

# Travel

**'Every so often the deafening boom of some calving ice would echo through the valley'**

Phoebe Smith goes glamping in Greenland

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GETTY IMAGES

**2** Aurel in Provence

**BEST PLACES TO GO ON HOLIDAY**

**Carolyn Boyd** gets our 10-page France special under way, picking out the very best holidays for the coming year

**BEST FOR FAMILIES**

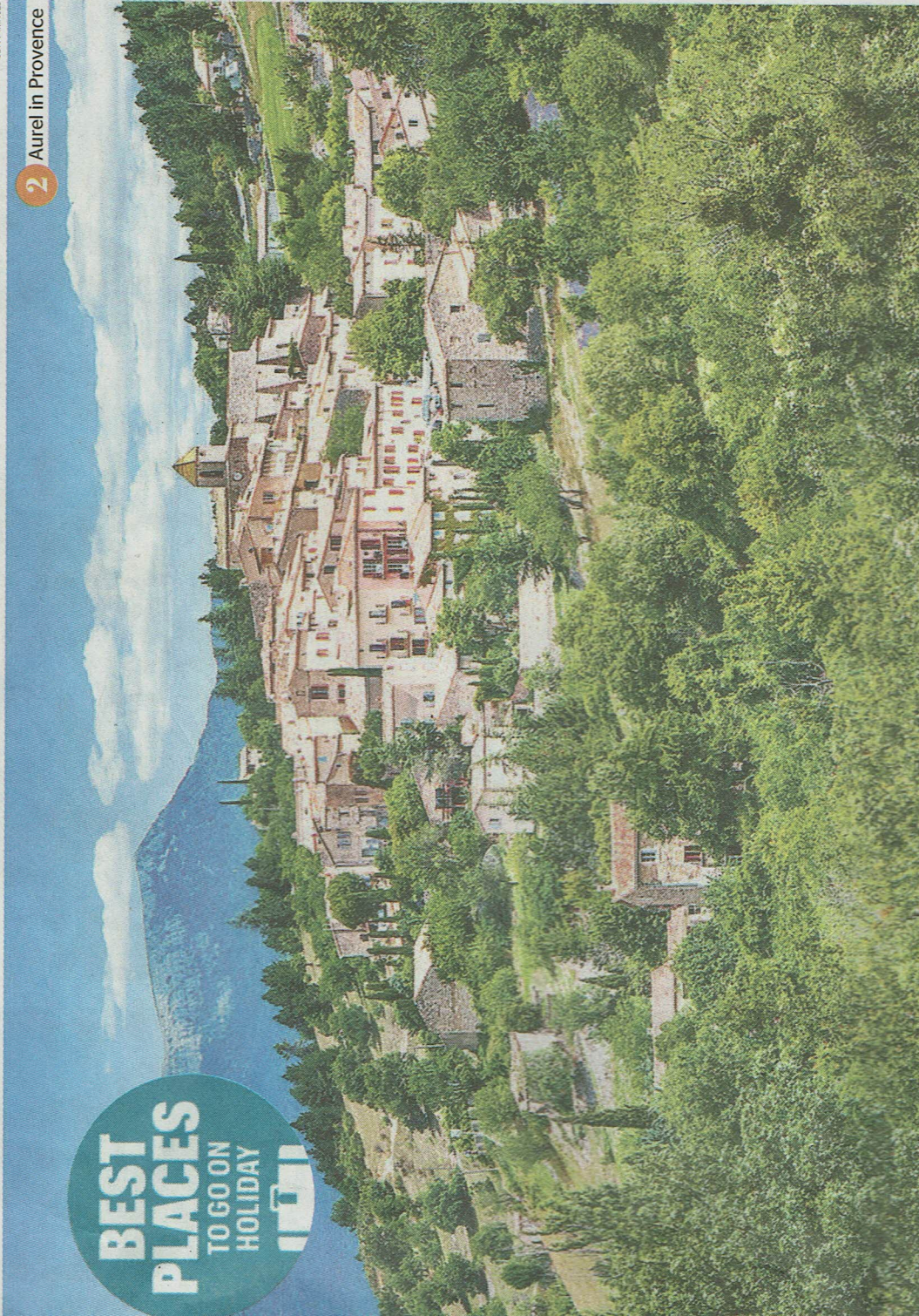
**1 Luxury château in the Languedoc**

It sounds like a winning family formula: take a wine estate, convert its