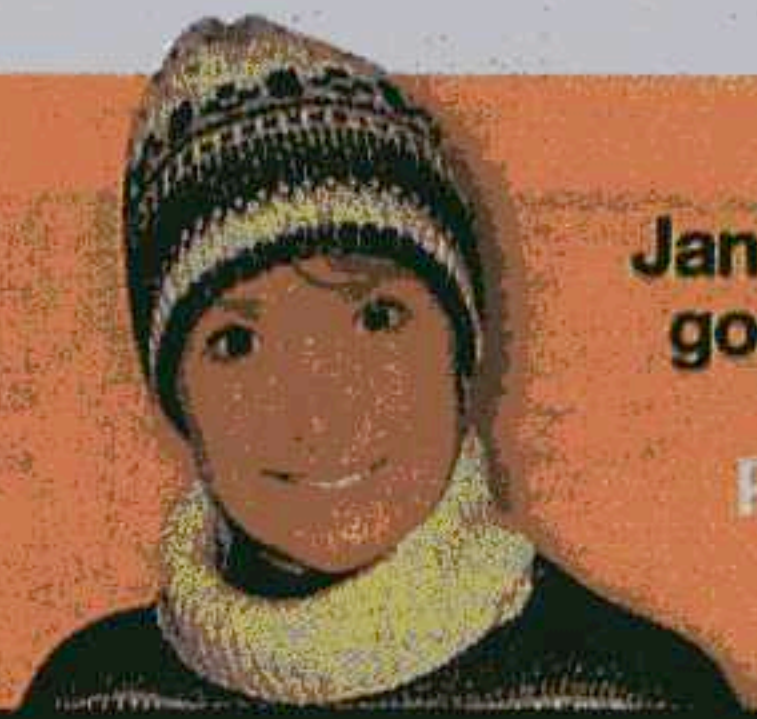
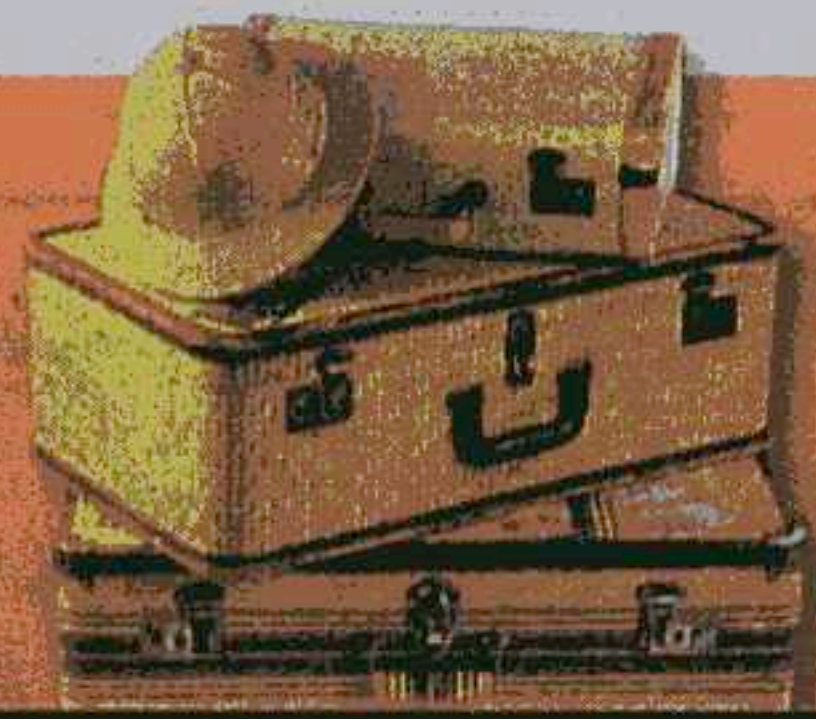


