

ON SUNDAY  
**THE INDEPENDENT**



3 January 2016

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SORTED**

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**RICHARD BRANSON**

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A protester  
in Bahrain  
condemns  
yesterday's  
execution  
of Shia cleric  
Sheikh  
Nimr al-Nimr

**‘DAMN YOU’**

The execution of 47 prisoners by the beleaguered  
Saudi Arabian regime yesterday set off a chain of protests  
worldwide. Insiders put the killings, which provoked fury in Iran,  
down to a minister ‘desperate to prove his authority’.  
No 10 is yet to deliver an official response

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ROBERT FISK: ‘THE WEASEL WORDS OVER THIS BUTCHERY’ P5

NO 1,348







## TRAVEL

## THE HOTEL

**Masseria Trapania** is a 16th-century farmhouse near Lecce, Puglia, that has been converted into nine suites. Opening at Easter, it has original features, plus more modern additions including a pool (trapania.com).



## THE TOURS

**The Natural Adventure Company** has new self-guided walking holidays to destinations including Albania, Romania and Greece. Prices start at £390pp for a week, excluding flights (thenaturaladventure.com).

## THE FLIGHT

**Cathay Pacific** is to start flying to Hong Kong from Gatwick starting in September. Tickets for the new service are in the airline's current flight sale, with economy returns from £609 (cathaypacific.com).

## B&amp;B AND BEYOND

## Such a victorious transformation

North Norfolk's Victoria Inn has welcomed guests for almost 200 years. **Nicola Trup** checks out its latest addition



A trip to the British seaside – particularly the wind-swept tip of north Norfolk – may not be top of everyone's to-do list at this time of year, but the right place to stay can make even the most rain-soaked winter walk invigorating rather than intolerable.

Between the small towns of Burnham Overy and Wells-next-the-Sea – just inland from one of the area's most beautiful beaches – is the Victoria Inn, a restaurant with rooms that dates back almost 200 years. Located on the Holkham Estate, the place has a hint of the hunting lodge about it – mounted antlers in the restaurant, rooms named after local shooting drives – but if, like me, you're more into fireplaces than firearms, you'll still feel right at home.

## The bed

I stayed in Emmerdale, one of the four suites and six standard rooms in the newly converted Ancient House (actually built in 1885), which opened opposite the main inn last May. It's traditionally decorated – plush headboard, antique dressing table, framed landscape prints – though a neutral colour scheme and subtle fabrics stop it from crossing the line into fusty.

There's a separate living room, complete with sofa, armchairs and

TV, but as it was separated from the bedroom by two extremely heavy fire doors, which resisted being wedged open, I found myself too lazy to move between the two, and spent most of the time in the cosy bedroom instead (there's a TV in here too). One thing the living room does have going for it, though, is the minibar, which comes with a complimentary mini prosecco and a bottle of fresh milk. Alongside the tea and coffee-making facilities are some posh biscuits.

The bathroom is a vision of white and cream, with a standalone bath (the hugest I've ever encountered) and separate shower – both with slightly overcomplicated taps – and generous quantities of Noble Isle toiletries.

## The breakfast

Breakfast is served in the restaurant. As well as a full English, eggs Benedict, cereals and so on, there are a couple of more interesting items to choose from. I went for smoked

**JUST INN TIME**  
The Victoria (main); a double bedroom (above); the quayside at Blakeney (top right)  
NICK SMITH  
PHOTOGRAPHY.  
ISTOCKPHOTO

haddock, which came with a perfectly poached egg and tangy hollandaise. Weeks later, I'm still craving the taste of the deliciously salty fish. A breakfast bonus was the availability of decaf tea which, as a non-caffeine-drinker (fussy, I know), I'm always pleasantly surprised to find on the menu.

## The hosts

Although the estate is owned by the 8th Earl of Leicester, you're unlikely to find him working on reception. Instead there is a team of dedicated staff across the restaurant and rooms. On arrival, the heating and hot water in my room weren't working, and the way this was dealt with was like a masterclass in customer service. As I put on the fan heaters (which come as standard in each room) a little bottle of champagne was brought round, along with the key to another room to shower in. By the time I finished dinner a couple of hours later the problem was sorted.

**OFFERS**

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## CRUISE REPORT CAROLINE HENDRIE

## A ship-shape year of bigger, more innovative launches

**Last year ended** with the launch of the third largest cruise ship in the world, *Norwegian Escape*. It was a year in which six new ships, including the biggest for the UK market, *Britannia*, set sail, increasing cruise passenger capacity by a total of 15,700.

This year, the cruise ship boom is almost doubling. Eleven new-build ships, adding 30,700 berths, will be leaving their shipyards, though

nearly half of them will not vie for our custom. *Ovation of the Seas* and *Genting World* are bound for the Far East while *AidaPrima*, *AidaTui* and *Mein Schiff 5* are destined for the German-speaking market.

The ship making the biggest splash in 2016 is *Harmony of the Seas*, for 5,497 passengers, making its maiden voyage in May (0844 493 3033; [royalcaribbean.co.uk](http://royalcaribbean.co.uk)). A cruise



On the horizon: New ships are aiming high THINKSTOCK





