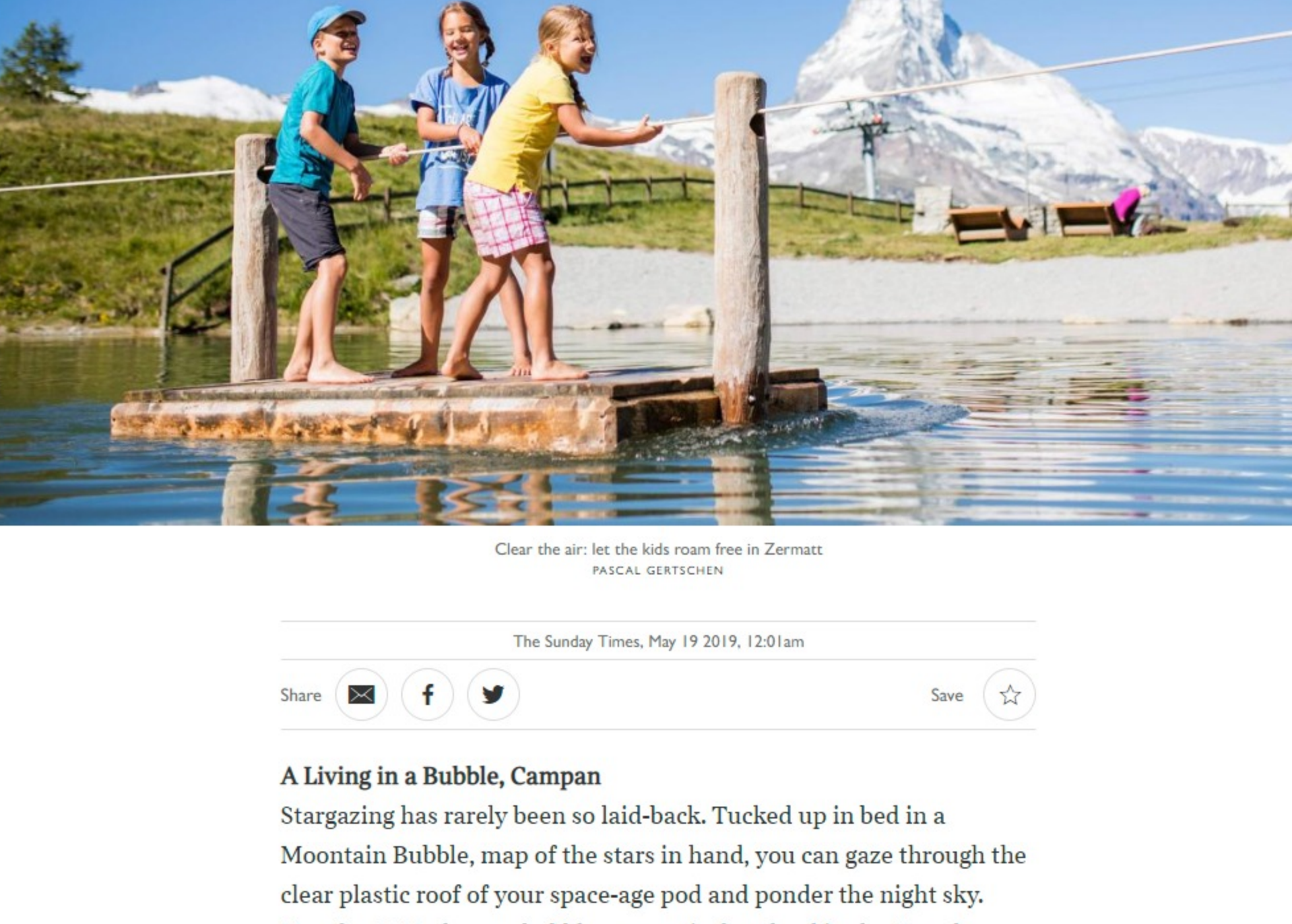




## EUROPE

# The best mountain holidays for summer

The slopes are just as tempting in summer, when you can run up them, bike down them, paraglide off them or simply enjoy the soaring views. By Sean Newsom



