

# TRAVEL AGENTS OF CHANGE

from Edinburgh  
to a sustainable  
destination



stories  
of flight-free  
low carbon  
holidays



PORTY  
COMMUNITY  
ENERGY



ECCAN  
EDINBURGH COMMUNITIES  
CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK



This zine was sustainably  
Riso-printed by Out of the  
Blueprint in Leith using rice  
ink on recycled paper.

Illustrations: Pilar Garcia de Leaniz

Project leaders: Hazel Darwin-Clements & Jane Herbstritt

Produced by Porty Community Energy with support from BANZAI &  
Willowbrae Mothers Climate Action Network, funded by ECCAN

# CONTENTS

---

## **Introduction & Map...4-5**

### **Short Break**

- Both Ways to Bells Bothy...6
- A Beautiful Monastery in Belgium...8

### **On a Budget**

- Fife Coastal Path...10
- Doon South...12

### **Connecting with Nature**

- Shinrin-Yoku in Perthshire & the Cairngorms...14

### **Family Holiday**

- Skiing in the Austrian Alps...16
- Family Venician Adventure...18
- Glacial Lakes in the French Alps...20

### **Trip of a Lifetime**

- Paris, Zurich, Rome, Naples, Milan & Sunny Sicily...22
- Germany for the Game...24

### **Active Adventure**

- Biking & Sailing in the Friesian Islands...26
- Wild Camping on the Isle of Arran...28

### **Top tips...30**



# INTRO

I now find it hard to enjoy a holiday if I know that it's harmful to the planet. If the aim is to connect with different cultures, then we must keep in mind those communities in some of the most beautiful places on Earth threatened by climate collapse. If the aim is to relax and change the pace, then slow travel is the perfect way to start and end a holiday. If the aim is to spend time with loved ones then make that the focus of your holiday.

Less than 20% of the global population has been on a plane. It's time we stopped seeing it as either normal or aspirational to fly regularly for holidays. Business flights make up only 7% of the flights abroad from the UK, 64% are for holidays and 26% to visit family and friends\*.

The stories in this Zine were selected from 60+ trips that were sent by local people who have resisted the advertising and social norms, refused to take government subsidised air travel, and are finding another way to enjoy holidays.

We hope there's something for everyone, with any budget, from the solo traveller to the family adventure across Europe. We hope it inspires change and leads to sustainable holidays becoming the first choice.

Hazel Darwin-Clements





### Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

Return flight to Bali - 3.37

Annual sustainable footprint p/p - 2.3

Eating meat for a year - 2.06

Changing bulbs- 0.04

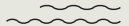
Taking the Eurostar in France cuts your journey's footprint by around 97%\*\*

\*UK data, from <https://flightfree.co.uk>. Accessed 05/12/2024

\*\*UK Government: Greenhouse Gas Reporting Conversation Factors 2022

# BOTH ways TO BELLS BOTHY

Short Break  
by **Charlie Wood**



Length of holiday: 2 days

Although this was a family trip, transport was split. Two older children and I cycled while my wife and younger child took the bus to Haddington and walked the 5 km to the bunkhouse. Cycle routes were not the most direct, around 40 km each way, but took in some fantastic East Lothian off-road trails via Ormiston, Butterdean, then skirting south of Haddington. The walkers enjoyed a lovely stretch along the Tyne, then passed a wonderful array of fields, farms and gardens between Northrig and Morham. We all met up, explored Morham and had a cosy evening together in the bunkhouse, with a few rounds of Exploding Kittens (don't panic, it's card game). All in, a fantastic wee micro adventure.

### **Highlights**

Sunday breakfast for the cyclists at The Lanterne Rouge in Gifford, a walk in semi-wild gardens around Morham Kirk and cake at Falko in Haddington.

### **Accommodation**

Bells Bothy, £45 (whole bothy, sleeps 6). This includes a £10 discount for walking or cycling!

