

take 3
OUR Take Three column gives a trio of cut-out-and-keep ideas. This week we're looking at the Austrian festive tradition of Krampus – a half-goat, half-demon creature which roams streets in search of mischievous youngsters. You'll be safe with our top picks to Salzburg.

PEP THINGS UP IN SALZ



BUDGET – The FourSide Hotel: You will certainly feel safe from Krampus on the upper floor of this bright hotel, just a three-minute drive from the centre of Salzburg. The modern FourSide Hotel is ideal for those who just need a comfy base for exploring, although there is a restaurant and bar on site for a lightcap or easy dinner. Three nights' room-only is from £176pp, based on two adults sharing. Flights from £40 return at ryanair.com.



BARGAIN – The Dorint City-Hotel: Close to the Baroque Old Town, the Dorint City Hotel will have you next to all the festive action and some of the stranger Krampus-themed events. Those visiting on December 21 will be able to visit the Perchtenlaufen Christmas market for cosy tipples – keep your eyes peeled for local residents in Krampus masks. The hotel itself features a restaurant and bar as well as small spa. Seven nights' room-only at the Dorint and including flights on December 16 is from £719pp.



BLOWOUT – The NH Collection Salzburg City: If you're after something swish and fancy, but still close to all the fun, the NH Collection is the place to go. As well as sporting facilities such as tennis, golf and a fitness centre, there's also 24-hour room service so you can take advantage of the lush rooms that even Santa would be jealous of, with excellent views of the town. Seven nights' room-only is from £1,092pp, based on two adults sharing and including flights from Liverpool John Lennon Airport on December 16. To book any of the above, see firstchoice.co.uk.

news
 GET in early and bag your-self one of Celebrity Cruises new itineraries for Alaska for the 2025-2026 season, when three of the award-winning line's ships, Celebrity Edge, Celebrity Solstice and Celebrity Summit, return to the glacier waters. Alaska is the ultimate destination for nature enthusiasts to explore glaciers, encounter wildlife or discover remote wilderness. For cruisers looking to voyage

the adventurous Inside Passage, Celebrity is offering two round-trip options, with Solstice departing from Vancouver and Edge departing from Seattle and for those looking to make the most of the waters and shores. Guests travelling on Celebrity Summit will have the option to add on a two to six night pre or post land tour of the region with a CruiseTour experience, staying in authentic lodges and travelling



lates
 ...IT'S A KRACKER: Three nights room only at the 4★ Avena Boutique Hotel in Krakow, Poland is from £379pp leaving Edinburgh airport on December 26. See loveholidays.com ...TURK A CHANCE: A week room only at the 5★ Wymara Resort and Villas in the Turks & Caicos is from £2,689pp leaving Heathrow airport on selected dates June 1-23. See

dialflight.com or call 0207 962 9933. ...ON THE TRAIL: A night self-catering at The Wee Trailer, a former military tank recovery trailer, with living-room/bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, outdoor tub and decking in Ballochnech, Stirling is from £150, two sharing. See campyandstars.co.uk ...WE ARE SAILING: A 14-night Discovering Cultural Morocco cruise onboard Fred Olsen's

Balmoral is from £1,169pp. Departs Southampton on January 18 and calls at Madeira, Agadir, Casablanca and Tangier (all Morocco), Lisbon and Leixoes, for Porto. See cruisekings.co.uk or call 0800 121 4776. ...HIT THE ROAD: Four days hire of Sukhi's Motorhome (sleeps six) from Edinburgh is from £424, including insurance, roadside assistance and 100km daily mileage allowance. See yescapa.co.uk



SANTA'S Official Post Office in Rovaniemi, Finland, is looking for novice elves to help with the 30,000 daily letters from children around the world this Christmas. In return they'll get to stay in Santa Claus' Cabin which has been listed on Airbnb free of charge. It's been given a 'furniture makeover complete with traditional Lapland decorations and a wardrobe of elf-wear. Guests will be treated to meals, a snowmobile activity, a trip to see the northern lights and - the most Finnish experience of all - a traditional sauna. Booking for this especially festive stay opens December 11 at 10am at airbnb.com/santa

FANCY FRENCH CHATEAU OFFERS A PERFECT ROMANTIC ESCAPE IN 'STUNNING' SAVOIE

Candie hits the sweet spot

IT was time to earn hubby brownie points and whisk my wife Louise away on a lovely romantic trip.