Clear the air: let the kids roam free in Zermatt  
PASCAL GERTSCHEN

The Sunday Times, May 19 2019, 12:01am

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**A Living in a Bubble, Campan**  
Stargazing has rarely been so laid-back. Tucked up in bed in a Mountain Bubble, map of the stars in hand, you can gaze through the clear plastic roof of your space-age pod and ponder the night sky. New for 2019, the two bubbles are set in farmland in the French Pyrenees, with a wall of jagged peaks at the far end of the valley and the pilgrim town of Lourdes (the nearest airport) two miles to the north. La Grande Ourse is the one to book; prices start at £180 a night, B&B, excluding travel ([mountain-bubble.com](#)). Hours of languid lounging beckon from its wood-fired hot tub.

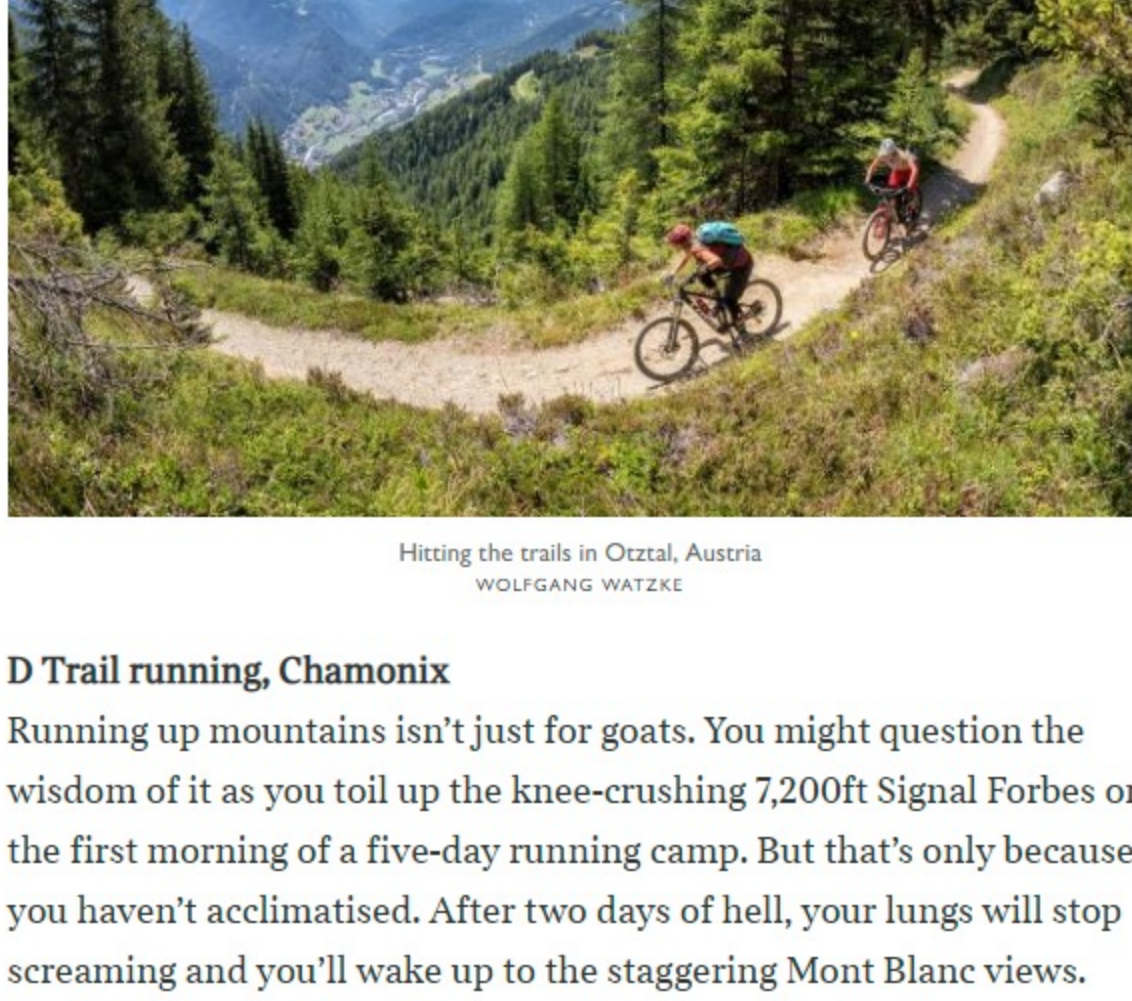


In suspense: a zip wire near Annecy  
DAVID MACKEY

**B Canyoning for kids, near Annecy**  
The French call it *ruisseling*, and it's a gentler, more playful version of canyoning, perfect for 8- to 13-year-olds. Equipped with helmets and wetsuits, you walk the gorges of the River Fier, sloshing about its pools and eddies (£72 for a family of four; [guides-des-aravis.com](#)). It's typical of the summer scene in the mountains east of Annecy, where big outdoor pools, a trampoline park, laser rifle shooting, mini golf, zip wires, archery and a toboggan course are combined in a majestic playground for teenagers. Erna Low has an August week in a two-room apartment at the Grandes Alpes residence, in La Clusaz, from £257pp for a family of four, self-catering; the price includes return Eurotunnel crossings ([ernalow.co.uk](#)).



**C The ride of your life, Tignes**  
Ski lifts might be an integral part of the mountain scene, but they are rarely the main event. Except in the French resort of Tignes, where, this summer, you'll feel the wind in your hair — and get a somewhat alarmingly real sense of the plunging depths beneath you — as you ride on the roof of the Grande Motte cable car to the dizzy height of 11,388ft. It's a fitting addition to the resort's