

THE MAKING
OF A MASS
MURDERER

TALKING POINTS
P 22

The truth about
American teeth

BEST AMERICAN
COLUMNISTS P 16

"I'm shocked that
my kids are more
square than me"

PEOPLE P 10

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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Can Corbyn catch up? The poll gap narrows

Page 4



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

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This week's dream: a hip hang-out in upstate New York

Two hours by train from Manhattan's Penn Station, the little town of Hudson is like a pocket of Brooklyn transported to the hills and forests of upstate New York, says Steve King in *Condé Nast Traveller* – an escape from the city that is both exquisitely hip and perfectly picturesque. Excellent farm-to-table restaurants rub shoulders with “chicly creaky” boutique hotels on its main drag, Warren Street, where the faded facades are a glorious compendium of 19th century architectural styles (“Greek Revival, Gothic Revival... Italianate, Second Empire... – you name it, they're all here”). And despite a strong vein of “perky metropolitan smugness”, the “careworn, small-town humility” of the place endures.

The town was settled in the 1780s by Quakers from Nantucket who needed an inland port for their whaling ships. After a brief flush of prosperity, however, it fell on hard times, becoming a byword for drinking, gambling and “whoring” in the 1920s.



A glorious compendium of facades on Warren Street

Then, in 1982, its “renaissance” began, when Alain Picon, a Frenchman living in New York, opened an antiques shop on Warren Street. More antiques dealers followed – today, about 60 have shops in a town with a population of less than 7,000. The foodies followed in the 1990s, and it became the gourmet capital of the Hudson River Valley, with inventive “locavore” restaurants such as Fish & Game, “where the bordello-red wallpaper is as luscious as the tasting menu”. Outside the town there is lots to see, including “stately piles” such as Olana, a Persian-inspired folly built by the 19th century landscape painter Frederic Church, and Clermont, ancestral home

of the Livingston family, whose descendants include the actor Montgomery Clift and the presidents Bush. *Hotels in Hudson include Wm. Farmer & Sons (www.wmfarmerandsons.com), The Hudson Milliner (www.thehudsonmilliner.com) and Rivertown Lodge (www.rivertownlodge.com).*

Hotel of the week



Kahanda Kanda, Sri Lanka

Perched high in the hills overlooking Koggala Lake – close to Sri Lanka's beautiful south coast – this revamped tea plantation house is “a knockout”, says Tatler. The ten suites have colonnaded verandas, canopied beds, Asian antiques, English oil paintings, and the family heirlooms of the owner, interior designer George Cooper. Best of all is the Dubu Suite, a Javanese cottage with an outdoor bathroom and ten floor-to-ceiling windows secreted in a “vast” garden. There's a rainwater infinity pool, and a restaurant serving good Asian fusion and traditional Sri Lankan cuisine. *Suites from £317. +94 91 494 3700, www.kahandakanda.com.*

Getting the flavour of...

Tracking gorillas in Uganda

It has long been possible for tourists to visit Uganda's endangered mountain gorillas, but encounters are generally with habituated animals and are limited to one hour. Now, however, visitors can track a semi-habituated family through the “fairy-tale” rainforest of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and spend up to three hours with them, to help them get used to human company, says Sue Watt in *The Independent*. Expeditions cost \$1,500 (£1,160) per person, for groups of up to four. The day starts with a crash course in tracking – looking for discarded leaves, bent foliage, knuckle prints, and the like. You may not meet the gorillas, who are still “wary” and have been known to charge, but any time you do spend with them is likely to be “magical”, if nerve-racking. *Steppes Travel (01285-601050, www.steppestravel.co.uk) has a six-day trip from £4,495pp, including flights.*

Eco-chic in Arctic Norway

Norway's Steigen archipelago – a mountainous wilderness rising from gin-clear seas, 62 miles inside the Arctic Circle – is “almost as remote as it gets in Europe”. Even so, you can now stay there in great style, says Peter Carty in *The Guardian*, thanks to explorer Børge Ousland, who is the first person to have reached the North Pole alone and unsupported. His new Manshausen

resort has four shoreside wooden cabins, with an award-winning minimalist design featuring vast floor-to-ceiling windows. There is great hiking, climbing, kayaking and diving to enjoy, and a hot tub and spa to relax in afterwards. The local wildlife includes Europe's largest colony of sea eagles – and there's a fine museum nearby, in a well-preserved 19th century house that feels like a set for an Ibsen play. *Sea cabins cost from £285 a night for two people (+47 23 38 22 00, www.manshausen.no).*

A secret island in the Adriatic

Croatia's Dalmatian Coast and islands are “overrun” with tourists in the summer, but you can still find peaceful pockets – such as the “pretty” island of Šipan, says Laura Goulden in *The Sunday Times*. Little more than an hour by ferry from Dubrovnik, it has no “must-see” sights – just a small castle, 34 churches (many open only on Sundays), and two little towns. And that's the point: this island serves “as a reminder that there's life beyond your to-do list”. The backcountry, fragrant with wild herbs and criss-crossed by dry stone walls, is great for walking. Or spend lazy days just soaking up the sea views from the terrace at the excellent Hotel Božica, or at Bowa, a beach bar that serves “simple” but delicious seafood. *Hotel Božica (www.hotel-bozica.hr) has double rooms from about £85 a night.*

Last-minute offers from top travel companies

Weekend in Cambridge

The brand new and super-stylish Tamburlaine Hotel is offering a 2-night stay, with cream tea, from £139pp b&cb (based on two sharing). 0843-227 7777, www.secretescapes.com. Arrive 7 July.

Culture in Vancouver

Enjoy a 7-night stay at the Sheraton Wall Centre hotel – within easy reach of galleries, restaurants and theatres – from £1,554pp b&cb, incl. flights. 0871-402 1480, www.travelbag.co.uk. Depart 7 August.

Chill out in Thailand

Soak up the sun with 6 nights at the Phi Phi Island Village Beach Resort, from £1,557pp half board (two sharing), incl. London flights. 01204-821787, www.destinology.co.uk. Depart 21 July.

Trekking in north Albania

Get back to nature with an 8-day walking adventure in the Accursed Mountains, from £1,308pp full board, incl. treks and flights. 01962-302085, www.walksworldwide.com. Depart 8 July.