



HIP TO BE SQUARE AT DUTCH HOSTEL

OUR weekly feature on quirky accommodation for couples under £100 a night. This week it's...

CUBE HOUSE, ROTTERDAM

KEYWORD: Unusual.

TELL ME ABOUT IT: It's not every day you get to sleep in an architectural landmark but Stayokay – the Dutch equivalent of the YHA – has made it an affordable treat. The company has created a fantastic hostel out of Rotterdam's striking cube houses, which were designed by Piet Blom back in 1984. The innovative homes look like they have been tilted by 45 degrees but were cleverly designed and placed on pylons. The funky hostel has a range of colourful rooms to suit all budgets, from private doubles to eight-bed dorms. Breakfast and bed linen are included in the price but you will need to bring your own towels or hire them

from reception. **WHAT'S NEARBY?** The hostel is located in the heart of trendy Rotterdam – Europe's biggest port city. You are close to Oude Haven, a historic area full of bars and restaurants, while all the main sights can be easily reached on foot. The hostel is also a great base for those wanting to explore the islands of South Holland, where you will find beaches, forests and traditional villages.

ANY COOL EXTRAS? The Dutch love to cycle, so get in on the act and hire a bike direct from the hostel. And if you are keen to see how the cube houses work as family homes, join the queue of curious tourists and take a tour of one of the neighbouring properties for just a few euros.

HOW MUCH? A night in a private room at Stayokay Rotterdam, which sleeps two, starts from £46. For more information, visit stayokay.com/rotterdam.

JENNY GREEN

TURK UP THIS ONE

A WEEK in sunny Turkey for just over £200 sounds like a bargain to us – so it's our pick of the week.

Teletext Holidays is offering seven nights all-inclusive at the 3★ Kervansaray Marmaris from only £212, including return flights from Gatwick on October 13.

The family-friendly hotel features an indoor and outdoor pool, fitness centre, spa, kids' club, games room and mini-golf.

For more information, check out teletext holidays.co.uk or call 020 3001 0628.

bargain



app

TripJournal Free on Apple and Android

A HOLIDAY diary is a great way to occupy kids on long journeys and at airports. If they don't fancy making an old-fashioned scrapbook with the pics from a Polaroid camera, try an app such as TripJournal, right.

It does mean more screen time – on your iPad, most likely – but is a creative way to record all their holiday memories and even geotag their locations. You might end up with a travel blogger in the family.



SAUCY NEW ARRIVAL

WHAT do you get when you mix red and brown? A bit of a mess actually.

But Premier Inn has cooked up a condiment that combines the fruitiness of ketchup with the tang of brown sauce. The result? Purple Sauce.

You'll have to check in to a Premier Inn to try it but after some exhaustive breakfast-based research

we can confirm it tastes... pretty good.

Blackberries give it its distinctive hue but it's the vinegar that hits you first. If you like HP, you should like this.

Rooms are from £35 this summer and a cooked breakfast £8.75, should you need an excuse for a fry-up. For more info, see premierinn.com.

gadget



THE Polaroid Socialmatic (amazon.co.uk, £249.99) might be the ultimate photo sharing tool.

Not only can you upload pics instantly over wifi, you can print out on the go. It's a great way to record your travels or even give pics to people on the way.

And your mum will be glad to have a nice print of the family on the beach.

HIT THE DECKS WITH AN IBIZA DJ MASTERCLASS

WANT a career change? How does international superstar DJ sound? If you want to master the art of the mix, the crossfade and the lesser known dropsnatch, head over to Ibiza this summer.

Guests at Chic Ibiza Villas can book a beat-mixing masterclass led by a pro DJ at the stylish Es Vive hotel.

The two-hour tutorials are from £140. And you can live the DJ lifestyle at Chic Ibiza's Villa Moonraker. The 11-bed property is from £1,050 next month – a saving of 15 per cent.

See ChicIbiza.com or call 0034 638 582 290.

OR look ahead to winter. Inghams, Esprit and Ski Total are recruiting resort staff for the 2015/16 season. Chalet hosts, drivers, chefs and elves are all required. Yes, elves. Santa's Lapland in Saariselka, Finland, always

cruise news

COSTA Cruises has commissioned two new ships that will each carry 6,600 passengers – more than any other cruise ship.

And they will be the first in the industry to be powered by liquefied natural gas. The two vessels will be built by the Meyer shipyard in Turku, Finland, with delivery due in 2019 and 2020.

Costa's order is part of a multi-billion dollar contract with Meyer's two shipyards – Papenburg in Germany, as well as the Finnish one – which includes two new ships for Aida Cruises, Costa's German brand.

Michael Thamm of Costa said: "These ships will expand the leadership position for the Costa Group, the market leader in major continental European markets."



needs a ready supply of idiots – ahem, we mean well-trained actors – to help at the Christmas-themed resort. You'll need to "adhere to the Elf character at all times".

They're not advertising for a new Santa as yet but when we visited last year he was looking pretty old... Watch this space.

See workaseason.com for details or email recruitment@workaseason.com.

CYPRUS IS RELAXING PLACE FOR FAMILY HOLIDAY WITH FUN NOT FAR AWAY

Villa's away win



GRAND... Kamare's Aqueduct in Larnaca, and, right, child on dinghy at resort.



RELAXING... Balinese outdoor area, above right, and crystal-clear pool, right.



Hols for under...

£100: Try a city break in Barcelona – two nights room-only at the 4★ Hesperia Sant Just is from £99, with Gatwick flights on October 11. See lastminute.com or call 0800 083 6000.