château into bright self-catering apartments, and throw in free activities and a kids' club offering crafts, baking and petanque, leaving parents to enjoy the fruit of those surrounding vineyards. That's Château les Carrasses, which this year has added a play area and cabin in the nearby woods, as well as experiences including kids' trout-fishing lessons.

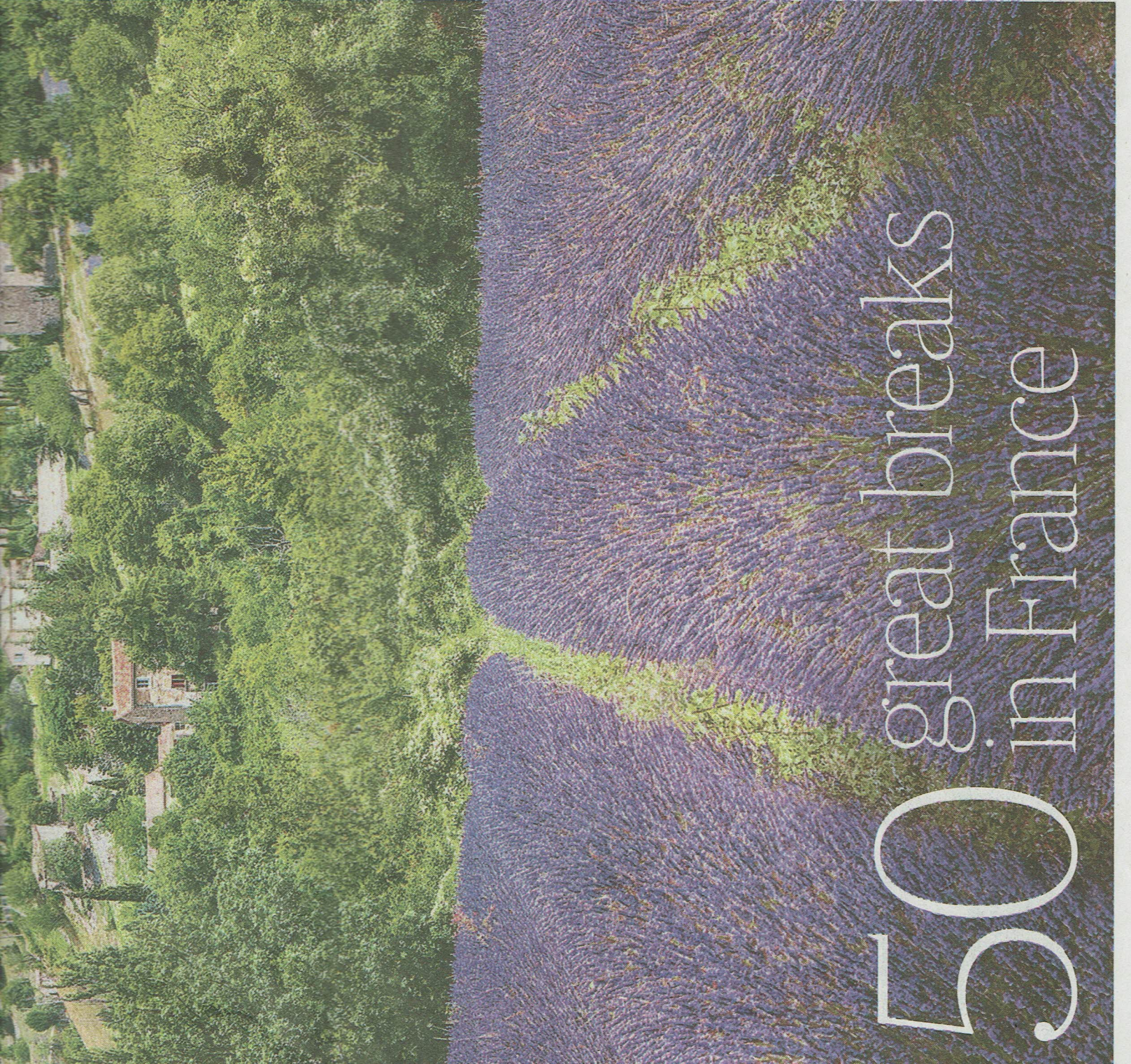
**Details** One night's self-catering apartment for four from £190; five Kids' Club sessions costs £105 per child (lescarrasses.com). Fly to Béziers with Ryanair

