

This week's dream: Kilimanjaro's peaceful cousin

As the continent's highest mountain, at around 19,000ft, Kilimanjaro is the African climb "everyone talks about". But just 213 miles from it lies another peak, Mount Kenya – the continent's second highest, at just over 17,000ft – that is more beautiful, and less crowded, says Matthew Parris in *The Times*. On Mount Kenya, you can feel as though you're on your own "private adventure". The massif has wonderfully dramatic topography, with jagged snowy ridges and "breathtaking" cliffs, gorges, canyons and waterfalls. And with its unique ecosystem, it bristles with varied and spectacular flora. The way up is not quick, nor easy, and only experienced climbers reach the summit. But if, as an ordinary hiker, you give yourself five days and aim for Point Lenana, about 700ft shy of the top, all the "majesty" of the mountain can still be yours.

Go in the dry season ("during English winter, praise be") and, if possible, employ a "first-class climb organiser", who will supply



Views of the Delamere Peak, on the Chogoria route

an "army" of guides, porters and cooks. Relax for a couple of days after flying to Nairobi, perhaps by visiting the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, home of the world's last three remaining northern white rhinos. From there, it's a pleasant drive to the start of the Chogoria route.

Forest gives way to lush alpine pasture as you ascend, and then stranger plants appear – giant groundsel "like monster cabbages perched atop bare tree trunks", heather "taller than a man", and, along the skyline, "ghostly legions" of "triffid-like" giant lobelia. Sunbirds dart among their flowers, and rock rabbits shriek from "stony lookouts" above dazzling glacial lakes. Altitude sickness

can defeat even fit hikers, and the penultimate stage is a "tiresome trudge" across volcanic gravel. But the view from the ridge across the plains to the "snowy top" of Kilimanjaro itself is sublime, and provides a euphoric climax. *Kenya Treks* (07843-273873, www.kenyatreks.com) has a six-night trip from \$1,800pp, excl. flights.

Hotel of the week



Lympstone Manor, Exmouth, Devon

This recently revamped Georgian manor house by the Exe Estuary is "the hottest country house hotel opening of the year", says Susan d'Arcy in *The Sunday Times*. New owner Michael Caines is the "champion" chef who held two Michelin stars at nearby Gidleigh Park for 18 years. Interiors have a "pared-back vibe", with oak furniture, chandeliers, and lots of velvet in muted shades; some of the rooms have outdoor tubs and firepits. There are "niggles" – a cluttered lobby, a lack of cosy nooks – but the modern British cooking is "masterly", and the service "blissfully unpretentious".

Doubles from £305. 01395-202040, www.lympstonemanager.co.uk.

Getting the flavour of...

Art and glamour in Cape Town

Occupying the top six floors of a towering converted grain silo in Cape Town's industrial dockyards, The Silo is Africa's most "sophisticated" new hotel, says Lucia van der Post in the FT. It's pretty incredible, with its wildly colourful interiors featuring antique furniture from markets all over Africa. There's a rooftop bar and pool with panoramic views, and floor-to-ceiling windows in every room. But The Silo is most exciting for the close relationship it enjoys with its downstairs neighbour – the soon-to-open Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. Guests will enjoy direct access to the museum – the world's largest gallery of contemporary African art – and the hotel (which opened last month) is full of work by artists featured in it. *Africa Travel* (020-7843 3500, www.africatour.com) has a five-night stay at The Silo from £2,795pp, incl. flights.

Returning to Sorrento

The Sorrentine Peninsula is best known for its gorgeous southern shore, the Amalfi Coast – but other areas are just as beautiful, more affordable, and "less infuriatingly busy", says Nicky Swallow in *Condé Nast Traveller*. Sorrento itself – a staple of the 18th century Grand Tour – is a fine town with a spectacular cliff-top setting facing Mount Vesuvius across the Bay of Naples. Away from its main tourist drag are plenty of

little-visited treats, from "astounding" medieval palaces to charming traditional shops. Nearby Vico Equense has some lovely beaches and "glorious" walking paths, as well as several Michelin-starred restaurants in the surrounding hills. But to truly venture off the beaten track, explore the wild coast between Nerano and Positano by boat, returning to civilisation at lovely Marina del Cantone for pasta at the "restaurant on stilts", Lo Scoglio. *Bellini Travel* (020-7602 7602, www.bellinitravel.com) has a six-night trip from €1,720pp, excl. flights.

Riding in Ireland's wild west

A legendary horseman, pony breeder and entrepreneur in his native County Galway, 79-year-old Willie Leahy founded Connemara Trails almost 50 years ago, and the week-long, 110-mile rides he leads across this rugged region, on Ireland's wild western fringe, are still going strong, says Leyla Daybelge in *The Daily Telegraph*. The sense of "freedom, fun and proximity to nature" on these trips is wondrous. You spend your nights in country house hotels, and ride by day across landscapes ranging from lonely mountains to vast, boggy plains that echo with birdsong. There are white sand beaches too, where you can ride your pony, bareback, in turquoise waters – "a magical experience". From €1,590pp for six days (+353 91 843968, www.connemara-trail.com).

Last-minute offers from top travel companies

Dublin to Dingle

Take a 6-day coach tour from Dublin to Belfast, Derry, Galway, Killarney and Dingle, and back. From £615pp, incl. 5 nights' b&cb. 0800-083 4000, www.excursions.lastminute.com. Depart 26 May.

Amazing Alsace

Enjoy a 6-night stay at the Best Western Grand Hotel in Colmar, from £1,315pp b&cb, incl. rail travel from London, 3 dinners and excursions. 0800-033 7960, www.holidaysbyrail.com. Depart 13 June.

Lakeside Swiss break

Take in the stunning views of Lake Maggiore during a 4-night stay at the Dell'Angelo Hotel in Locarno, from £729pp b&cb, incl. flights. 01483-791116, www.inghams.co.uk. Depart 8 July.

Punta Cana resort

An all-inclusive 7-night stay at Majestic Elegance Punta Cana, a luxurious Dominican beach resort, costs from £1,475pp, incl. flights. 020-3897 1152, www.loveholidays.com. Depart 23 June.