roster of blood-pumping activities. Mix in glacier skiing, mountain-biking, trail running, watersliding and rock-climbing, and your heart will be thumping from start to finish. A week in a two-bedroom flat at the Nevada apartments starts at just £160pp, including guiding and B&B accommodation, based on four sharing and including return ferry crossings ([peakretreats.co.uk](#)).



Hiding the trails in Otztal, Austria  
WOLFGANG WATZKE

**D Trail running, Chamonix**  
Running up mountains isn't just for goats. You might question the wisdom of it as you toil up the knee-crushing 7,200ft Signal Forbes on the first morning of a five-day running camp. But that's only because you haven't acclimatised. After two days of hell, your lungs will stop screaming and you'll wake up to the staggering Mont Blanc views. You'll also be astonished by your body's mountain-beating capabilities. The result? Euphoria. This summer, Icicle Mountaineering is offering four of these six-night camps — starting on June 23 — for £699pp, including guiding and B&B accommodation, but not travel ([iciclemountaineering.ltd.uk](#)). Fly to Geneva.

**E Classical music, Verbier**  
This year's Verbier Festival kicks off with Valery Gergiev, director of St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, conducting Bartok and Shostakovich. It's a suitably heavyweight opening to a star-studded programme that runs for two weeks from July 18; the mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Gubanova, the pianist Andras Schiff and the cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason are also performing. This isn't what you'd expect in a Swiss ski resort famous for party-loving royals and hardcore off-piste skiing, but there's no denying that the mountain setting adds fizz (tickets from £40; [verbierfestival.com](#)). Stay at the central Hotel Bristol (doubles from £186, B&B; [bristol-verbier.ch](#)). Geneva is the nearest airport.

**Literature Festival at Sea 2020 on Queen Mary 2**  
Join the world's greatest writers and Times Journalists as you sail from Southampton to New York.