**2 Go camping in style in Provence**

Check into the striking lakeside







# 50 great breaks in France

formula: take a wine estate, convert its château into bright self-catering apartments, and throw in free activities and a kids' club offering crafts, baking and petanque, leaving parents to enjoy the fruit of those surrounding vineyards. That's Château les Carrasses, which this year has added a play area and cabin in the nearby woods, as well as experiences including kids' trout-fishing lessons.

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## 2 Go camping in style in Provence

Check into the striking lakeside cabins at Les Cabanes des Grands Cépages for a vintage glamping break, just a popped cork from the prestigious vineyards at Châteauneuf du Pape. The sustainable-wood cabins, sleeping two to five people, are built on the lake — on stilts on the shore or set into the rocks, each with a shady terrace — comfortable beds, heating and air con. As well as the vineyards of the southern Rhône you'll find spectacular countryside walking and cycling on your doorstep — including the distinctively jagged Dentelles de Montmirail mountain range, Mont Ventoux and, within easy reach, hilltop villages such as Aurel.

**Details** Seven nights' B&B from £1,106 (oneoffplaces.co.uk). Take the Eurostar to Avignon

## 3 Explore Pas-de-Calais

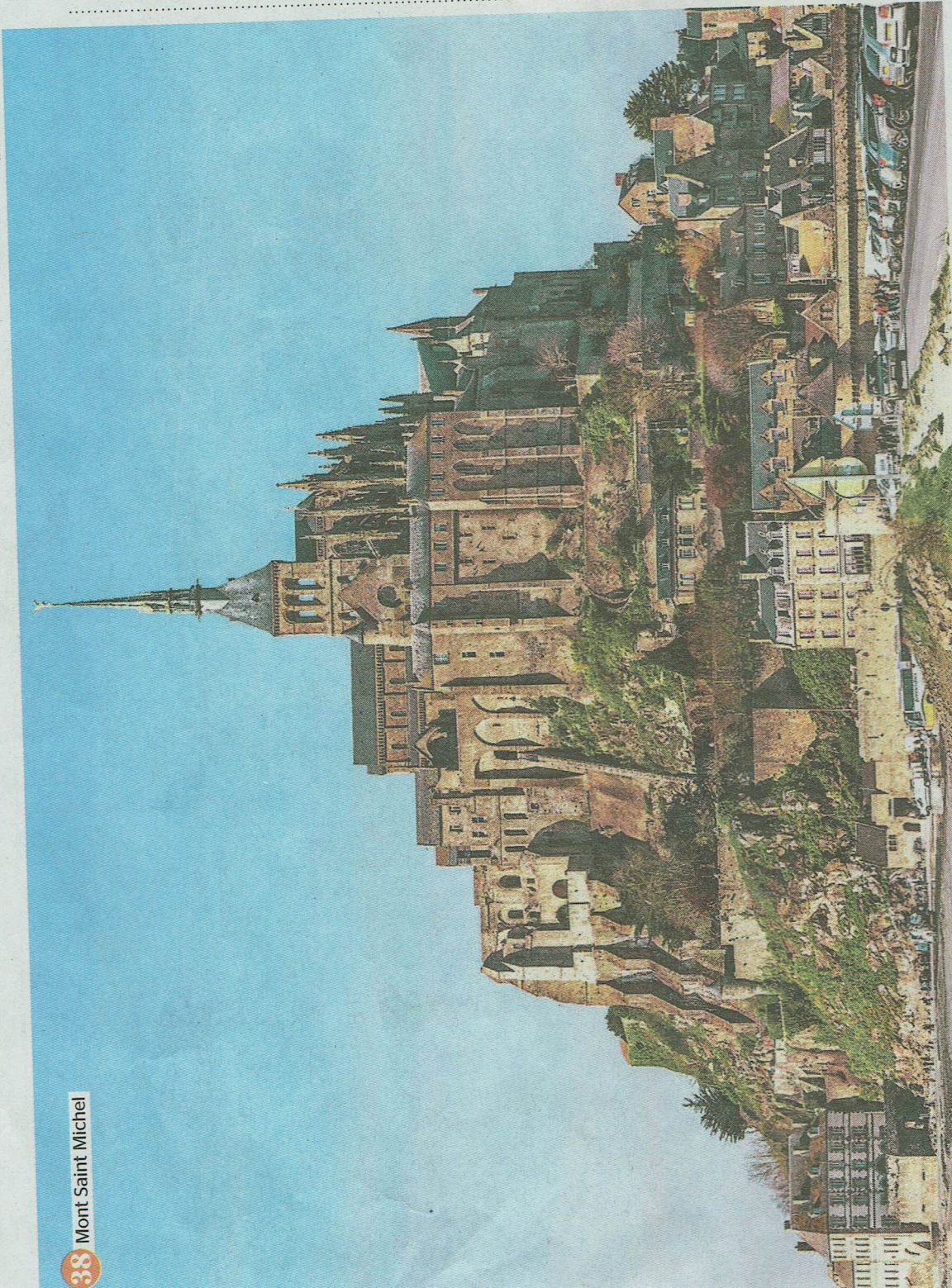
