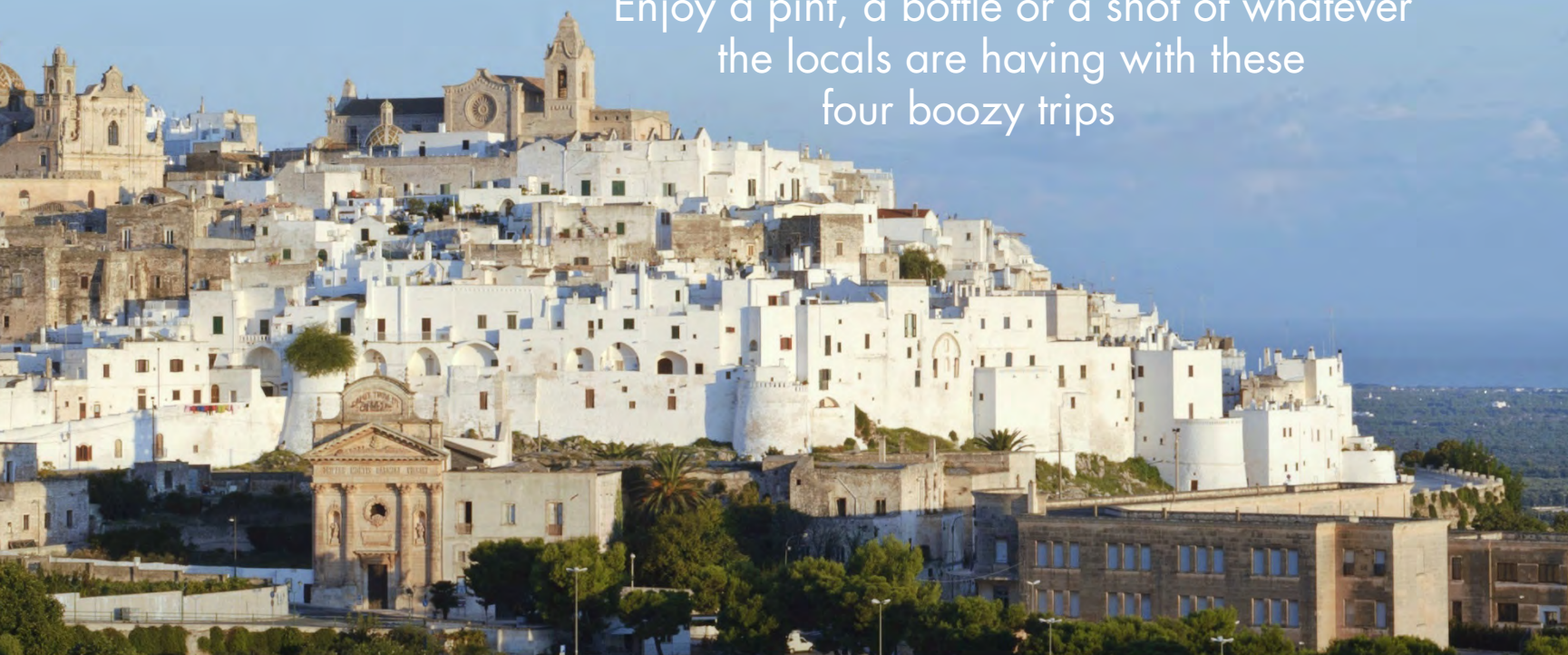


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Bitesize breaks RAISE A GLASS

Enjoy a pint, a bottle or a shot of whatever the locals are having with these four boozy trips



PUGLIA

When you roll up to a 'cantine' in Puglia for some cellar sampling, it's highly likely you'll park next to a beaten-up flatbed truck: your fellow buyers will be the grape growers.

Near Brindisi, around the 16th-century city of Mesagne in the Terra dei Messapi, the production of wine is a co-operative business. Here, away from the main tourist trail, enthusiasm and interest may get you out the back to taste new, raw wine from tanks in the floor. In the cool cellars, away from the belting sun, locals will scrutinise your 'tasting face' while filling plastic containers from the barrel, the meter ticking up the sale like a petrol pump.

At **Cantine Due Palme** (cantineduepalme.it), a co-operative with 1,000 members and an eye-popping red boardroom to house them all, try jammy, red berry DOP Selvarossa Salice Reserve (negromaro

and malvasia nera) and mineral and floral Anthea (falanghina). Shop at **Cantine Sanpancrazio** (cantinasanpancrazio.it) for spicy Campio Appio Negromaro (€5.70) or rich, dry Primitivo (€4.70).

At **Cantina San Donaci** (cantinasandonaci.eu, pictured bottom centre and right), don't leave without award-winning Contrada del Falco, a plummy blend of negromaro, primitivo and malvasia nero aged in the barrel. Ask to see the old wine tank downstairs: the walls have been washed dark purple over time and the bright new American oak barrels glow against them.

Stay at high-end **Tenuta Moreno** (pictured bottom left) and, after all that tasting, you can relax in its beautiful grounds, cool off in the pool or even take a masterclass in Puglian cookery.

Double rooms at **Tenuta Moreno** cost from €69 (tenutamoreno.it). Return flights from Stansted to Brindisi start from £63 (ryanair.com). More info: viaggiareinpuglia.it. Buy the wines to try at home from pugliashoponline.com

WORDS: JULIE GRAYES



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SHROPSHIRE HILLS

'As stunning as the Lake District, just without the Lakes.' That's how one local sums up the Shropshire Hills for us, and he should know. When we pick him up, hitchhiking along a road outside the pint-sized town of Bishops Castle, he's literally fallen from the sky, having just finished sightseeing the county from his paraglider.

