



stay with the stars

SHIP-HIP HOORAY... performers in Schhhh on Iona

NIC'S SCHHH-OW TAKES TO SEAS

SUPERSTAR Nicole Scherzinger let passengers into a little secret while on board P&O's Iona - her new musical experience, Schhhh, is like winning the Olympics. The former Pussycat Doll said creating the colourful dance and acrobatic show was life-changing. Nicole, below, who has just finished starring in Sunset Boulevard on London's West End, launched Schhhh before Iona sailed from Southampton to cruise the Canaries. She said: "It's my first Saturday night off in six months, and I can't think of where I'd rather be. I was over the moon when asked to create

Schhhh. I want people to leave feeling it transformed them. I try to make a difference." The multi-sensory performance is on stage in the SkyDome, on Iona and sister ship Arvia. For a touch of spice, try her cocktail Schhhh! Iona's passengers were sailing off for a bit of winter sun - and so is Nicole. She said: "I'm off home to Hawaii to see family and lie in the sun. Then I'll be back in Sunset Boulevard on Broadway."

P&O offers a seven-night, full-board Iona cruise to the Fjords, from Southampton on April 6, calling at Stavanger, Olden and Alesund, from £829 per person. See pocruises.com. **TRISHA HARBORD**

- lates**
- PORTUGAL:** Seven nights' B&B at the 3* Auramar Beach Resort, Albufeira, is from £246pp including flights from Luton on January 31. For more info, see loveholidays.com.
 - WALES:** Two nights at the 4* Twr y Felin in St Davids is from £190 per room. Includes breakfast and one evening three-course dinner. Offer available until March 26. For more details, see twryfelinhotel.com.
 - BUDAPEST:** Three nights' B&B at the 4* Atrium Fashion Hotel is from £109pp including flights from Luton on February 3. For more info, see bestonlinetrips.com.
 - NEW FOREST:** Two nights' B&B at the 4* Balmer Lawn hotel is from £248 in total. Arrive selected dates in January. A dog is welcome to stay for £25. See balmerlawnhotel.com.
 - AUSTRIA SKI:** Seven nights' half-board at the 3.5* Arena Franz Ferdinand Nassfeld, Tropolach, is from £986pp including flights from Manchester on February 24. See crystalski.co.uk.

essential

Ultrasun Winter Suncare Kit, £39, ultrasun.co.uk

SKIERS often find out the hard way that a sunny day on the slopes can lead to sunburn - or worse. The UV reflected from snow increases potency by 80 per cent according to the World Tourism Organisation. This clever little kit is currently on sale for £39, reduced from £56. You'll get a SPF50+ face cream that delivers over 95 per cent UVA filter against a EU standard of 33 per cent. Then there's a UV Mist in SPF50+, great for over or under make-up or for top-ups. Lastly, there's a SPF30 lip-salve, essential when outdoors in cold weather. The kit can just as easily be taken on a warm-weather break. Having used Ultrasun products for years, I can vouch that they are long-lasting and highly effective.

Don't miss Tuesday's **TRAVEL EXTRA**



BAY WATCH... waterfront bars



DOWNTOWN... shops and restaurants



STONE RANGER... beach at Little Venice



LOOKING FOR LOVE... scene from Shirley Valentine



PITTA SWEET... chicken gyros

OUR WRITER HAS VISITED GREEK PARTY ISLE FOR 30 YEARS. HERE'S HER GUIDE

In the Fifties and Sixties, it was frequented by movie stars such as Grace Kelly and Brigitte Bardot as well as former First Lady Jackie Kennedy Onassis, who lends her name to riotous nightclub Jackie O'. In recent years, it has played host to Beyonce and the odd Kardashian or two. In 2023, George Clooney, Matt Damon and the Hemsworth brothers visited too. I first discovered it 30 years ago, on a summer holiday as a hard-up student, and fell for its beautiful beaches, fantastic restaurants and enchanting maze of narrow lanes of main town Chora. While there are some affordable souvenir shops, cafes and bakeries, you will also find designer stores, Champagne bars and bouji beach clubs. *I couldn't afford those then, and let's be honest, I still can't. So here's my guide to enjoying Mykonos on a budget...*

FUN (ALMOST) FREEBIES

A POPULAR pastime in Chora is playing Spot The Pelican. Pelican Petros, the island's unofficial mascot, became famous in the 1950s, when legend has it a fisherman came across a wounded bird and nursed it back to health. When he died some years later, Jackie Onassis donated a new pelican to the island. Today, nobody is sure exactly how many Petroses there have been, but this one likes to wander around near Little Venice, where bars and houses sit on stilts that stretch into the sea. Another must is to enjoy the island's spectacular sunsets. Bring a bottle to the small square opposite the five windmills - remnants of Mykonos's former wheat-grinding industry - which sit above Little Venice, and watch the sun sink into the sea, turning the sky orange, scarlet and purple. If you prefer to do this with a cocktail in hand, get to one of the waterfront bars, such as Caprice, Rhapsody or Katerina's, early to bag a ringside seat.