But where to go? When planning a long weekend from Scotland, it's easy to think of somewhere like Prague or Barcelona. Or even Paris. I mean what can be more romantic than a couple of nights in the city of love? Well I can tell you – a few nights at the magnificent Chateau de Candie, smack-bang in the middle of France's gorgeous Savoie region. We jumped on a plane to Geneva, grabbed a hire car and just over three hours after leaving Edinburgh, we were rolling up to this exquisite 14th century hotel. Louise yelped with delight when she caught a glimpse of what would be our home for the next few days. "Stunning" was all she could mutter – a word we'd find ourselves using rather a lot over the coming weekend. The autumnal colours of the ivy wrapped themselves around the building's facade, adding to the charm and allure of this fabulous castle. Inside the grand entrance left us with jaws hitting the floor. Chateau de Candie is what you'd call a real French fancy!

Own vineyard
 Situated in a six hectares of countryside, its surrounded by woodland and its very own vineyard, with vistas of the nearby town of Chambéry and the Chartreuse mountains looming in the distance. Inside the hotel is a beautiful mix of the building's ancient history and bold modern decor. Each of its 25 rooms are individual in appearance and style; from gorgeous comfort rooms to opulent prestige rooms, there is a style and price point for all who want to stay at Chateau de Candie.

We were in the a 'simply stunning' (told you we used that word a lot) Duplex Suite, with a king-size bed, a deep free-standing bath, all the mod cons you'd expect, and if needed, a secret second bedroom a floor up if you are bringing the family with you. If you really want to push the boat out, try the exceptional Tower Suite. Three floors of luxury, including a double bathtub, situated in a circular tower overlooking the hotel grounds and pool. I found this exquisite hotel on the Purple Summer website. They specialise in small, exclusive properties in Majorca and France including this luxury Savoie accommodation here.



MAGNIFIQUE .. Gary and Louise, below, loved the spectacular 14th century hotel



CHARM .. shores of Lake Annecy, chateau's luxury room, autumnal exterior and meal

SEE THE HOLIDAY VIDEO: thescottishsun.co.uk



In summer months, lounging by the swimming pool or on one of the huge luxurious four-poster sun beds scattered along the hotel's veranda, reading a book, sipping a cocktail or two, would have made the perfect lazy holiday for us. The following day we visited the jewel in the crown of the Savoie region, Annecy. This stunning town, 30 minutes north of Chambéry, is picture postcard perfect. Situated on the shores of crystal-clear Lake Annecy, it is known as the Venice of the Alps due to the Thiou River that flows through it. The winding, narrow old town streets and bridges attract tourists, year-round, populating the many cafes, bistros and patisseries. Again, cafe culture was in

full swing here, you really are spoilt for choice as to where you can sit and take it all in. The old town's main attraction is the Palais de l'île, a 12th-century house that sits on an island in the middle of the canal. You will know when you're near due to the throng of tourists all gathered on the bridge opposite to snap a picture. Returning to the hotel later that evening, it was the turn of La Cantine, the chateau's exceptional restaurant, to steal the limelight. The restaurant is always busy and its reputation pulls in diners

from miles around and we quickly found out why. Delicious highlights were the butternut squash veloute, cured trout starter and deconstructed vegetable lasagne main course. The food was matched by the impeccable service. Make sure to wash it all down with a glass or three of the house Candie wine, which is made with grapes picked from the hotel's own vineyard. Our last day was spent along the shores of yet another spectacular scenic treat, Lac du Bourget, the largest lake in France and it just happens to be where the hotel's partner restaurant, Li Lido, is located. Sitting down in the large circular restaurant we were presented with unobstructed views

do, as we couldn't visit the Auvergne-Rhône-Alps region and not go up a mountain. So we jumped in our motor and drove to the top of Mont Revard. Arriving at the summit you could hear people gasping as they held up their phones to photograph the last rays of sunlight creeping over the epic peaks of the Juras lighting up the sky with a golden glow. We had just made it to the top in time, and the view was breathtaking. Feeling pleased with ourselves we made it back down to the hotel, ending our fabulous French long weekend at the bar with Champagne and oysters. Well it was a romantic escape after all!

GARY SIMPSON

GO: SAVOIE, FRANCE

GETTING THERE: EasyJet.com have flights from Edinburgh to Geneva from £16pp one-way. **STAYING THERE:** Rooms at Purple Summer's Chateau de Candie start from £174 a night, bed and breakfast. See puresummer.com and chateaudecandie.com/en **MORE INFO:** Europcar hire from around £90 per day. See europcar.co.uk/en-gb