The Sunday Telegraph

# Travel

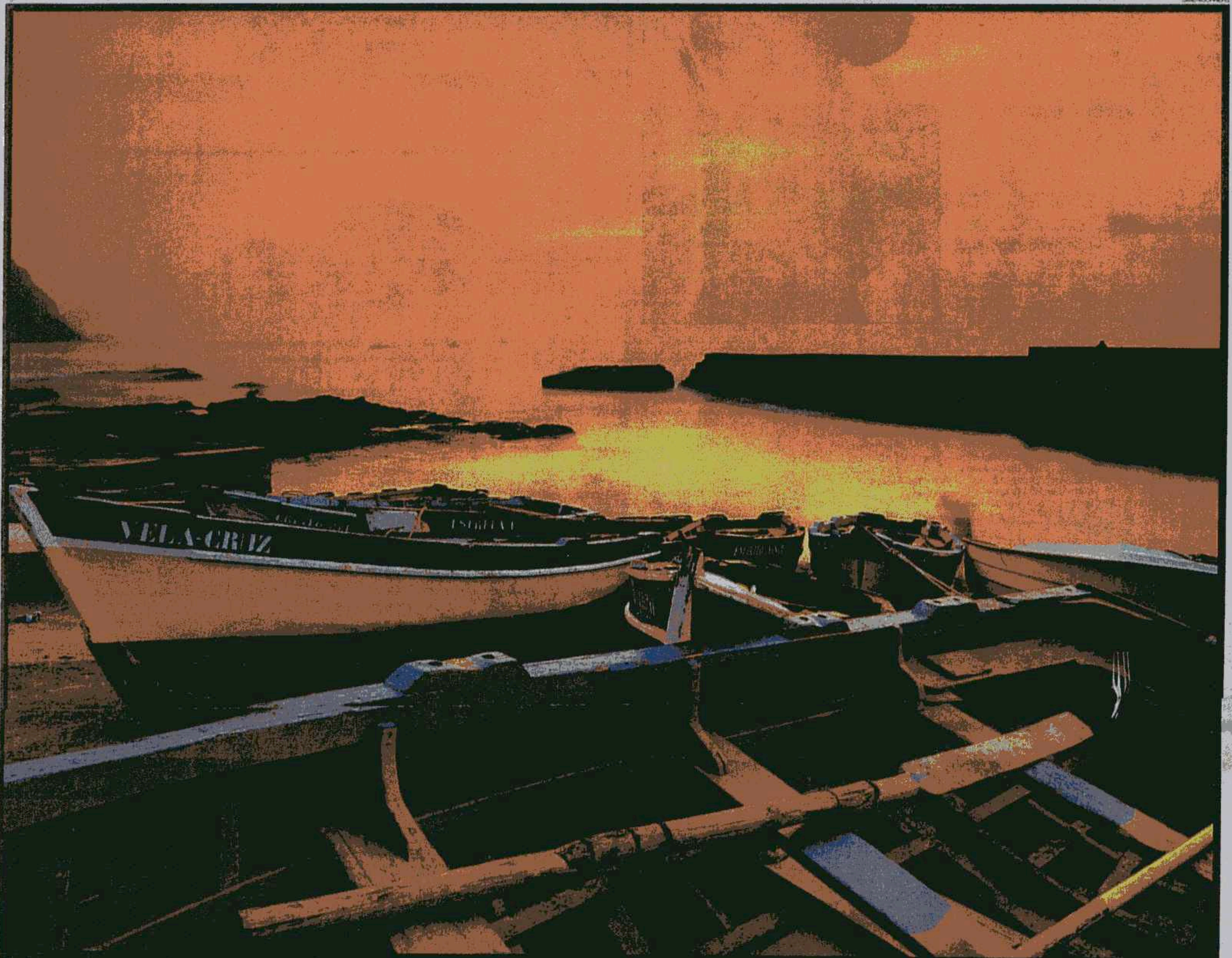


Jan Leeming  
goes wild in  
Lapland  
Pages 8-9



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March 11 2007 www.telegraph.co.uk/travel