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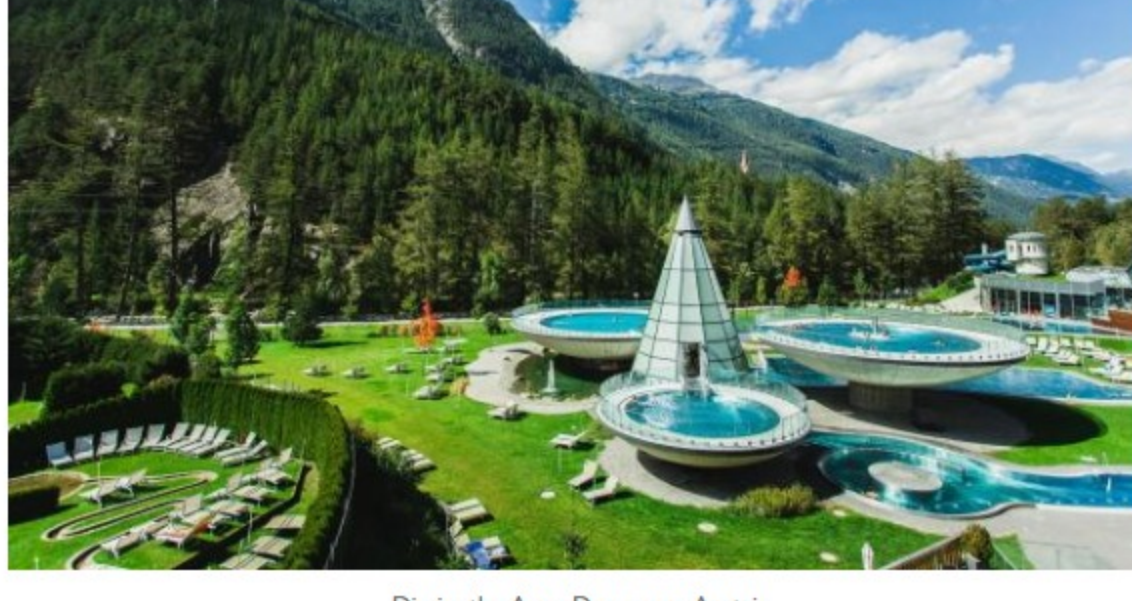
Free Leith, Armando Iannucci, Matt Charley, Pam Ayres, Mark Billingham, Kate Mosse, Daniel Finkelstein, Alexander McCall Smith, Ian Rankin

Find out more

**F Heli-biking, Zermatt**  
Those who join Bramble Ski's Fearless Families programme in the Swiss resort this summer will earn serious bragging rights. With the Matterhorn as your backdrop, you'll plunge into an adrenaline-fuelled week that includes tandem paragliding, a via ferrata climb and a night in a mountain hut. But it's the helicopter ride up to 10,000ft, accessing remote MTB trails with a guide, that will leave your kids buzzing. Base camp is a swanky self-catering apartment, with restaurants nearby in case Mum and Dad are too tired to cook. Seven nights start at £1,822pp for a family of four, including six activities ([brambleski.com](#)). Fly to Geneva or Zurich. Heli-bikers must be 12 or older.

**G Paths of glory, near Rovereto**  
A trip along the Vallarsa, southeast of Rovereto in Trentino, Italy, will render you dumbstruck for two reasons. The first is the sublime beauty of this tight, steep-sided valley of forests, cliffs and sparkling mountain streams. The second is the history. Just over 100 years ago, the Austrians and Italians fought a full-blown mechanised war through this all but impassable landscape. Local expert Michele Zandonati will guide you through it, visiting key sites such as Monte Pasubio and revealing the murderous ingenuity of the two sides as they fought battles on the edge of precipices, carved trench systems into solid rock and turned mountain passes into mass graves (£210 a day for up to 20 people; [zando@gruppopgrotte.it](#) for bookings). The Hotel Leon d'Oro, in Rovereto, is the best base (doubles from £70, B&B, [hotelleonoro.it](#)). Verona is the nearest airport.

