



FLOATING AWAY:
Tom and river
guide Barnaby.

Tarzan proud

sneaker-clad back-packer types in the clubs, restaurants and bars that sit so comfortably on the shore.

Many appear to reach Ambergris Caye and never leave, they have that hazy recollection of being somewhere near San Francisco in the early 70s and that's about it, man.

Others having been drifting this way for generations — in particular the large, devoutly Christian Menonite people that have set up home in Belize, quietly tilling the land undisturbed by the 21st century. Think the Amish community featured in the Harrison Ford blockbuster Witness; the Menonites are of similar stock, living the same way.

After three lazy days on the islands we dragged ourselves back to the Jungle Dome and, as daft as it sounds, it did almost feel like coming home.

There were the howler monkeys in the trees; there were the horses grazing happily across the dusty front lawn that doubles as Andy Hunt's football pitch; and there, if you squinted very closely through the darkness, were the fireflies doing their fiery dogfights across the night sky.

There, too, was little Jimmy, whose cowboy father had been smuggled across the Mexican border to begin a new life in the United States, sending his hard-earned dollars home to his family in Belize; there, clanging away in the distance, was the echoing sound of a rusty wheel hub being rung, summoning the ferryman to work as he pulled his leaky rowing boat across the river to meet the weary traveller on his way home.

It was a kind of magic — one that, five weeks into a grey British spring, is already calling us back . . .



LATE TRAVEL DEALS

FROM NORWICH

June 10. Corfu. Seven nights, self-catering, Cavo Blanco apartments, St Peters, from £289.

June 14. Malta. 14 nights, half-board, allocated on arrival, from £319.

June 16. Lanzarote. 14 nights, self-catering, Jable Bermudas apartments, Puerto Del Carmen, from £314.

June 19. Croatia. Seven nights, half-board, Mlini Hotel, Mlini, from £475.

June 21. Tenerife. Seven nights, self-catering, allocated on arrival, from £297. Call Travel Counsellors on (01603) 869045.

UK/IRELAND

NORTH WALES: Ye Olde Bull's Head (01248 810 329) offers two nights' half-board for £163 through June for Beaumaris Festival (May 28-June 5) or Anglesey Walking Festival (June 11-25).
DUBLIN: Cresta (0870 333 3303) offers three nights' B&B at four-star Chief O'Neills hotel May 29-June 30, incl return flights.

BRUMMIE BREAK: Macdonald Hotels & Resorts (0870 400 9090) offers two nights' B&B for two people (sharing) until June 6 for £99.

GLASGOW: Superbreak (01904 644 455) offers B&B Fri-Sun through May/June at four-star City Inn for £42 per person per night.

SHORT BREAKS

LISBON: Ebookers.com (0870 814 6024) offers two nights' B&B at three star hotel July 1-Aug 31 from £145 ex-Gatwick.

BARCELONA: British Airways Holidays (0870 243 3406) offers two nights' B&B at four-star hotel from £168 per adult, through May/June, with one child (under 12) sharing room for free with two adults. Sched flights from £69 return.

PRAGUE: British Airways Holidays (0870 243 3406) offers two nights' B&B at three-star Ibis hotel from £147 per adult, with one child (under-12) staying free when sharing with adults on arrivals through May/June.

OSLO FESTIVAL: ShortBreaks (0870 027 6077) offers two nights' B&B from June 24 for £269, incl flights ex-Stansted, to enjoy Europride annual festival.

TURANDOT IN PARIS: ShortBreaks (0870 027 6076) offers two nights' B&B from May 27 in three star hotel and ticket to Puccini's famous opera produced by Zhang Yimou, currently Eastern cinema's hottest export, for £229. Great spectacle incl 450 Chinese actors, singers and acrobats.

BRUSSELS: Eurostar Holidays Direct (0870 167 6767) offers overnight B&B at two-star hotel for £99, excl Bank Holidays, until June 30.

