

The #30ActiveDays Project

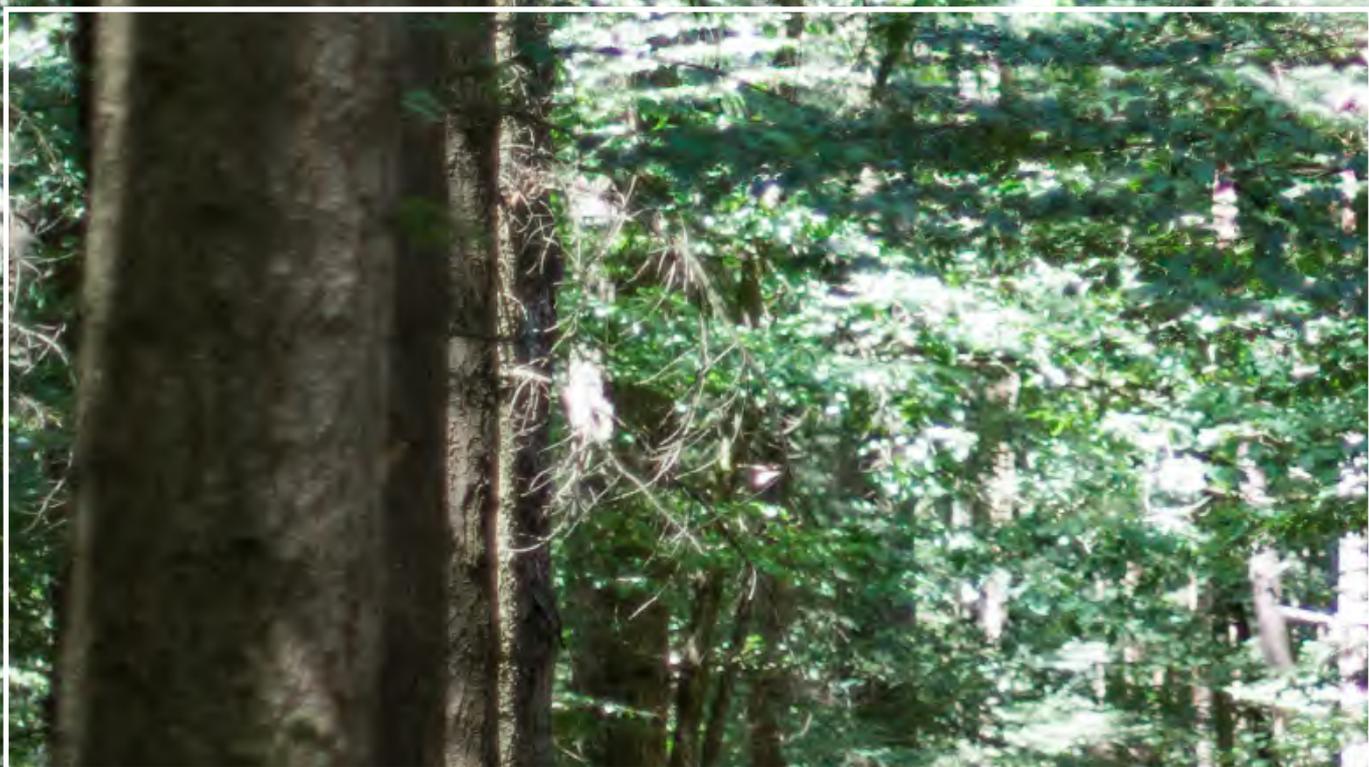
The Wanderer

The Relaxed Activity Holiday Handbook

First-hand accounts from walking, kayaking and cycling across Italy and France.



PLUS: bonus tips on what to pack for a walking holiday



“Exercise should be part of your life and, wherever possible, it should be beautiful, inspiring, and part of the whole reason you want to stay alive!”

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The Relaxed Activity Holiday Handbook



In the summer of 2015, five bloggers set out to see the world and become more active along the way. Through a travel relay of 30 days, they explored the vineyards of France, the trattorias of Italy and the mountains of Austria with Headwater Holidays.

Why 30 days? Well, the idea was sparked by Headwater's celebration of its own 30 years in business, offering relaxing activity holidays that really get under the skin of a destination.

And 30 minutes forms an important part of medical advice when it comes to exercise. Most of us aren't doing nearly enough despite the fact that regular exercise boosts concentration, life expectancy, sleep, memory and even your sex life.

