

COUNTRY LIFE®

EVERY WEEK

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It's love, actually Why our dogs understand us perfectly



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FUTURE

Slowly does it: British snails are winning
 How to sow poppies for summer colour
 Star Wars and semaphore: life in a treehouse

What is your earliest holiday memory?

Riding on the beach in Ireland with my cousins.

Which is your favourite hotel?

Hotel Il Pellicano in Porto Ercole, Italy.

Have you had any travel disasters?

At 18, I travelled by train from Hong Kong to Beijing, China. It wasn't a disaster—just a very, very long way. Once, I also slept on a rooftop in Varanasi in India.

What is top of your travel bucket list?

See the cherry blossom, eat *shojin ryori* and visit the zen temples and the shrines in Kyoto.

What do you never travel without?

Sunglasses, camera, baseball cap and a fresh crisp white shirt.

A cold or hot holiday; beach or culture?

All! Don't make me choose, but if I really had to, culture always wins. Give me a string of churches and galleries, small cafes and some local craftsmen to visit and I am very, very happy.

The globetrotter

Alex Eagle, creative director of concept store Alex Eagle Studio



Apart from your family, who would be your dream travel companion?

My best friends Sophie Hodges and Marie Louise Scio.

A holiday book recommendation?

A classic. Something light and fun by someone such as Françoise Sagan or Nancy Mitford.

A hotel or destination that's taken you by surprise (in a good way)?

England. Don't forget to travel here. We have so much on our doorstep without having to take a flight. A road trip around Albion. From the beautiful Cotswolds to wonderful Cornwall; Dorset; Devon; the New Forest; Hay-on-Wye, the list goes on and on.

What's your number-one travel tip?

Plan ahead, then disregard all plans!

The Alex Eagle Studio, London W1, is open now (www.alex eagle.com); Oakley Court hotel, Windsor, redesigned by Alex Eagle, is open for alfresco dining; overnight guests may book from May 17 (www.oakley court.co.uk)

In the spotlight

Herdade da Malhadinha Nova, Alentejo, Portugal



Best time to go

In May, wildflowers carpet the landscape and summer shimmers in the distance. Alternatively, visit in September or October, when the crowds have diminished, but the sea is still warm.

all different—mine, Casa das Artes, had two bedrooms and was full of Portuguese craft pieces, sourced by Rita Soares herself.

At the helm in the kitchen is Michelin-starred chef Joachim Koerper, who delivers healthy dishes using the farm's bounty. Try the Malhadinha partridge pie or the estate beef with a risotto of home-grown pumpkins. On one hot, still day, I picnicked under the trees with chilled gazpacho, before a wine tasting. But my favourite memory is of the early mornings, when the sun cast the bucolic landscape in the Portuguese light that never fails to lift the soul. *Mary Lussiana* ✍️
From €300 (£260) per night (00 351 28 496 5432; www.malhadinhanova.pt/en/)

SET among the wide, open plains of the Alentejo, where black pigs roam under oak trees and huge stork nests perch atop squat olive trees, this working farm offers a slice of real Portugal. Lived in and loved by the Soares family (the children created the memorable in-house wine labels featuring plump and cheerful

cows), the estate stretches as far as the eye can see in all directions. Days can be spent riding glossy Lusitano horses, racing quad bikes, hot-air ballooning or wine-tasting.

Last year, six farm buildings were renovated into country-chic houses, each with a private pool. They join the existing 10-bedroom hotel that opened more than a decade ago and are