### **Transport**

£8 by bus



# A Beautiful Monastery in Belgium

Short break  
by **Zoe Johnstone**



~~~~~  
Length of holiday: 5 Days



Belgium is such an underrated place to go and so easy to reach from the UK. It is a beautiful country with truly amazing architecture and the cities are clean, cosmopolitan and not too expensive. There's loads to do and see, from Brewery visits, funny walking tours, gorgeous museums and canal boat trips - Ghent does a city card for tourists which is packed with tickets to everything you might want to do at a bargain price. Our monastery accommodation was the highlight of our stay, so beautiful and peaceful and the buffet breakfasts were delicious and generous. Great pubs, interesting history, friendly locals, well organised public transport - it was everything I wanted it to be. Weather was 22 degrees during our April trip. Vegan food easy to find.

### **Highlights**

Staying in a monastery, House of Alijn museum, and STAM museum and cafe.

### **Accommodation**

Het Rustpunt Monastery in Ghent (£71 p/p p/n)

Sint Niklaas B&B in Bruges (£75 p/p p/n)

### **Transport**

£50 trains to Newcastle,

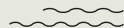
£250 ferry to Amsterdam,

£50 trains to Belgium



# FIFE Coastal Path Sleeping at Home

On a Budget  
by **Kate Thomas**



Length of holiday: 7 days

We cycled to Burntisland, stopping at the Honey-pot Creative Café in South Queensferry. The cycle to the bridge is a family favourite, so it was exciting to explore beyond it. We walked all subsequent stages to Leuchars, with start and end points reached by train or bus, buying food and ice cream at local shops along the way. The journey was part of the adventure, time to relax and chat. Our 12-year-old son Charlie enjoyed sharing our train commute (“I love this bit over the bridge - I always take a deep breath and enjoy the view”; “there are often seals on the rocks... look there!”) We usually feasted on a picnic on the way home. We loved the remote places, particularly between Crail and St Andrews. It was a wild holiday - time to be slow and connect, skim stones and paddle in the sea. All with the joy of sleeping in our own beds.

### **Highlights**

A friendly groundsman chasing us off the fancy

golf course in an electric buggy - oops!

Pizza at the bus stop in St Andrews.

Passing over the Forth twice each day - on bikes, the bus and the train.

### **Accommodation**

At home!

### **Transport**

Buses and trains, approx £60 p/p

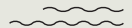


# Doon South

On a Budget  
by **Katie Renker**

I love public transport combined with active travel: a perfect match. At least, it was... until I broke my neck. But this didn't change my hatred of queuing to have liquids decanted and be patted down pre-flight while helping set the world on fire. Travelling as a full-time wheelchair-using, gummy worm on wheels, paralysed from the arms down takes a good amount of planning and luggage. Assistance has to be booked, things go wrong, and mobility aids decide to break just when you need them most. Yes, had I opted to drive instead of travelling using a dodgy bike, held together with duct tape, I might have made all my appointments and spent less time stuck. But I would have also missed so many adventures.

Sure, I was forgotten 3 times on trains and was at one point carried off by 3 off duty staff going to a heavy metal concert. Yes, 5 buses didn't stop so I had a search party on a side-by-side tandem sent out to look for me when my handcycle ran out of battery. The taxi wasn't planned, I forgot cash, and I had to ask a bemused passer-by to collapse my wheelchair (because the internet stranger who offered a lift was also in a wheelchair). But it gave me a chance to problem solve, be creative, have new experiences, slow down, laugh at myself, and witness true human kindness.



Length of holiday: 14 days

## Highlights

Buzzing across London with my wheelchair bike as fireworks burst above. Incredible selfless kindness: someone giving you the shirt off their back? How about someone giving you a £5k wheelchair from under their bum when yours breaks! The best train assistance I've ever had (big up Bristol Temple Meads and GWR).

## Accommodation

St Christopher's village London (single dorm beds from £20 p/n), Easy Hotel Cardiff (£44 accessible double), YHA Bath (£50 p/n double en-suite), Rockaway House Temple Cloud 2 bed apartment (£70 p/n)\* Couch surfing with strangers from Instagram.

## Transport

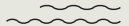
buses, trains and taxis £250

\*booked privately as boycotting Airbnb for ethical reasons.



# SHINRIN-YOKU IN PERTSHIRE AND THE CAIRNGORMS

Connecting with Nature  
by **Kathy Ka Yi Leung**



Length of holiday: 9 days

