

8 SEPTEMBER 2023

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Evening Standard

Charlize
Theron
on learning
to enjoy
the ride

Happiness:
where to
find it, how
to keep it
and why it
matters

The ecstatic art of Will St. John

VENDING MACHINE PIZZA REVIEWED · THE SAGA OF DATING AS A DISABLED WOMAN · MAWAAN RIZWAN'S (VERY FUNNY) MY LONDON

AWAY GAME

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I

love a city break: the culture, the wine, the carbs, they're great. But with punishing itineraries — must, see, everything! — it's also exhausting. I often return from a weekend away more

tired than ever. With this in mind, as my best friend and I touch down at Oslo airport, we discard our packed itinerary and make a commitment: to come home feeling restored. To be candid, I'd recently lost my dad so I was already knackered, I needed to go slow.

Oslo is a good place for this. Surrounded by the clear waters of the Oslofjord on one side and dense pine forests on the other, the city has a less frenetic vibe than other capitals of culture. Locals also take wellness seriously here, but in a light, non-serious way, which resonates nicely with my own approach as a life coach (and person).

Our first stop is The Well, a sprawling spa resort 20 minutes outside the city. Best described as a relaxation fortress, it has more saunas, steam baths, pools and waterfalls than you can imagine. Phones are not allowed and nudity is almost entirely mandatory (bar a plush bathrobe), which makes for a uniquely freeing and restorative stay.

We swim (naked) in the outdoor pool and meditate (naked) in the sculpture-filled forest. We eat and sleep well. All sense of time disappears as we work our way through The Well's extensive programme of 'rituals' — a floating gong bath in a warm cave pool; a Moroccan rhasoul with multiple scrubs and masks; a soothing meditation in the Japanese bathhouse. But the true highlight ritual is 'Aufguss', where a sauna master (#jobgoals) places essential oil-filled balls of ice on to heated coals and then hypnotically dances and twirls towels to music, blasting scented heat. It's intense and emotional. Good for grief.

Back in the city, aside from a few non-negotiables, we make peace with Fomo. We let time flow and walk almost everywhere. With the vast, art deco-style Sommerro hotel as our base, we wander down to the fjord for a pint of fresh prawns with crusty warm bread, then through the Akershus Fortress, along Karl Johan Gate and into Slottsparken, or Palace Park. We stop liberally at pastry shops. We exchange our supper booking at high-brow Thai



PUTTING THE GO SLOW INTO OSLO

The real way to master a city break is to perfect the art of doing very little, discovers Lily Silverton

eatery Plah for its informal, street-food sister restaurant, Ahann (relaxed, delicious, perfect).

We spend two blissful hours at Kok (pronounced 'cook', thanks), the city's renowned floating sauna, alternating private sweat sessions with refreshing leaps into the sea, and we stroll along the river and enjoy a mind-blowing brown cheese and jam waffle at Haralds Vaffel in the Grunerløkka district (think Hackney). We peruse the vintage shops and unhurriedly drink coffee at Tim Wendleboe. We only speed up to get to a Bruce Springsteen concert, having been offered VIP tickets by Sommerro's Guests Relations Manager, Dominic, just an hour before it starts.

Oslo is a marked contrast from the city breaks we used to embrace: frenetic itineraries and shot after shot of culture. I leave feeling sated, but also calm: I'm a convert. (thewell.no; sommerrohouse.com)

YOUR GUIDE TO... RYE

From fine art to bacon sarnies: your weekend sorted



Best place for art: **McCully & Crane**

Previously in east London, this pair are now Rye's best art purveyors with their gallery and shop.



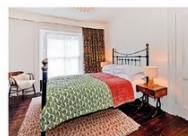
Best place for interiors: **Soap & Salvation**

Housed on the old Salvation Army site, it's brimming with vintage pieces for all your home decor needs.



Best place for food: **Whitehouse Rye**

Run by chef Rosie Bates and everything is baked on site. Try the posh bacon sandwiches with chilli jam.



Best place to stay: **Landgate House**

The Grade II-listed property is interiors porn at its best. From £500 per night (camberholidavcottages.co.uk)



Best place to see: **Mermaid Street**

Wander down this cobbled road for beautiful kitchenalia shops and the (haunted?) Mermaid Inn.

THE INTEL

People, places and trends happening around the world



KEEPING STANDARDS

Fan of a spontaneous sleepover? The One Night Standard app was created by the Standard hospitality group, catching the best rates on same-night stays at any of its hotels. Certainly beats a long Uber ride home.



WORKS OF FICTION

Amazon shoppers reported a rise in sales of fake, AI-generated travel guides, so before clicking 'Buy Now' look out for the classic tropes of a fake: AI-generated or stock images, few details on the author and all five-star reviews.



LONDON CONFIDENTIAL

For all the insider info, blogger Gina Jackson's new directory of London's top hotels is a must for design aficionados, gourmants and everyone in between. 'An Opinionated Guide to London Hotels' (£10.95; Haxton)