## ISLANDS IN THE SUN

It looks like the Caribbean, says **Robert Nurden**, but Cape Verde also has plenty of European charm

Our rickety van moaned and shuddered as it snaked its way up the side of the volcano. Below us lay Porto Novo, where we'd disembarked half an hour earlier, already a white fragment against the deep blue of the Atlantic. All around us on the hill were bare earth and the vestiges of terraces, where vegetables had once grown but now lay scorched brown under a relentless sun. "I remember when maize and cassava grew here and we got several crops a year," said Julio, our guide. "But now it gets hardly any rain and the desert is expanding." He didn't seem unduly perturbed by this apocalyptic scenario; in fact he was grinning. Clearly there was more to the climate of

Santo Antão, the most westerly island of Cape Verde's necklace-shaped archipelago, than first impressions suggested.

After we'd spent another 20 minutes climbing, the landscape began to provide hints of what lay beyond. Patches of Scotch pine and acacia, dotted along the 5,000ft ridge that splits the island in half, started to appear. Our van jolted to a halt and Julio got out. We followed him to the edge of a precipice, the side of a huge caldera that plunged a thousand feet. Now we could see farm buildings and tiny figures bending over crops. After the wasteland behind us, this was a picture of abundance. We'd never seen such a sudden change in a landscape.

Julio, smiling at the amazement on the faces of yet another group of visitors, explained: "The wind comes from the west

bringing moisture, which meets the mountains and forms clouds. But because the mountains are so high the clouds become trapped and all the rain falls on the west side and never reaches the east." We weren't surprised to learn that his other job was teaching.

Back in the van, and now under a thick canopy of vegetation, we crawled along a ribbon of asphalt into a world of tortured lava, in which Gaudiesque outcrops of rock shook misshapen fists at the sky. Wherever we looked there were ridges and ledges of bent and twisted volcanic sculpture. On either side, beneath these petrified streams of lava, canyons dropped away to plantations of beans, tomatoes, orange trees, chillies, maize and sweet potato. This is where the farmers of Santa

Antão live, some still in traditional sugar cane huts. It is also Cape Verde's fruit and vegetable bowl, and every morning trucks stop to pick up the produce for the market on the neighbouring island of São Vicente.

The land looked and felt like the Caribbean. Even the language - Creole - was similar, though here Portuguese was the dominant European element. At one point, on the way down to Ribeira Grande on the other side of the island, the road narrowed further to thread its way, trapeze-like, along a slender spine of lava. To the left and right twin ravines, giant aloe vera plants at their summits, dropped to the valley floor.

Our extraordinary two-hour journey - incorporating natural

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# Where to Stay

## ST-GERMAIN, PARIS

### HÔTEL D'AUBUSSON

**Location** At the heart of St-Germain: the Pont Neuf and Ile de la Cité are at one end of rue Dauphine, the Odéon Métro is at the other.