The ease of the cross-Channel hop to Calais makes it a tempting proposition with the family; this year a fire-breathing, water-shooting dragon may just seal the deal. Ride the 45ft-high, 75ft-long robot along the Calais seafront (£8 adults, £5.50 children; compagniedudragon.com) before branching out to explore the Opal Coast — 75 miles of wide, golden-sand beaches. Base yourselves at the luxurious B&B Maison 76, which has a pool. It's in the food-loving town of Montreuil sur Mer, a 30-minute drive from the newly expanded Nausicaa aquarium (nausicaa.fr).

**Details** B&B family rooms from £200 (maison76.com). Take the Eurotunnel to Calais ▶



38 Mont Saint Michel

GETTY IMAGES, JEROME MONDIERE



◀ dessert crêpe, while in Plerguer you can learn about cider production at Cidre Sorre with a multimedia exhibition, then enjoy a tasting. **Details** Two nights' B&B from £252pp, including return ferry crossing (brittany-ferries.co.uk)

to enjoy the Instants d'Absolu Ecolodge & Spa, next to the Lac du Pêcher and near the Pinatelle forest, which has been developed using low-impact, environmentally friendly materials. The converted farmhouse has 12 calming rooms, with beautiful views over the remote landscape, and a spa. Hop in the outdoor hot tub that

42 Normandy eco retreat

Reduce your carbon footprint by taking Brittany Ferries' LPG-powered ship *Honifleur* from Portsmouth to Caen-Ouistreham. Launching this summer the 1,680-passenger vessel will be the most eco-friendly operating in the English Channel. From the ferry port

