

GREAT ESCAPES

JOANNE O'CONNOR



Take me there

Festival of Cycling, Blenheim



Inspired by the efforts of Team GB in the Olympic cycling events? Then get on your bike and head down to Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, where this year's Festival of Cycling is expected to be the biggest yet. There will be time trials and road races for wannabe Wiggos, family trails through the magnificent grounds, and quirky events such as bike polo and the Brompton world championships (dress code: jackets and ties), a pop-up cycle café and appearances from the GB Para Cycling team. The Festival of Cycling takes place next Saturday and Sunday. For details, click the what's on section at blenheimpalace.com



Joanne's travel clinic

Alternative Algarve

THE DILEMMA *My husband, who is a keen golfer, wants us to go to the Algarve in September. I've done some research and can't say I feel very inspired. I don't mind being a golf widow, but I don't want to be stuck in a package holiday hotel or villa with nothing to do. Liz, by email*

Much of the development along the Algarve is indeed uninspiring (unless golf buggies and high-rise hotels set your pulse racing), but fortunately there are still pockets which have resisted the onslaught of mass tourism.

The historic town of Tavira in the eastern Algarve retains a distinctive Portuguese flavour with its elegant tiled buildings, twisting streets and riverside cafés.

Just 15 minutes away, Fazenda Nova is a new boutique hotel in a traditional country house surrounded by orchards and olive groves (fazendanova.eu; rooms from €170). Each of the 10 stylish suites has its own garden or terrace and there's a lovely infinity pool and plenty of shady nooks in the gardens where you can relax with a book. The British owners, Hallie and Tim, can book golf courses for your husband and will be happy to organise anything from boat trips to yoga classes for you. ■

ON THE WEB

If you have a travel dilemma, email Joanne O'Connor at magazine@observer.co.uk. For more travel suggestions, go to guardian.co.uk/travel

Three of the best Gourmet glamping breaks

Combine luxury camping with posh nosh, cookery classes and a bucolic setting, throw in the odd celebrity chef and what have you got? This summer's hottest tickets



1 Pop-Up Hotel, River Cottage, Dorset

Luxury bell tents and cookery classes in the gardens of River Cottage HQ. Three nights from £495. Until 7 Sept (thepopuphotel.com)



2 The Big Feastival, Oxfordshire

Jamie Oliver hosts a food and music mash-up on Alex James's farm. 1-2 September. Camping from £130 (jamieoliver.com/thebigfeastival)



3 Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester

Stay in a shepherd's hut on this working farm famed for its cheese-making courses, farmshop and café. £60 a night (theorganicfarmshop.co.uk)