BEACH LIFE

MOST of the popular beaches are on the island's south coast. If you want to avoid sun-lounger fees, invest in your own parasol at one of the beach boutiques and lay your towel on the sand. Paradise, a glorious stretch of pebbly sand, tends to attract a younger crowd who like to dance to the music from the main bar. Super Paradise, further east, was known as the island's first dedicated gay beach. Today it's more mixed and attracts a party crowd. Jackie O' beach club is here. More family-friendly is Ornos, which fringes a former fishing village of the same name. It has a sheltered bay perfect for swimming, while pretty Paraga is more compact and laid-back and attracts boats which like to anchor in its calm, clear waters. The "Shirley Valentine" beach is chilled Agios Ioannis, where, in the 1989 film, the fed-up Liverpudlian housewife found love, or lust, with a thickly-moustached taverna owner. That taverna is now called Hippie Fish, where you'll find upmarket cuisine.

CHEAP EATS

YES, there are some pricey places to eat, but if you stick to simple, bistro-style restaurants, you won't go far wrong. Some of my favourites include Nikos Taverna near the Old Port. Try tzatziki, moussaka and grilled sardines - and a litre of house wine costs under £7. At Rouvera, on the waterfront, you can sample tasty pastas, grilled fish and meat dishes while overlooking the harbour. A



Mykonos without a big bill... unless it's a pelican's



BIG FAN... Laura on one of her first visits and, inset, with pal Dan last summer



MILLION DOLLAR VIEW... sunset by windmill and, right, famous pelican



popular snack spot in the centre of Chora is Leonidas, which serves mouthwatering chicken gyros, wrapped in the softest, fluffiest pitta bread, for £4. Cafe Paraga, on Paraga beach, does good club sarnies, Greek salads and milkshakes. For friends, the Mycococon Hostel promises Scandi chic akin to a boutique hotel with dorm beds from £30 a night.

TRAVEL & TIPS

OUTSIDE of peak season, April is the cheapest time of year to fly to the island. And according to skyscanner.net, the cheapest time to book is around 40 days in advance. Most beaches are served by buses from Fabrika bus station at the edge of Chora. Buy your ticket before boarding and be warned that, at busy times, you may not get a seat. Check the timetables at mykonosbus.com. When you do reach your

desired beach, you'll find rows of sun-loungers. On average you'll pay around £21 per day.

PUSH THE BOAT OUT

TURKISH-butcher-turned-restaurateur Salt Bae has washed up on Mykonos's shores. So you can try his signature gold leaf-covered steaks and truffled fries. Lio Mykonos, which started in Ibiza by club group Pacha, offers a stylish, if racy, cabaret show and dinner. Minimum spend is £215 per person, and the open-air venue turns into a funky club afterwards. Namos beach club on Psarou beach is aimed at those who like their bottles of champagne adorned with sparklers. It is the place to go for the best chance of spotting an A-listers.

GO: MYKONOS

GETTING THERE: British Airways flies seasonally from London Gatwick to Mykonos from £73 one way. See britishairways.com. **STAYING THERE:** Double rooms from £185 a night at Yi Hotel Mykonos including breakfast. See yihotelmykonos.com. Rooms or dorm beds at Mycococon Hostel from £30 a night. See hostelworld.com. **OUT & ABOUT:** A Mykonos sunset boat cruise with drinks costs from £43 per person. See viator.com.

LAURA MILLAR

CHECK OUT THIS LOT

CLOWN costumes, dentures and glass eyes are among some of the crazy items left in hotel rooms after customers checked out. A survey of 100 hotels across Europe by operator easyJet Holidays looked at lost or abandoned items over the last year. False teeth were one of the most common finds, while outlandish costumes also featured - and one hotel even reported witchcraft artefacts. Other oddities included caviar, rosary beads, prosthetic limbs and an inflatable boat. A NEW eco-friendly tour operator is making green travel easier for environmentally conscious travellers. Sustainable Journeys will focus on holidays designed around trains, electric vehicles, buses, bikes and hikes, with stays at accommodations that will help to reduce carbon footprints. Trips will also focus on activities that support local communities and help with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Packages include the ten-night Estonian EV Exploration from £1,235pp, based on two adults sharing and including car hire, bed-and-breakfast hotels and cultural and wine-tasting experiences. The self-drive tour starts in Estonian capital Tallinn then heads to the Lahemaa National Park and along the Onion Route to Tartu, before venturing to Soomaa National Park, stopping at beach resort summer capital Pärnu. See sustainablejourneys.co.uk.