Have you ever thought about lying down on a bed of fallen oak leaves in the middle of an ancient forest? Listening to the sound of birds, trees and waterfalls? Walking through woodlands with freshest air? Standing on one of the highest mountains in Scotland watching the sea of clouds? The golden sunshine is sparkling on the waterfalls and rivers. My reverie of Caledonia. I took a wee trip at the end of October, a little break for myself, for shinrin-yoku (forest bathing). I took a bus from Edinburgh to Pitlochry. In Pitlochry I visited the River Tummel, Faskally Forest, and Garry Bridge. The following few days I went to the Queens View of Loch Tummel, Kinloch Rannoch and Falls of Bruar in Blair Atholl and The Birks of Aberfeldy. After that I took a bus from Pitlochry to Aviemore and stayed in the Cairngorms National Park for 3 days. I walked up Cairn Gorm (1,245m) before taking a night bus back to Edinburgh. A wonderful way to slow down and escape from the city.

### **Highlights**

Magnificent Highland mountains, rivers and woodlands, lovely people, and tasty local Scottish dishes.

### **Accommodation**

Pitlochry Backpackers Hotel (£30p/n),  
Coylumbridge Hotel (£91 p/n)

### **Transport**

Bus £55



# SKIING IN THE AUSTRIAN ALPS

Family Holidays  
by **Sarah Lewis**



Length of holiday: 14 days



'Family Interrailing' - not the footloose adventure of my twenties but a big hit nevertheless. Passes are free for under 12s and Edinburgh to London is free if you leave the UK (or return) on the same day! A travel day took us from Edinburgh to London to Brussels then onto the European Sleeper and we were having breakfast with our Czech friends in Liberec the following morning. After a lovely weekend catching up, we hit the Austrian Alps. Yes, Interrail is not confined to cities, and you can forget the long minibus transfers on those terrifying alpine roads and bypass the soulless airports by taking the train. Changing at Innsbruck, Ötz is where the ski valley begins. With 6 ski resorts to choose from and a regular bus running through we explored the variety of glaciers, ski tunnels and forests before finishing the week in the Aquadome thermal spa. Last stop, a pilgrimage to Salzburg and Fräulein Maria's bike tour was every bit as amazing as it sounds. Back to Brussels on the ÖBB nightjet, then Eurostar and LNER, and home.

### **Highlights**

Incredible skiing, Sölden, Obergurgl, Hochötz, and the old fashioned European Sleeper from Brussels to Dresden.

### **Accommodation**

Apartment Watson, Oberlängenfeld  
£130/night sleeps 4

### **Transport**

£1000 for family of 4



# FAMILY Venician ADVENTURE

Family Holidays  
by **Emily Wood**



Length of holiday: 11 days

When my mother suggested a family get - together to celebrate her 80th birthday, we hoped she'd choose somewhere easy to get to by public transport, perhaps off the East Coast mainline. Her thoughts lay further afield, Venice: a lot more exciting, but a logistical challenge. We travelled bus-train-bus-boat-bus-train-train-train-boat-boat from Edinburgh to Murano in 3 days, including a day in Amsterdam between the ferry from Newcastle and the sleeper to Innsbruck. Venice is a unique city, with a lot more to explore than the busy central islands. The vaporetto water buses provided a great way to get around. After 5 fantastic days in Venice celebrating and sightseeing, we made the reverse trip with an extra stopover in Innsbruck before the sleeper to Amsterdam.

### Highlights

Toasted sandwiches in Amsterdam (twice). Spectacular views from the train through the Brenner Pass and Italian Tyrol, funicular and cable car up the snowy mountains above Innsbruck.

### Accommodation

Casa Sulla Laguna, Venice, (£55 p/p p/n)  
Pension Stoid Guest House, Innsbruck (£183 p/n for a family of 5)

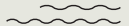
### Transport

Trains and ferries £1600 for a family of 5



# GLACIAL LAKES IN THE FRENCH ALPS

Family Holidays  
by **Maddy and Lewis Barlow**



Length of holiday: 9 days

Last summer we went to the French Alps by train. It took 24 hours. Edinburgh - London - Paris. From Paris we took the sleeper to Mont - Dauphin, the gateway to the Queyras Regional Park. It was amazing to wake up surrounded by mountains. After a delicious breakfast we walked 20 minutes to our campsite. The friendly owner upgraded us to a chalet instead of the safari tent we'd booked! There was a swimming pool and the village of Guillestre (for shops, cafes and patisserie) was only a 20 min walk. We got the free shuttle bus to the nearby swimming lake for canoeing and high into the Alps. The kind driver told us a good walking route that took us past two amazing glacial lakes and we found snow! The bus meant we could start and finish our walks at different places and didn't have to drive on the terrifyingly twisty roads. We stayed a week, and on the way home we even got a Eurostar upgrade (extra hot chocolate and pastries).

### **Highlights**

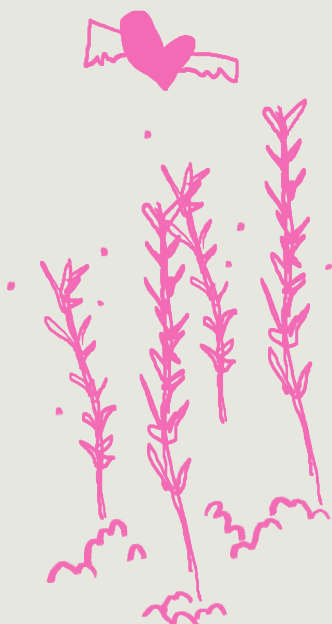
Walk in the high Alps past Lac Saint-Anne and Lac Miroir, the swimming pool, the sleeper train, and the sunset from the window.

### **Accommodation**

Camping Le Villard , Guillestre £491 for a 4 person chalet in July/August

### **Transport**

£800 for a family of 4



# PARIS, ZURICH, Rome, NAPLES, MILAN and SUNNY SICILY

Trip of a Lifetime  
by **Juliet Dunstone**



