



Weird and wonderful

Bored of booking the same old holiday? If the thought of a mediocre vacation leaves you tossing and turning at night, then perhaps it's time to consider a different type of summer trip. **POLLY WEEKS** picks some weird and wonderful hotels.

Barking Mad

There's nothing new about a B&B which allows guests to bring along man's best friend - except when it comes to the Dog Bark Park Inn, located in Idaho, USA.

Instead of looking up at the bricks and mortar of a 'regular' hotel on arrival, you'll find a giant dog in front of you.

The animal-shaped accommodation comes courtesy of chainsaw artists, and husband and wife team, Dennis Sullivan and Frances Conklin. The two artists took their love of art to create the world's biggest beagle.

Named Sweet Willy, the guesthouse is accessible through the dog's stomach.

There's plenty of dog memorabilia throughout the accommodation such as a bed headboard with 26 carved dogs.

www.dogbarkparkinn.com

Live Like A Hobbit

New Zealand is a popular destination for British travellers, and ever since Peter Jackson highlighted the country's incredible landscape in the Lord of the Rings trilogy it's become a tourism hot-spot.

So if you're one of the many who are keen to explore this magical country, then why not stay at the Hobbit Motels at Woodlyn Park in Waitomo. Each room is set into the landscape and comes equipped with accommodation for up to six people. The motel rooms have kitchens, so guests can imagine they are cooking up a storm for Frodo. And if that's not enough excitement, check out the plane and train nearby, which have been converted into kooky hotels.

www.woodlynpark.co.nz

Lakeside Luxury

If it's a luxury hotel you're after then the Hotel Palafitte could be ideal; where only the views can compete with the high standard of accommodation.

Situated along Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland, each room is described as a 'pavilion' and comes equipped with all the luxuries of a five-star hotel.

But while on the inside, many of the rooms appear similar to any luxurious hotel accommodation, on the outside, 24 of the hotel's 40 pavilions are actually situated on top of the lake.

Resting on stilts, these rooms ensure that guests enjoying a cocktail on their balconies feel like they're on a boat deck, rather than in a sturdy cabin.

www.palafitte.ch



Hub Of Ideas

Capsule hotels (where guests sleep side-by-side in individual pods) have raised eyebrows in the past. Now the hotel '9h' in the region of Kyoto, Japan, has taken this minimalistic approach to the next level.

Offering 'sleeping hubs' - something that won't appeal to claustrophobics - the hotel is targeted towards people who are visiting the area for a short stay.

The people behind 9h have deduced that, on average, people require a nine-hour hotel stay. So when their guests arrive at the hotel they are expected to spend one hour showering, one hour resting and then seven hours sleeping.

After checking in, guests of 9h are invited to follow the arrows and multi-lingual descriptions on the floor towards the lockers, then the showers, and finally, their individual hubs. It may not be a luxury hotel, but a visit will definitely provide a memorable stay.

www.9hours.jp

Jet In For A Night

When in Stockholm, you'll be hard pushed to find accommodation more convenient for Arlanda airport, than this hostel.

Named the Jumbostay, it is a converted 747 jumbo jet.

The plane, built in 1976, was previously flying the skies for Pam Am, Singapore Airlines and Transjet.

Then, in 2008, the jumbo was transformed into stop-over accommodation.

The interior maybe unrecognisable from its previous incarnation, but one look out of the windows and onto the runway, and guests will be in no doubt that this is a hostel with a difference.

Aviation enthusiasts will be tempted to pay a little bit extra for a room with a view - notably the cockpit which sleeps two.

www.jumbostay.com



Luxury on the high seas



For those that dream of adventure at sea but also hark after the finer things in life, ScicSailing offers the ultimate vacation. EMMA KNIGHTS sets sail on a voyage of luxury in the Aegean.

As we pulled into a deserted bay the setting sun painted the sky a dusky orange and a cast a mesmerizing glow over the mysterious silhouettes of the Turkish coastline.

Aboard our luxury yacht, my boyfriend Oli and I sipped cocktails while watching the closing moments of one of Mother Nature's most spectacular of shows.

It was one of those wonderfully simple yet utterly enchanting moments that you feel you will remember for a lifetime, and it was the perfect end to one of our many wonderful days aboard Nemesis.

We spent a week on Nemesis, one of ScicSailing's fleet of five beautifully crafted wooden ketches. Starting at the Turkish town of Bodrum, we spent some time sailing along south west Turkey's rugged coastline and then entered Greek waters visiting the charming islands of Symi, Tilos, Nisyros and Kos.

And while it was wonderful exploring the many different places, for us the highlight of our vacation was the time we spent on Nemesis herself.

Throughout our week's holiday with ScicSailing - which stand for Sailing Cruises in Comfort and is pronounced "Chic Sailing" - not once did we see a classic sailing boat as beautiful and as luxurious as our own.

Twenty-four metres long and six-and-a-half metres wide with two masts and five sails - Nemesis looked simply majestic as she sailed in the brilliant blue sea, and we felt like royalty aboard her.

The whole ScicSailing experience is the inspiration of ScicSailing's Dutch co-owner Loes Douze who has combined her lifelong passion for sailing with a touch of luxury - and this wonderful mix creates the most magnificent of holidays at sea.

Each morning we would wake up to a

different yet equally beautiful view from the windows of our cosy en-suite cabin. Sometimes we would open our curtains to see a desolate Robinson Crusoe-like cove or a quiet little harbour where we could watch fishermen at work, while other times we would be in a bustling marina full of scores of beautiful boats old and new.

After we enjoyed a delicious breakfast of fresh fruits, meats and cheeses with our fellow guests, our experienced captain Selahattin would roll out his sea charts and talk to us about what adventures lay ahead for the day - be it visiting some ancient ruins, discovering a Treasure Island-like deserted bay, or enjoying an epic sail in the sunshine.

One of the nice things about ScicSailing holidays is that only the start and finish points are fixed, and so for the rest of the week you are quite literally as free as the wind to do whatever takes your fancy.

For us sailing was always top of our list - seeing Nemesis in all her glory and feeling the wind in our hair as we sunbathed on the front of the deck while drinking gin and tonics and enjoying the vast views of the shimmering water, wide open skies and unfolding landscapes.

If it was shade we were after then there was nowhere better to relax than amongst the giant comfy cushions at the back of the boat - a perfect place to curl up and lose yourself in a book or chat to the captain and our fellow guests who we quickly became friends with.

And once the boat dropped anchor it was wonderful being able to just jump over the side into the crystal clear water for a refreshing swim or a spot of snorkelling.

There was also the chance to go exploring on our own in Nemesis' canoe as well as experience the thrill of waterskiing, and Oli, never one to miss an opportunity for fishing, also enjoyed spending many an hour casting a line off the boat and sharing fishing tips with the captain.

As if we were not spoilt enough by our spectacular surroundings, the captain and his three crew members made sure we had a five star experience with their superb service.