot of fun.

Worst travel experience?

Going to Jamaica a few years ago and trying to

land in a storm. The very good pilot made three attempts. It was not a gale, more of a hurricane, so eventually he went to a nearby airport instead.

The bottom line was that, the next day, they were going to take off in the same plane again, so I said: "No, I'll go in a car." We stupidly got in a car, had to go around some mountains and it took about five hours to get there. It was a pretty hairy trip, I have to say.

Best hotel?

I've always loved the Ritz in Paris. For me, that was the height of elegance and glamour. I haven't been for a while but, in the Eighties, I took up a whole floor because I was doing a mini series, called *Sins*, which I was producing and starring in. I had two children, the secretary, the husband and we were treated beautifully. It's a wonderful hotel with old-fashioned attributes.

Favourite walk?

I'm not much of a walking fan, but if I'm going to, I'll walk down Fifth Avenue or Bond Street.

Best meal abroad?

Le Club 55 in St-Tropez. They have the best salad Niçoise, the best omelettes – I like quite simple food. They also have the best ambiance.

Greatest travel luxury?

Sending my luggage ahead, so that I don't have to stand in line at baggage reclaim. I've done it for about seven years and it's brilliant – they pick it up the day before and then it will be waiting when you arrive. It's luxury beyond belief.

I didn't do it when we came back from Miami recently and had to hang about in the airport for 65 minutes. I timed it!

Where next?

The South of France and then Marrakech for somebody's wedding. I've been before and I like it a lot. I don't know which hotel – my husband takes care of all of that – I just get on the plane, honey.

Interview by Laura Holt

TRAVEL CHALLENGE CRETE

Each week, we invite three companies to offer us their best deal for a specific date. Today: a week on the Greek Island of Crete. Prices are per person, based on two people sharing. Each package includes seven nights' accommodation, transfers and Germania flights from Gatwick to Chania on 1 July.



£349
Islands of
Greece

Includes self-catering at the Camari Gardens near Rethymnon. "Just 6km west of Rethymnon – with its Renaissance architecture, Venetian fortress and beaches – this is ideal for couples," says Zoe Cornwall (01444 225641; islands-of-greece.co.uk).



£469
Sunvil
Holidays

Includes self-catering at the Afrodite Apartments near Kalives. "These apartments have a lovely pool just three minutes from a sandy beach, near the traditional village of Kalives," says Dudley der Parthog (020 8758 4758; sunvil.co.uk).



£739
Olympic
Holidays

Includes half-board at the Cavo Spada Luxury Resort near Kolymbari. "This stylish hotel is right on the beach with a good choice of restaurants and spa facilities," says Photis Lambrianides (0844 576 2386; olympicholidays.com).