OR escape to the Peak District – two nights' B&B at the 4★ Hallmark Hotel Derby is from £99, including a cream tea and £20 shopping voucher. Valid for arrival on August 21. See superbreak.com.

£200: Be a culture vulture in Istanbul – two nights' B&B at the 4★ Byzantium Hotel is from £189, including flights from Heathrow in October. See ba.com.

OR head to Edinburgh – two nights room-only at the 3★ Piries Hotel is from £193, including flights from Stansted on August 18. See lowcostholidays.com.

£500: Seven nights all-inclusive at the 4★ Geranios Suites in Fuerteventura is from £969, including flights on various dates from November 29 until February 28, 2016. See thesunholidays.co.uk or call 0844 204 3247.

break in Bodrum – seven nights' B&B at the 3★ Panormos Hotel is from £336. Leaves Leeds Bradford on August 13. See jet2holidays.com or call 0800 408 5594.

£750: Relax in the Costa Blanca – seven nights' B&B at the 5★ Thomson Platinum Hotel Don Pancho is from £582, including Newcastle flights on August 15. See thomson.co.uk or call 0871 230 2555.

OR get a free spa treatment with a week's B&B at the 5★ Ailia Diwa in Goa from £669. Includes Heathrow flights between August 1 and September 23. Book by August 4. See dialflight.com or call 0844 556 6060.

£1000: Seven nights all-inclusive at the 3★ Savannah Beach in Barbados is from £999, including Manchester flights on August 31. See virginholidays.co.uk or call 0844 557 3870.

OR treat yourself to seven nights' B&B at the 5★ Melia Resort & Spa in Koh Samui from £955. Includes Heathrow flights between October 19 and December 20. See turquoisholidays.co.uk.

SPOTTING three babies together on a plane would put most people off flying – and have them waving goodbye to any sleep.

But the three tots – with two pending – were part of our holiday party and we were about to embark on a five-hour flight to Cyprus.

Accepting that glamorous beach bars and party breaks were a thing of the past for us, our three sets of thirtysomethings chose a holiday catering solely for families with kids.

We decided that a beach resort in Kapparis, just north of Protaras, on the East Coast of Cyprus would be the ideal place.

On arrival at Larnaca airport, our convoy hopped in two cars all arranged by the holiday company Villas4Kids, complete with car seats and English-

GO: CYPRUS

GETTING THERE: Direct flights from London, Birmingham and Manchester with easyJet are from £66 adult return (easyjet.com).

STAYING THERE: Prices for Villa Lydia are from £850 for the week. Masseuse arranged by Villas4Kids is 20 euros (£14) per person. See villas4kids.com.

speaking drivers. Once at our destination, an abundance of goodies greeted us – local wine, pasta, cereals, milk, tea bags – creating an instant home-from-home feel.

The beds were crisp and freshly-made, and in the brightly coloured cots the little ones were soon blissfully snoozing away as we enjoyed the first balmy evening.

Little touches such as the signature Villas4Kids ducks dotted about, and baby monitors also proved a great touch.

I instantly relaxed and did a silent "whoop!" They had EVERYTHING covered, and we needn't have packed one suitcase

full of toys. Located in a quiet cul-du-sac with five other villas in the popular Bluewater Bay, our new home "Lydia" was a three-minute walk from a safe, sandy beach with lots of watersport options.

A big plus in the property was stair gates, cordoning off the kitchen area and the tiled stairs. Everyone knows babies love an assault course stair challenge.

There was a fenced-off area outside, complete with playhouse linked to the patio doors so that the children could nip in and out easily, plus oodles of toys and DVDs that kept them all amused and in the shade.

The crystal-clear pool was wincingly refreshing and serviced twice in the eight days we spent there and was great to cool off in after an hour in the scorching sunshine.

A large Cypriot-style BBQ with sink and preparation area kept the dads busy, and a Balinese outdoor shaded area with seats and table was perfect for any over-heating mums.

The local supermarket was a cab ride away and cost ten euros (£7) return. Shopping there was a joy as all the

fruit and vegetables were so juicy and plump and the delicatessen counter offered everything from olives and tzatziki to BBQ wings and T-bone peppery steaks, perfect for popping on the BBQ.

On our first shop we blew around £50 each but that covered breakfast, lunch and dinners, booze and treats and made the overall cost of the holiday very cheap.

Vanilla-hued sand and azure sea

If you don't fancy cooking each day, within five minutes walk there is a mile-long strip full of restaurants and bars.

These are all very family-friendly, with adjoining outdoor soft-play areas. There were bouncy castles galore, ball pits, and trampolines – I'm not sure who enjoyed it most.

Tony's Bar was our favourite for hanging out and enjoying a drink, a stone's throw from the villa. We

enjoyed halloumi drenched in honey and piña colodas while the kids played happily.

Our favourite seaside spot was Fireman's Beach, a 15-minute walk away.

Slightly hilly with a ramp down, perfect for prams, it had soft, vanilla-hued sand, plenty of shade and a beautiful azure sea.

If anyone needs to let their hair down, Ayia Napa is only 15 minutes away, and if the dads want to party, the mums can have a pamper session in the comfort of the villa all arranged by the villa manager.

And back in the area's capital, Larnaca, there are historic sights galore, including the spectacular Ottoman-era Kamare's Aqueduct.

Our super holiday was stress-free, thanks to the accommodation owners, who go above and beyond.

Our first family holiday was a resounding success for all. And I even managed to get a tan.

LAUREN NAYLOR

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