

The Mail on Sunday & MailOnline

spider



56 TRAVEL

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Idols. For something out of this world, head for Lyons and the new Musée des Confluences. The extraordinary structure is built on stilts and resembles a stainless-steel cloud hovering above the Rhone and Saone rivers. It will feature three major exhibitions based on the origins of the universe, the evolution of man, and what the future holds for us.

Closer to home, Cardigan Castle (cardigancastle.com) in West Wales will be open to the public next spring for the first time over. Overlooking the River Teifi, the 12th Century castle has been restored to its former glory.

You can explore the ramparts, the medieval tower and the Grade II listed Georgian mansion that stands within its walls. There will be a centre for learning the Welsh language, culture and crafts, and its Eisteddfod garden will have a wet weather dome and luxury self-catering accommodation.

A different culture can be explored through Exodus (exodus.co.uk), which has become the first UK tour operator to feature cultural holidays to Bangladesh. Travellers will explore the lovely city of Dhaka before venturing further afield to the mangroves of the Sundarbans National Park to see crocodiles, sea turtles and, if you are lucky, Bengal tigers. There are departures in February and April.

THEME PARKS

THE Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Florida will expand this summer to include Diagon Alley, which opens at the Universal Studios theme park adjacent to the Islands of Adventure in Orlando. Fans will board the Hogwarts Express to travel between the cobbled wizarding alley in London and Hogsmeade, and the new area will include rides, magic shops and a marquee attraction based on Gringotts Bank. See universal.orlando.co.uk.

Alton Towers (altontowers.com) is to launch the world's first-ever CBeebies Land in May, introducing some of the most-loved children's characters to the theme park. It will include rides, play areas and live encounters in a fun environment for pre-schoolers.

CRUISE SHIPS

A LUXURY floating hotel opens in Gibraltar in March. Sunborn Gibraltar (sunborn.com), the first five-star yacht hotel in the Floating Hotel fleet, will be moored in the Ocean Village marina on Gibraltar's sheltered west coast. It has 189 beautifully appointed rooms, some with stunning views of the Rock, and a top-deck restaurant has

A jungle cruise – and a trip on the Hogwarts Express

HAVEN: A floating hotel will be moored in Gibraltar

a retractable roof and floor-to-ceiling glass doors.

Fans of the sitcom Friends can celebrate 20 years since the first episode with a cruise to New York (jetlinecruise.com) to see the places where it all happened. It departs January 10 with a three-day add-on in the city giving you the chance to visit the Pulitzer Fountain – which lent itself to the famous opening credits – the Solow Building where Chandler worked, with its amazing glass architecture, and Greenwich Village, home to the real restaurant that inspired the gang's favourite coffee shop, Central Perk.

Alternatively, stay at sea on the new Quantum of the Seas, to be launched by Royal Caribbean (royalcaribbean.co.uk) on November 23.

RAIL

THERE'S nothing like an adventure by rail, and there's a thrilling one on offer aboard the Golden Eagle Danube Express (danube-express.com), which will be the first European private train to enter Iran when it makes an epic 15-day journey next October. From the shores of the Bosphorus through ancient Persia to Tehran, it will take destinations rarely experienced

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You can experience the thrill of skydiving in a glass simulator or enjoy a 360-degree bird's eye view of the horizon from a capsule that transports you 300ft above the ocean. The inaugural cruise will sail down the US East Coast to the Bahamas.

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