**T** Missed our Italy special last week? Visit [4times.co.uk/](http://4times.co.uk/)

44 Digital art in Bordeaux

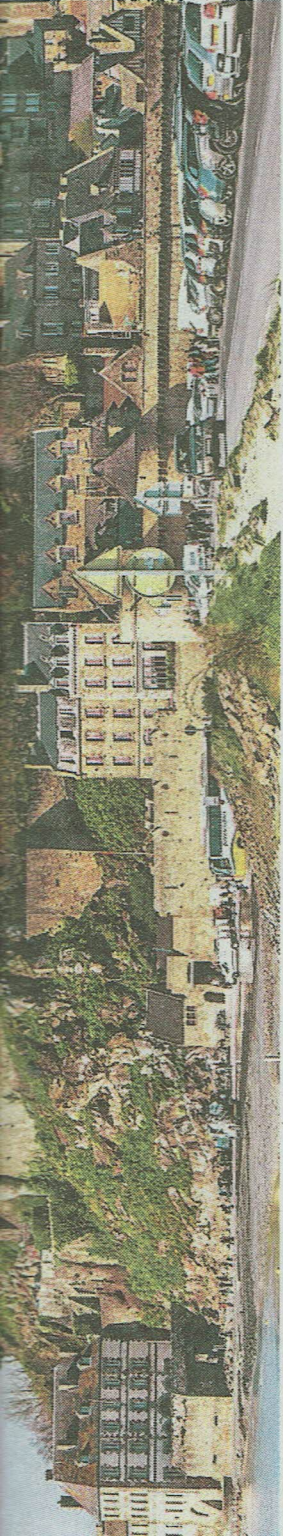
Since the Cité du Vin museum opened in 2015, Bordeaux's Bassins à Flot district has become the city's most happening quarter. Last year the Musée Mer Marine (museum of the sea and navy) opened on the banks of the Garonne. This year it's all about the Bassins des Lumières — Second World War bunkers transformed into the largest digital art centre in the world, with works by artists such as Gustav Klimt projected on to the vast walls and reflected in the water, and plenty of immersive exhibitions (bassins-lumieres.com). Opening in April, this should trump even its Parisian sister site, the Atelier des Lumières, set in an old iron foundry. Base yourself in the newly opened, 40-room Hotel Zoologie, set in the former Institute of Zoology. **Details** Room-only doubles from £143 (hotelzoologie.com). Fly to Bordeaux with Ryanair

45 Angoulême cartoon break

The film director Wes Anderson picked Angoulême's remarkably preserved old town as a backdrop for his soon-to-be released film *The French Dispatch*, centred on the bureau of an American newspaper. In real life, the kooky city is more famous for its dedication to the French love of the *bande dessinée* thanks to its International Comic Strip Festival, which started in 1969. Join in the fun from January 30 to February 3, when leading comic artists reveal their newest creations and lead workshops for amateur cartoonists. Also visit exhibitions by artists such as Robert Kirkman, the creator of *The Walking Dead* (day passes from £14; bdangouleme.com). **Details** Le Saint Gelaïs has room-only doubles from £80 (hotel-saint-gelaïs-angouleme.com). Fly to La Rochelle with Ryanair

46 Strife gold in Landes





dessert crêpe, while in Plerguer you can learn about cider production at Ferme de la Source with a multimedia exhibition, then enjoy a tasting. **Details** Two nights' B&B from £22pp, including return ferry crossing (brittany-ferries.co.uk)

## BEST ECO-FRIENDLY OPTIONS

### Go green in the Pink City

France's speedy rail network is a pleasure to use, so make the most of Ouigo, a direct train service that launched its five-hour route from Paris Montparnasse to Toulouse last summer (ouigo.com). One-way tickets start from £16, which, when combined with Eurostar tickets, can make for a cheap and eco-friendly trip south. Explore the old town in La Ville

— called for its pink-washed architecture, and head out along the Canal du Midi with the city's bike-share scheme for a day. Albert is a family-run hotel with an EU label for its environmental responsibility and dedication to the Slow Food movement. **Details** Seven nights' B&B from £577 (hotel-alberti.com)

### Auvergne spa escape

Escape to the volcanic region of Auvergne, in central France, an area that remains largely unexplored by tourists. A four-night Wilderness Experience allows you

to enjoy the Instants d'Absolu Ecologie & Spa, next to the Lac du Pêcher and near the Pinatelle forest, which has been developed using low-impact, environmentally friendly materials.