DUBAI: Bridge Travel (0870 191 7287) offers three nights' B&B at five-star Le Meridien for £449, between June 1 and Aug 26, with flights ex-Heathrow, Gatwick.

NORMANDY: Inntravel Shortbreaks (01653 617908) offers four nights' half-board from May 20 & 27, for "Woods & Abbeys" walking holiday via abbeys and half-timbered villages for £439, incl Channel crossings, four nights' half-board in four auberges, three picnics, luggage transfers, walking maps and notes.

LAS VEGAS: Ebookers.com (0870 814 6024) offers four nights' room-only at "America's Best Value Inn" until June 30 from £549 (ex-Gatwick).

NORTHERN FRANCE: Cresta (0870 333 3303) offers overnight B&B at two star hotel near Calais for £49, saving £57, until May 31. Price incl Channel crossing for car and passengers.

SHORT HAUL SUN

TUSCANY: Discovery Tours (0845 230 1212) offers seven nights' self-catering in apartment sleeping up to four people for total £348, saving £61, from June 4, 11 & 18. Flights, car hire fixed on request.

ANDALUCIA: Spain at Heart (01373 814 222) offers 25 per cent discounts on rentals in Andalucia through May, starting at £180 per person in converted blacksmith's forge near Gaucin. Prices incl car hire, flights extra.

ITALIAN LAKES: Inghams (020 8780 4433) offers seven nights' half-board at three-star hotel in resort of Riva, on northern tip of Lake Garda, from £465 ex-Gatwick May 28.

LONG-HAUL

EGYPT: Peltours (020 8371 5200) offers seven nights' half-board from May 23 at five-star hotel in El Alamein, Egypt's hot new Med resort, for £349, saving £120 and £299 per child (aged 2-11), incl flights.

BARBADOS: Sovereign (0870 607 0770) offers seven nights' room-only from £793 until July 15 at The Crane Resort & Residences.

FIJI ISLANDS: Bridge & Wickers (020 7483 6555) offers seven nights' room-only for price of five — £997 — on departures before June 15, incl Air New Zealand flights. Airfare incr by £370 in July.

WESTERN US: Destinology (0800 505 3636) offers nine nights' room-only through June, from £970, with three nights each in Las Vegas, Hollywood and San Francisco. Package incl return flights.

MAURITIUS: Bon Voyage (0800 980 7090) offers seven nights' all-inclusive at three star hotel from £859, incl BA flights, saving £189, until July 15. Book by June 30.

THEMED HOLIDAYS

LEARN TO SURF: Crystal Active (0870 888 0266) offers seven nights' self-catering from June 4 in Linda Barker-designed mobile homes between Biarritz and Bordeaux from £175, saving £50. Package incl Dover-Calais ferry crossings

BY RAIL TO AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: Great Rail Journeys (01904 521 940) offers 13-day trip by rail/river cruise via Cologne, Passau and then cruise to Melk, Esztergom, Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna and return rail to Nurnberg. Package at £1,750 incl five nights' hotel half board and seven nights full board on cruise.

TANGO IN MIAMI: Club Dance Holidays (0870 286 6000) offers seven nights' room-only accom from May 27 or 29 from £1,089 and full pass to Tango Festival Fantasy events from May 27 or 29. Package incl Club Dance Holidays host for clubbing and dancing.

CAMPING ON COTE D'AZUR: Canvas (01383 629 000) offers 12 nights' camping at St Aygulf from June 4 for two adults and up to four children for total £305, saving £156, incl Channel crossings.

SINGLES ON KOS: Friendship Travel (0289 446 2211) offers seven nights' half-board ex-Gatwick May 25 or £499, incl transfers, single occupancy of double room and group host.

CRUISES

WESTERN MED: Crystal (020 7287 9040) offers 11-night fly-cruise ex-Barcelona to Dover May 26 from £2,216, down from £4,894. Ports of call include Cannes, Gibraltar, Cadiz, Lisbon and Bordeaux.