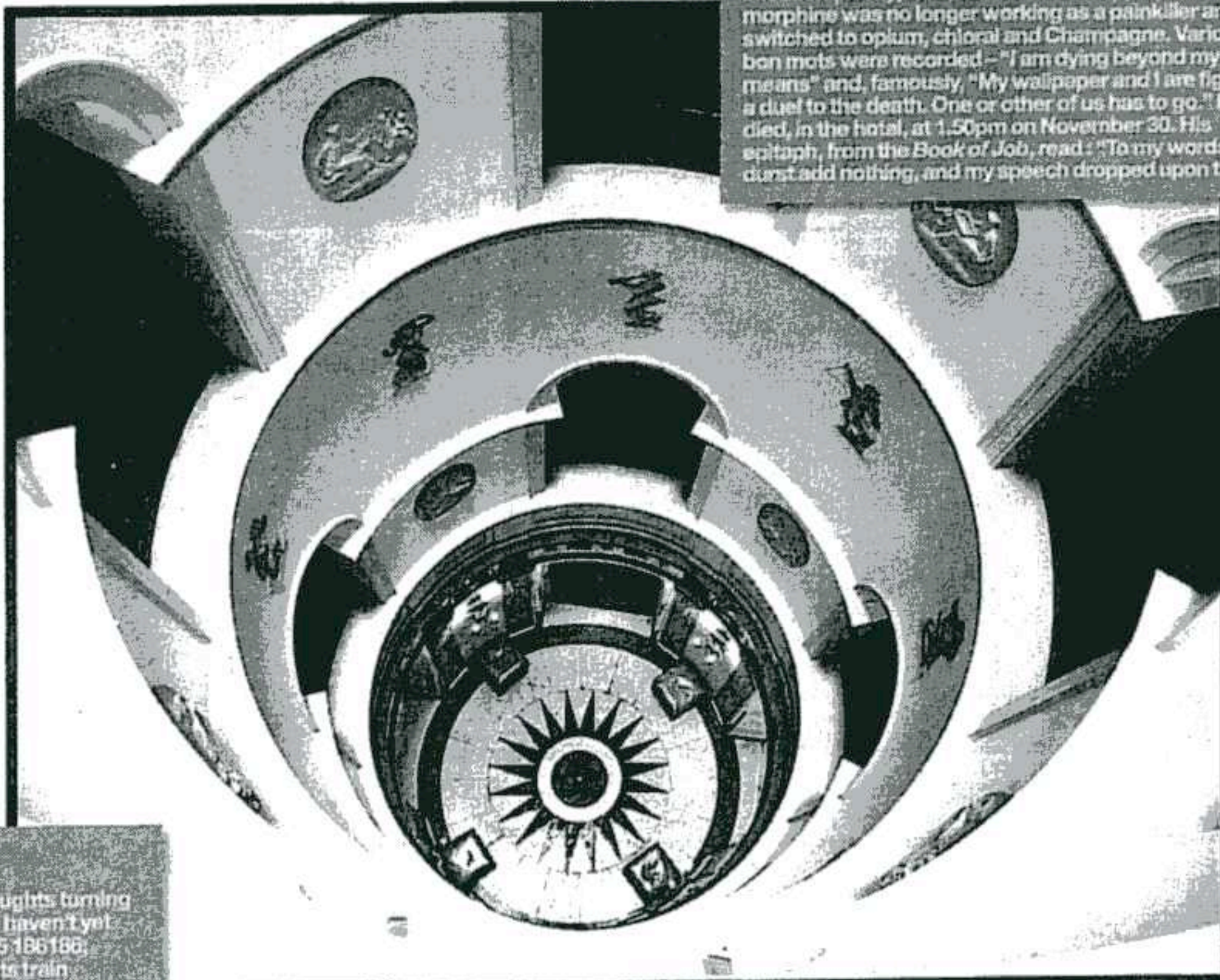
**Character** A 17th-century townhouse and former literary salon, but the hotel rooms, unlike L'Hôtel (see below) don't make the most of their history. This is less true in the public areas, where elements such as the main salon's large Burgundy stone fireplace, beams, Aubusson tapestries and antique urniture create an intimate period feel.

**Rooms** 49 rooms in four categories, but most, while spacious, are rather bland, with dark wood furniture, pastel colour schemes and only occasional touches of individuality. Food breakfast or drinks in the courtyard in good weather are delightful.

**We like** The great location, which is the hotel's main selling point, along with the courtyard and attractive public areas. Service is friendly and the website is brave enough to give you a good look at what to expect of the rooms.