~~~~~  
Length of holiday: 18 days

I got the train from Edinburgh to Sicily, and back. I did most of the trip by myself, with city stops in Paris, Zurich, Rome, Naples and Milan, as well as spending a week in sunny Sicily. The slow pace (3 days to Palermo overland, rather than 3 hours by air) meant I got hours of personal reflection, was treated to amazing scenery and made connections with people I wouldn't have met otherwise. There was no stress about packing (no luggage allowance or restrictions), no needing to be in the airport hours ahead of a flight, and you can bring your own wine to sip as you look out of the window at the mountains. I loved the drama of sleeping on an overnight sleeper train, and the feeling of being rocked to sleep by a moving train is incomparable. The night train to Sicily gets loaded onto a ferry in the morning - one of only two places in Europe you can have this experience!

### **Highlights**

Italian food and wine! Incomparable, and really affordable. The Bernina Express Panoramic coach and a shared sauna in Zurich

### **Accommodation**

B&B Novecento, Palermo £68 p/n, Cefalù In Casa £90, p/n for a solo traveller.



# Germany FOR THE Game

Trip of a Lifetime  
by **George Gunn**



Length of holiday: 6 days



After a painful 26 year wait, Scotland's men's national football team finally qualified for an overseas tournament. With 200,000 Scotland fans making the pilgrimage to Euro 2024 (and flights snapped up months in advance) I told my friends I'd see them over there. Football has a long way to go to tackle emissions, so I wanted to make the trip without flying. Yes, the journey took longer. Yes, it was also more expensive. But travelling by train allowed me to make the journey itself into an adventure, rather than an ordeal to be endured. After an easy Lumo train to London (cheap and electric), it was only 2 hours by Eurostar to Brussels - a city I'd never visited before, but always had on the list. After a night in the Belgian capital and a morning of exploring, a €20 bus ticket took me to Germany. At the Euros, the train easily took us between host cities Dortmund, Düsseldorf and Cologne, where I had one of my most memorable experiences as a fan, watching Scotland take the lead against Switzerland in a sea of tartan and blue.

### **Highlights**

Exploring new cities and being part of a once-in-a-generation experience with a positive, party atmosphere.

### **Accommodation**

with friends

### **Transport**

£350



# BIKING & SAILING IN THE FRIESIAN ISLANDS

Active Adventure  
by **Mary Collacott**



Length of holiday: 10 days

We discovered boat and bike trips in the Netherlands (the Utopia of cycling) and decided that was the trip for us. In London we panicked realising my friend booked 2 tickets in her name, but this was quickly resolved - an advantage of not flying! We took the Eurostar to Amsterdam and then the train north to Enkhuizen to meet our boat. The company provides bikes, maps and routes. The traditional sailing barge drops you off and meets you at various points, sails between islands, provides main meals and two bunk cabins. To explore a coastal landscape by boat and bike was incredible and gave a stronger connection to the place than if we had been driving. There is something indescribable about travelling only at self propelled speed, or that of the wind. The journey was planned depending on tides, wind directions and weather - so no trip would be the same. We cycled across the Friesian Islands and down through Friesland before sailing back across to our start point at Enkhuizen. We returned via Amsterdam - London - Edinburgh comfortably in a day.