Dropping him off close to the town's **Three Tuns Brewery** (threetunsbrewery.co.uk), we continue through arches of beech trees and towering, over-ripe hedgerows until we reach our home for the weekend, **Little Cwm Colebatch**. One of the remote but refined properties offered by holiday cottage company Sheepskinlife, it serves up the perfect mix of chocolate box prettiness (roses around the door, Aga warming the kitchen) and contemporary style (buttermilk paintwork, deluxe mattresses and walk-in rainshowers); not to mention killer views over a magical garden to fields and woods.

We're not here to gaze, though, but to drink. This particular pocket of south Shropshire is home to more than its fair share of small, independent breweries and, on a tip-off, we head for lunch at **The Bridges** (thebridgespub.co.uk) in Ratlinghope, the Three Tuns' bucolic country tap house. Set by a brook at the foot of the sweeping Long Mynd mountain, inside it's cosy with cushion-scattered wooden pews and a log burner. Five seasonal beers are on tap, including Clerics Cure IPA, which also features in the pub's beer-battered fish and chips.

The next morning, we stop off at **Bishops Castle Farmers' Market** to buy local Neuadd Fach pork sausages and generously spiced Welsh cakes, warmed on a little portable griddle (£1 for 3, caryscakes.com), before making our way to Ludlow for a pint of toffee-ish Ludlow Best at the Ludlow Brewing Co. bar (theludlowbrewingcompany.co.uk).

Just out of town is the **Ludlow Food Centre** (ludlowfoodcentre.co.uk), an earnest if slightly sterile showcase for the county's produce. We've had enough booze cruising, we decide. Instead we stock up here on everything we need to make slow-baked sausages in the Aga (including a bottle of Postman's Knock rich ruby porter from another local brewery, Hobsons) and head back to our country idyll. ☺



The Bridges pub

Little Cwm Colebatch sleeps 6; rental costs from £785 for 3 nights (sheepskinlife.com). **olive** offer: Book 4 nights and receive 10% off a stay at any Sheepskin property. Standard T&Cs apply. Book by 31 October, valid until 31 January 2015. Please quote **olive** magazine when booking



Lunch in the pub's bucolic setting

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Château Les Carrasses



LANGUEDOC

With ancient Cathar castles, the lofty Pyrenees and a coastline strung with fishing villages turned gastro hotspots, the Languedoc's revitalised wine industry is the icing on the regional cake. We're staying at the stylish **Château Les Carrasses**, a 19th-century castle turned wine resort where a collection of chic apartments and villas are surrounded by acres of carefully tended vines. At the chateau's brasserie we try the Château's own wines, including a fresh but rich chardonnay with hints of pineapple and citrus.

A tour of another winery, **Château Capitoul** (chateau-capitoul.com) with specialist local operator **Vin en Vacances** (vinenvacances.com) includes a guided tasting on a balcony overlooking the beautiful La Clape, a terroir so unique it has its own sub-appellation. The **Rocaille** (€11 per bottle) is an outstanding, full-bodied red with notes of pepper and strawberry.

All Les Carrasses' suites come with kitchens so it's well worth exploring the local markets. Narbonne's Les Halles is a must-visit: pick up some fat lucques olives at **Le Royaume de l'Olive** and a bottle of the region's zesty, bone-dry picpoul. When you're shopped out, order a bavette steak (fresh from the neighbouring butchers) with chips and salad (€12) at the market's character-full in-house restaurant **Chez Babelle** (chez-babelle.fr).

Suites at Chateau Les Carrasses start from €125 per night (lescarrasses.com). Flights from Luton or Gatwick to Montpellier from £85 return (easyJet.com), and from Bournemouth, East Midlands, Prestwick, Liverpool or Stansted to Carcassonne from £53 return (Ryanair.com). More info: sunfrance.com

REYKJAVIK

Huge bearded men knocking back vodka shots for breakfast might be what you imagine as part of life among the vast lava fields and mountains of Iceland's capital but, in reality, things are considerably more refined. Reykjavik's picturesque centre, with its Lego-like stack of colourfully roofed buildings, combines striking modern architecture with historic museums and galleries. Today you wouldn't guess that the country was under varying degrees of prohibition until 1989: Reykjavik is home to some great bars, but these days its drinkers are looking for quality rather than quantity.

In the pared-back surroundings of **MicroBar** (facebook.com/MicroBarIceland), owned by local microbrewery Gaedingur, aquavit is eschewed in favour of a range of local and international craft beers; try a glass of their toasty Stout (£5.65).

For an authentic Icelandic cocktail, head to **Slippbarinn** (slippbarinn.is/en) in the foyer of the Marina Hotel. Try a Perfection (pictured), with vodka, dried cherries, liquorice syrup, lemon and black raspberry liqueur (£11), or an R&B, made with rye whiskey, bitters and birch sap (£12.50).

Loftid (loftidbar.is/en) is another trendy cocktail hotspot where you can also sample the local Reyka vodka (£6). Filtered through lava rock, the result is an incredibly pure yet creamy spirit with notes of vanilla and aniseed.

Double rooms at the hip Kex Hotel cost from £64 (kexhostel.is). Return flights from Gatwick to Reykjavik cost from £80 (wowair.co.uk). More info: visiticeland.com



Kex Hostel

WORDS: SARAH KINGSBURY; PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTIAN KOBER/ROBERT HARDING; KRISTJANA ELSABET SIGURDOTTIR