**Not so keen** Prices are too high for what are pretty average rooms.

**Essentials** 0033 1 4329 4343; www.toleldaubusson.com. From £200.

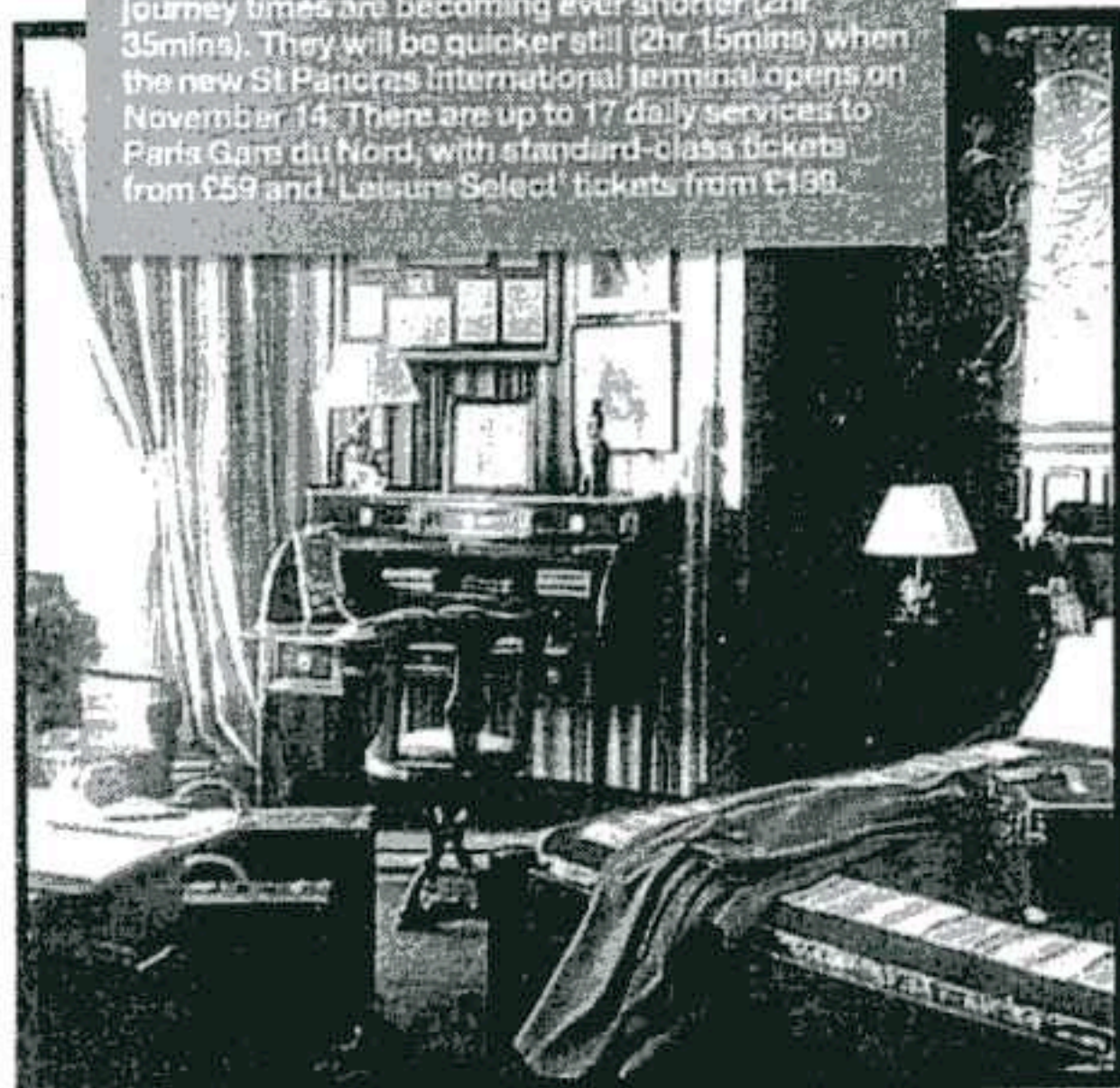


### IT'S ME OR THE WALLPAPER

Oscar Wilde was released from Reading Gaol in May 1897 and travelled to Paris in 1898. In August he moved from the Hôtel Marollier (still a hotel at 13 rue Marollier) to the Hôtel d'Alsace - now L'Hôtel (see below). He soon fell ill from a recurring inner-ear infection (not syphilis, as often asserted). By November, morphine was no longer working as a painkiller and he switched to opium, chloral and Champagne. Various bon mots were recorded - "I am dying beyond my means" and, famously, "My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or other of us has to go." He died, in the hotel, at 1.50pm on November 30. His epitaph, from the Book of Job, read: "To my words they dust add nothing, and my speech dropped upon them."