**H Wine tasting, Trentino**  
Sit in the garden at the family-run Dorigati winery, in Mezzacorona, and the view — beyond the burbling fountain — is of a sheer 2,000ft cliff. It's typical of the soaring scenery that characterises the Adige Valley as it cuts deep into the Italian Alps. The ever-changing geology adds variety to the wine, as you'll learn sipping your way from rich, fruity teroldego reds to the creamy, champagne-style Trento DOC. Pick up a hire car at Verona airport, 70 miles south, and base yourself at the Albergo Caffè Centrale, in Mezzacorona (doubles from £129, B&B; [hotelcaffecentrale.com](#)), or the Villa Weingarten, further up the valley in Caladaro (doubles from £102, B&B; [villaweingarten.it](#)). Allow a healthy budget for tasting taxis.



Dip in the Aqua Dome spa, Austria  
CHRISTOPH SCHUECH

**I Bikes and baths, Otztal**  
Founded in 2015, Sölden's Bike Republic has rapidly grown into an Alpine MTB hub, with four lifts serving a range of trails. This year, 15 natural descents and nine manmade ones will test your mettle, alongside e-biking and road routes ([bikerepublic.soelden.com](#)). When your legs are like jelly, it's time for some world-class splashing, whooshing down a giant waterslide in Austria's largest adventure park (£22; [area47.at](#)) or lolling in an elevated hot tub in the Aqua Dome spa (£19; [aqua-dome.at](#)). Doubles at the chic, MTB-friendly Die Berge hotel start at £115, B&B ([dieberge.at](#)). Innsbruck is the nearest airport.

**J Hut to hut, Zillertal Alps**  
Fancy a proper stomp? Then stretch your legs on the Berliner Höhenweg, which knits together eight huts amid raw, top-of-the-world scenery in the Austrian Alps. The full 53-mile circuit takes seven days, but it's easy to pick a single section, with the Furttschaglhaus to Berliner Hut leg the most highly rated. You'll need a head for heights and a walker's harness to clip onto fixed cables above the most precipitous drops, but the vast views repay every ounce of effort. Book the huts at [naturpark-zillertal.at](#) (£108pp for two nights, half-board) and stay in pretty Mayrhofen either side of the trip. Inghams has one-week packages from £399pp, half-board, including flights and transfers ([inghams.co.uk](#)).

**K Traditional farmhouse, Tyrol**  
Pining for a mountain farmhouse festooned with geraniums? The Hinterbrannerhof is the real deal. Built in 1832, with a bell on top and a barn at the back, it has been restored in a low-key style that makes so much of its ancient timber, it's like living inside a tree. Even better, this idyllic self-catering property offers doorstep access to the pastures and stirring ridge walks of the Wildschönau, an unsung area of the Tyrol that's home to one of the prettiest villages in the Alps, Thierbach. Fly to Innsbruck, pick up a hire car and don't forget the Sound of Music songbook. One week's rental of the whole house, which sleeps nine, starts at £1,460 ([hinterbrannerhof.at](#)).

**L Forest luxury, Zell Am See**  
Need to intersperse family fun with some me-time? Then whisk your brood to the Forsthofgut, in Leogang, Austria. This five-star spa hotel has its roots firmly planted in the local forests and spoils weary parents with yoga, artisan G&Ts and a big adults-only area in the spa while the young 'uns are in the kids' club. The menu is heavy on vegan food, with many of the ingredients sourced from within 30 miles; pine panelling adds a soothing scent to the bedrooms. When you're ready to face the world, the hotel's own hiking and biking guides await. A week in July starts at £550pp for a family of four, half-board, including daily childcare ([forsthofgut.at](#)). Salzburg is the nearest airport.

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