The converted farmhouse has 12 calming rooms, with beautiful views over the remote landscape, and a spa. Hop in the outdoor hot tub that overlooks the lake or unwind with yoga and expert-guided nature walks. **Details** Four nights' full board from £1,330pp, including spa treatment, yoga sessions and guided walks (peakretreats.co.uk). Fly to Clermont-Ferrand with Ryanair

### 41 Saddle up in Paris

The French capital is leading the way with its green initiatives, which have already led to a ban on old cars.

This year the capital is on schedule to complete its five-year plan to double the length of its cycling paths to 620 miles. Grab some wheels from the Vélib' bicycle-share scheme

— the latest incarnation includes electric bikes, and there are more than 60 stands (velib-metropole.fr). Plans are also afoot for a fleet of eco-friendly water taxis to take to the Seine (seabubbles.fr).

Elsewhere, Promenade Plantée, in the 12th arrondissement, is a disused railway replanted as an elevated garden. Stay at the eco-friendly Hôtel Gavarni, which is powered by electricity from renewable sources and serves organic breakfasts. **Details** Room-only doubles from £135 (sawdays.co.uk). Take the Eurostar to Paris

### 42 Normandy eco retreat

Reduce your carbon footprint by taking Brittany Ferries' LPG-powered ship *Honfleur* from Portsmouth to Caen-Ouistreham. Launching this summer the 1,680-passenger vessel will be the most eco-friendly operating in the English Channel. From the ferry port it's an hour south to the unspoilt department of Orne, where Perche dans le Perche has a new eco-property, in addition to its already popular treehouse — Hilltop House is set in a ten-acre nature reserve with a wood-burning stove and views of Perche national park.

**Details** Seven nights from £846, sleeping six (perchedansleperche.com). Return ferry from Portsmouth to Caen from £115 each way for two people plus a car with Brittany Ferries

### BEST OF THE REST

#### 43 Chic shopping in the capital

Credit cards at the ready — La Samaritaine, the art deco and art nouveau department store, reopens its doors in April. It closed in 2005, but the luxury retail group LVMH has invested more than £400 million in bringing the landmark building in the 1st arrondissement back to life. You'll find plenty of designer labels, as well as refurbished art nouveau features including its glass roof, enamel tiles and ornate ironwork staircase. The development also incorporates a 72-room, five-star hotel from Cheval Blanc with a Dior spa and a restaurant led by the acclaimed chef Arnaud Donckele (projet.samaritaine.com). **Details** Cheval Blanc has B&B doubles from £928 (Chevalblanc.com). Fly to Paris with Air France or British Airways

**T** Missed our Italy special last week? Visit [thetimes.co.uk/italy](http://thetimes.co.uk/italy) for all the best trips and ideas for the year ahead

The film director Wes Anderson picked Angoulême's remarkably preserved old town as a backdrop for his soon-to-be released film *The French Dispatch*, centred on the bureau of an American newspaper. In real life, the kooky city is more famous for its dedication to the French love of the *bande dessinée* thanks to its International Comic Strip Festival, which started in 1969. Join in the fun from January 30 to February 3, when leading comic artists reveal their newest creations and lead workshops for amateur cartoonists. Also visit exhibitions by artists such as Robert Kirkman, the creator of *The Walking Dead* (day passes from £14; [bdangouleme.com](http://bdangouleme.com)). **Details** Le Saint Gelais has room-only doubles from £80 (hotel-saint-gelais-angouleme.com). Fly to La Rochelle with Ryanair

### 46 Strike gold in Landes

Why not try your hand at the art of gilding at Les Prés d'Eugénie, one of France's best hotels, in the rural Landes area of southwestern France. With this three-night craft break you'll learn how to use gold leaf to enhance a baroque mirror from the master gilder Nicolas ▶

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