### GETTING THERE

With spring round the corner, and thoughts turning to the classic Paris short break, if you haven't yet travelled to the city by Eurostar (08705 186180; www.eurostar.com), or haven't used its train services for some time, it's as well to know that journey times are becoming ever shorter (2hr 35mins). They will be quicker still (2hr 15mins) when the new St Pancras International terminal opens on November 14. There are up to 17 daily services to Paris Gare du Nord, with standard-class tickets from £59 and 'Leisure Select' tickets from £139.



### L'HÔTEL

**Location** In the pretty and quietly chic rue des Beaux-Arts, perfectly placed a few minutes' walk from the Seine, Louvre, Notre-Dame, Latin Quarter and shops of St-Germain.

**Character** Built in 1816, this building has long been a hotel (Oscar Wilde died here), but was bought a couple of years ago by Jessica Sainsbury and Peter Frankopan, owners of Cowley Manor, a fabulous country-house hotel with a modern twist in the Cotswolds. Small and intimate, this is very different to Cowley, with its grand house and sweeping grounds, but has the same one-off quality and idiosyncratic charm that clearly appeals to this accomplished pair of hoteliers. The feel is private, cosseted, subtly sexy (not loud or louche), relaxed - and well-run. The pool and hammam in the old stone cellar are a bonus.

**Rooms** You can still stay in Wilde's room (16; pictured left) - and yes, the wallpaper has gone, replaced by green-blue motifs and Victoria-era styling. Each of the 16 rooms and four suites, leading off a remarkable oval atrium (above), is individually decorated, but all have the rich, gently decadent and just-right feel of the rest of the hotel. I stayed in the Pondichery room, with a sexy Indochine theme, not as glorious as some, but still delightful.

**Food** In 1899, the hotel provided Wilde with an allowance of five bottles of Courvoisier a week; breakfast was served in bed at 11am and a lunch of cutlet and two hard-boiled eggs at 2pm. These days, if you insisted, the hotel would doubtless oblige with the brandy, and breakfast in bed is as tempting here as anywhere, but the intimate Le Bédier restaurant (adjoining the bar, with glass roof and patio views) can do a lot better than egg and cutlet.

**We like** The whole intimate, cosy velvet sumptuousness of the place, which manages to be decadent without being over-the-top. This is the perfect mid-priced, small, character-filled Parisian hotel, whether you want a faintly naughty weekend, a fun place to take your parents or children, or an ideal base for high culture, shopping and sunny riverside walks.

The snug bar is wonderful (love the leopardskin-print carpet) and the service charming - the staff's bold velvet suits are a great touch.

**Not so keen** I guess you could say the rooms are a bit small, but what gorgeous rooms...  
**Essentials** 0031 1 4441 9900; www.l-hotel.com. Doubles from £173. Wide room, £368.

TIM JEPSON

# Hotel Guru

## Fiona Duncan



The Rookery, Clerkenwell, London

If I were on business in the City and my employers had booked me into the Rookery, I would jump for joy. Just a glance through the windows of its three adjoining, faithfully restored 18th-century houses into the warmly lit drawing room beyond, and I would know I'd been sent not to the usual bland box of a business hotel but to a quirky period home-from-home. But then, I love quirky. Especially in unexpected places such as the City, or, to be precise, Clerkenwell, just outside the Square Mile. In Dickensian times the area was known - for its thieves, vagabonds and prostitutes - as the Rookery, from which the hotel takes its name. Nowadays Clerkenwell is more hip and edgy than edged out, although history has a way of repeating itself: not long ago the Rookery hit the headlines when Pete Doherty was arrested there after a fracas. But I suppose the Rookery wouldn't suit everyone. Where we found charm and integrity in the owners' love of all things Georgian and Victorian (wooden panelling, heavy four-posters, oil paintings, dimly lit, shadowy rooms), others might bemoan the lack of extras (if the purist owners had their way you wouldn't even have a telephone; as it is, there's a minibar, flat-screen TV, wireless internet and air-conditioning, but no more).