### **Highlights**

Landscapes viewed from the train (especially Amsterdam to Enkhuizen), circumnavigating islands by bike, and spending too long sea swimming having to race back to the boat!

### **Accommodation**

[www.boatbiketours.com](http://www.boatbiketours.com) Netherlands: Sail & bike Wadden Sea £1000 p/p for 8 days

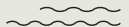
### **Transport**

£200



# WILD CAMPING on THE ISLE OF ARRAN

Active Adventure  
by **Belén Dalbesio**



Length of holiday: 4 days

Arran, often called “Scotland in miniature,” was even more incredible than we’d imagined during our bike trip. The island slowly came into view from the ferry deck. I wasn’t expecting the peaks, the turquoise bays, or the greenery. It felt like stepping into a scene from Jurassic Park. Cycling gave us the freedom and speed we needed to move forward or stop wherever we wanted, whether it was to hike to King’s Cave, or stroll around the Standing Stones. One endless, steep descent left my legs trembling, but the reward was a breath-taking view of the shimmering coastline. I felt truly disconnected from city life as if everything back on the mainland was a blur, and only the simple things mattered: finding the next local shop, staring at the seagulls, or chatting with other travellers whilst exploring a waterfall. Most nights we wild camped beside a river and huddled inside the tent for shelter with local cheese and wine. Arran proved that the best trips only need a sturdy bike and a spirit of adventure.

### **Highlights**

King’s cave

Wild camping on the beach

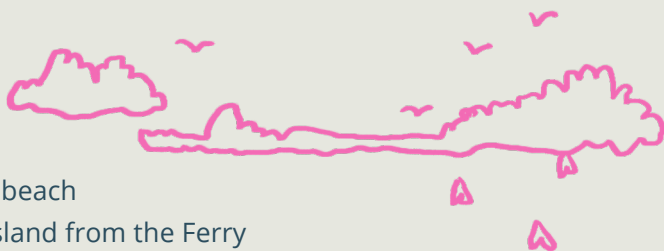
First glimpse of the island from the Ferry

### **Accommodation**

Wild camping, Seal Shore campsite, £22 p/n for a small tent

### **Transport**

Train to Troon and ferry to Arran, £24 p/p



# 10 TOP TIPS

**www.seat 61.com** for (international) train travel info (including money saving tips)

Check out **Railcards & Kids for a Quid** (under 17s travel for £1 on Scotrail)

Book **DFDS ferries** before Jan 31st and get 20% off.

**Sleeper trains with kids** make a long journey more fun.

**Long trains with kids:** snacks, games, more snacks, more games (and try the sleeper!)

See the difference ditching flying makes with the **WWF carbon calculator**

Make a flight free pledge at **www.flightfree.co.uk**

**Invite friends** over to share low carbon travel stories and bring a dish from your holiday.

Use apps like **Bounce Luggage Storage** to find luggage storage and make the most of the day.

Don't take **egg sandwiches** on the train.

With thanks to our judging panel  
Charlotte White, Robin Liebman,  
Lara Celini, Ellen Grūnewald,  
Hilary Roberts, Zoe Johnstone and  
Fiona Diggle.

Also thanks to  
Ewan Klein, Brenda Murphy,  
Michelle Lowe, Anna Hughes,  
Angela Giancola, Cheung Chi Wai,  
Rachel Sedman, Gillian Wilson,  
Jennifer Elliot and The Water of  
Leith Visitor Centre.



# Let's celebrate FLIGHT FREE HOLIDAYS and savour the POSSIBILITIES OF SLOWER TRAVEL.

Aviation causes 3.5% of global emissions, even though 80% of the global population never fly.\* Reimagining holidays could help us become more grounded in many ways.

---

**Porty Community Energy Ltd** is a not-for-profit organisation in Portobello, Edinburgh, run by people who are passionate about creative community climate action and systemic change. We're currently working on projects with bikes and shared transport, community solar, community retrofit, heat networks and of course, low carbon holidays.

---

For many more inspirational holidays please check out

**[www.portycommunityenergy.wordpress.com/travel-agents-of-change/](http://www.portycommunityenergy.wordpress.com/travel-agents-of-change/)**

\*UK data, as of 02/02/2021: <https://flightfree.co.uk/post/what-has-aviation-got-to-do-with-climate-change/>  
Accessed 05/12/2024