FUN TIME... Leigh-Anne and Andre's twin girls loved it SKY LIGHTS UP DISNEY

DISNEYLAND Paris has kicked off its Electrical Sky Parade - a spectacular new drone show. Part of the Symphony of Colours display that will run until September 30, the evening performance includes video projections, lights and fountains with music. More than 500 drones take to the sky to form dazzling images including Cinderella's carriage and Mickey Mouse and his friends' train. Launching later in February, A Million Splashes Of Colour will celebrate animated films from Disney and Pixar. The daytime show will feature much-loved characters, 30 dancers and a musical mash-up. In spring, a new Alice in Wonderland stage show will also be unveiled. Little Mix star Leigh-Anne Pincock recently returned from a family visit to Disneyland Paris, posting snaps of her husband, footballer Andre Gray and their twins. The singer captioned one snap: "Disney Dump we had the cutest little family trip. Bubbas LOVEDDDDD it! Screamed when they met Minnie just too too cute!" Two nights at Disney's Hotel Santa Fe for a family of four is from £303pp, with access to the Disney Parks for three days and return flights departing on February 20. See disneylandparis.com or call 0800 169 0737.



SEA-SCAPE... boats on the town's shoreline

WHITSTABLE IN WINTER? IT'S SO COOL

"YOU must be mad, love!" said an older lady as she walked past on the blustery beach. She was right - who else would be nursing an ice cream on Whitstable's seafront in January? I'll admit I'm more of a fan of the English seaside in the winter than the summer. Not only are there fewer crowds but you often get a much better experience when the waitresses aren't being rushed off their feet. Sure, some places are closed off-season and the weather won't be warm - but that's what a cosy pub with a roaring fire is for. Which is why after licking the ice cream from my frozen hands, I headed straight to the Old Neptune, the Kent pub right on the beach. Squeezing through the pub garden, I made a beeline for the cosy inside, complete with wood-paneled walls, strung up old helmets and a jukebox. I was both dry and sand-free - Whitstable has a pebble beach - as I nursed a pint, enjoying the sounds of the whistling winds while warming up. Thankfully the weather eased after just one pint of Whitstable Bay ale, so I decided to make the most of it by exploring the quaint town where independent stores outnumber chains. There is the famous pink Wheeler's Oyster Bar, which sells, you guessed it, fresh oysters, plus The Lobster Shack on the seafront. Make sure to go past the public toilets on the way - yes, really - to spot on the walls one of the many works of Catman, nicknamed the Banksy of Kent. I strolled past the Bears Ice Cream Imaginarium, not quite ready for a second so soon, and instead lost both hours and pounds after being sucked into the tiny shops, leaving with hand-crafted necklaces and shell-shaped candles. It's a town for bargain hunters too. At a charity shop, I nabbed a jumper, worth £75, for just four quid. To celebrate, I treated myself to a glass of Portuguese wine at the moody Porto Bar, named one of the best in Kent. Along with wine bars, the town is the starting point for a 25-mile walk from Whitstable to Ramsgate, part of the King Charles III England Coast Path. I decided to join it, albeit for just one mile to get to my digs for the night, The Marine Hotel. More than half of the rooms overlook the sea, and mine ticked all the boxes of the perfect seaside resort - shabby chic decor, a huge bathtub and lots of Twinnings tea. I didn't fancy braving the cold again for dinner, and thankfully I was well looked after at the on-site restaurant. Both the food and the brisk winds resulted in a deep night's sleep, with my plans for an early-morning beach walk scuppered by the cosiest king-size bed. Instead, I was greeted by the whole reason I was in Whitstable - a beautiful ocean sunrise over the English coastline. Only this time with a steaming cup of coffee and bacon bap in bed to pass the rest of the morning. There's only so much cold weather I can take, after all. **KARA GODFREY**

GO: WHITSTABLE STAYING THERE: One night at The Marine Hotel starts from £125 per room per night inc breakfast. See marinewhitstable.co.uk.



SHABBY CHIC... Marine Hotel on coastal road