Maybe they wouldn't be amused, as I was, to ransack the room for the hairdryer, unearthing it at the bottom of the huge old wardrobe in the hallway of my room (like a pied-à-terre, on two floors, its subterranean bathroom complete with internal sash window and paneled door, Pepsysian bust, roll-top bath, brass shower and matching heated brass towel rail for the fluffy towels). And they would surely side with the TripAdvisor correspondent who said he would never return to the Rookery because of the noise from the creaky floorboards above and below. Our floorboards creaked too. So did those of the room above: creak all you like, I say. My only serious complaint concerned the naked skylight that caused us to wake at dawn.

So, quirky, creaky, admirably unfussy - and cosy. You can curl

up by the fire with a drink from the homely bar, or in warm weather sit in the sliver of garden, wittily enlivened by a mural of cows being herded by two smocked peasants, portraits of the hotel's proprietors (who also own the equally excellent and quirky Hazlitt's in Soho). There's no restaurant, but who'd stay in anyway when happening Clerkenwell beckons? We chose Portal, a few paces away in St John Street, and we chose brilliantly. Traditional warmth and contemporary chic collide in a stunning glass and chrome space where the Corrae family offer Portuguese hospitality and produce delicious Mediterranean dishes, including braised bisaro (a rare

**Rooms** ★★★★★  
Crowned by the Rook's Nest (£425), one of London's best bedrooms for a try!

**Service** ★★★★★  
Possibly a bit flaky, but if something's amiss, ask and it'll be done!

**Character** ★★★★★  
Dickensian charm; note reception room often used for daytime functions

**Food & drink** ★★★★★  
Brief room service menu; breakfast served in the room

**Value for money** ★★★★★  
For a rare hotel experience, worth the bill

Portuguese wild pig). We've since crossed London to return there. Back at the Rookery, the morning reveals the unexpected sight of fellow guests Chantel and Preston (*Celebrity Big Brother*, remember?), who plainly have more sense than you might expect if this is the sort of hotel they like. Which reminds me: the Rookery isn't just for City types; it's perfect for romantic weekends too.

12 Peter's Lane, Courteen Street, London EC1 (020 7336 0931; www.rookeryhotel.com). Doubles from £186 to £240, including breakfast. For reviews and recommendations by Fiona Duncan, visit www.thehotelguru.com.

## WIN THREE NIGHTS AT THE PALACIO URGOTTI, BILBAO

This week we are offering readers another opportunity to win three nights' B&B for two at the magnificent Palacio Urgotti in Bilbao, with return flights to and from London.

A luxuriously restored 17th-century former palace, the building sits in a beautiful area, with a private golf course just a few minutes from Bilbao. Each of the 40 rooms and suites has superb views of the nearby mountains,

while the excellent restaurant provides a traditional Basque experience. For a chance to win it all, answer the following questions. The answers to all questions are found in this week's *Sunday Telegraph*. Draw held on:

a. What does 'carnal' mean?  
b. What is the world's smallest island nation?  
c. Where is the Rio de la Plata and how old is it?

Send your answers online at [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com) or by post to: The Sunday Telegraph, PO Box 224, Colchester CO2 2XT. The draw will be held on the 11th of April. This prize is available to UK residents only. The prize is subject to availability. The prize is not transferable. Local and foreign airfare is included. Prizes will be awarded to the winner of the draw with easyJet on 11th April 2007. The draw will be held on 11th April 2007. The draw will be held on 11th April 2007.

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Day 3 Trinidad: Step back in time as you walk along the cobblestone streets of this UNESCO World Heritage town exploring colonial buildings, handicraft markets and museums.  
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