We wanted to inspire you to move more, to maybe think of holidays in a more active (yet still fun) fashion – and perhaps most of all, to inspire ourselves as deskbound digital lubbers to get into training and get moving under our own steam.

Here are our stories...

Abi

Abigail King | www.insidethetravellab.com

Director at Captivate | www.captivatedigitalmedia.com

In partnership with Headwater Holidays | www.headwater.com





What to pack for a walking holiday

Abigail King | Inside the Travel Lab

How hard can it be to pack for a walking holiday? Just a pair of sensible shoes and you're set, aren't you? Well...yes. And no. Life teaches lessons (often in a painful way) and here are the tips I've put together from walking through the rain-sodden swamplands of our esteemed British Isles to sun and mosquito-soaked climates further afield.

From the glamour of Italy's Amalfi Coast to the high-altitude cloud forests of Ecuador and Peru, the legendary snows of Kilimanjaro, the fog of Mount Fuji and the sands of the Sahara, some things always stay the same.

And it wasn't until someone asked me recently (en route to the #30ActiveDays Project) that I realised that there was

advice to impart at all. So here goes: my packing tips for walking holidays...

Essential Items

Decent walking boots

It may sound obvious, but this is THE THING to get right. Much as you can't

have a circus without a clown, so you can't have a decent walking holiday with shoes that make you scream with pain.

What to look for? Ankle support. That means: boots that rise to cover your ankles. If you've left it all too late (and no-one's judging here) then trainers/sneakers will likely carry you through. But as you walk over uneven ground,

your ankles bend and twist, as they're supposed to. Ankle support from your footwear will stop things bending too far, saving you from sprains and strains.

Wear Them In. It should, perhaps, go without saying, but wear the shoes/boots/trainers/sneakers in first. Start by wearing them around the house and then gradually increase the amount of walking so that you can ease into them and them into you.

Get the Right Size. When you buy them, wear thick socks and err on the side of slightly too loose rather than slightly too tight. Your feet get hot when you walk (even in cold climates) and hot feet means swollen feet, which means you need slightly more room in your shoes.

Waterproof, breathable fabrics are all good things to hear. So is Gore-Tex. A grip on the soles is a must.

Decent walking boots need a wash and a spray with treatment from time to time but nothing fancier than that.

Wear Them When It's Hot. If you're going to be walking through tropical areas then sensible boots are even more important. They help protect from snake bites and mosquito bites and prevent water from infected sources (including sewage) accessing any cuts you pick

up along the way. I used to wear non-sexy but practical Teva sandals in such situations but after finishing medical school, it's closed-toe boots all the way.

Waterproof, breathable fabrics are all good things to hear. So is Gore-Tex. A grip on the soles is a must.

A Way to Carry Water

Once you're walking for more than an hour, you're going to need some water (and if you're walking through extreme conditions, you're going to need it sooner than that.)

At one end of the spectrum, you can have a plastic water bottle slung into a sexy leather handbag. At other ends, you're going to need more. Depending on your route, you may benefit from a metal water bottle with a carabiner you can clip to your bag. Alternatively, I love the Platypus water systems if you want to keep your hands

free (it's a pouch that fits into a rucksack with a long plastic tube you can clip on to the front strap. You can drink from the tube as and when you need to without having to stop and take the rucksack off and rummage around.)

So, in short, you need a water bottle or pouch and a bag to carry it in.

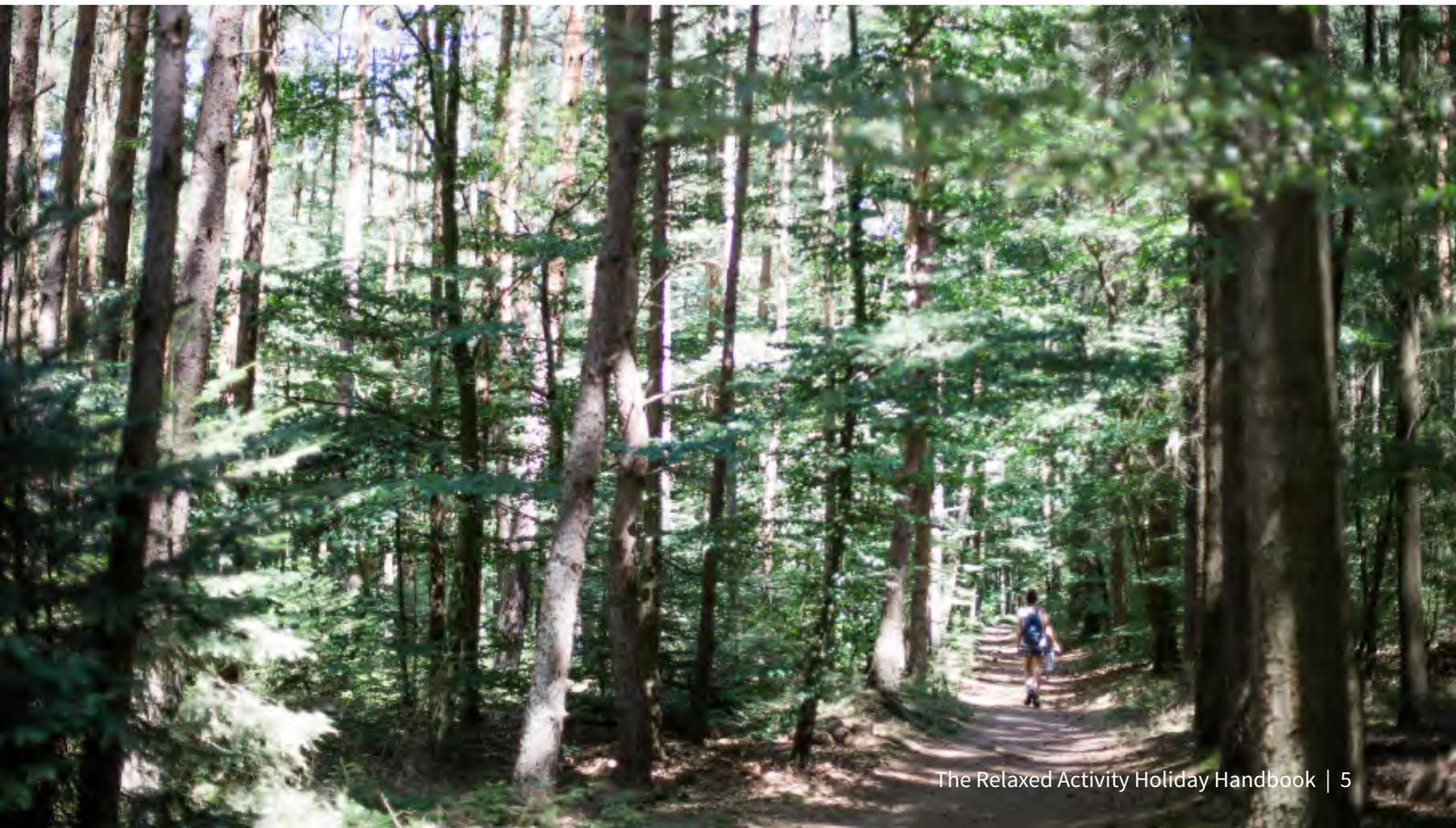
Sunscreen

Yes, wherever you are these days. We're all supposed to be wearing factor 15 SPF even in the midst of foggy grey Britain so if you're planning on being outside for more than an hour you'll definitely need this. Check out travel size sunscreens to keep your daypack lighter, and look for clear sprays to cut down on the gloop and mess factor.

Map Holder

I almost put this in the nicety section. Almost. But instead, I opted for including it here just to prompt you to think of the weather. Is it going to rain? Snow? Shower you with sand in a dust storm? If so, then you need something to protect your map.

Paper, iPhone, whatever. If you can't read it you may as well not have it. (And bear in mind that if you're betting on





using your phone you may want to think about back-up power supplies and mobile phone reception away from cities.)

From painful experience, I now always carry something to protect my map. You can stay simple with a zip-lock plastic bag from a supermarket or jazz things up with a purpose-built device from camping shops, complete with a waterproof zip and lanyard. **But whatever you do, think about this before you set off.**

Blister protection

No matter how well you break in your boots, in my experience, a blister will blight its way into your life one way or another. So a quick bit of first aid – leave the things alone! If you must “pierce” them, do so with a sterile needle and cover with a sterile dressing. Don’t have

those things? Not sure what sterile means beyond you can’t have children? Leave well alone.

Instead, cover the injured area with a well-heated compeed. (I pack these in every bag for every assignment.) Failing that, a plaster (band-aid) will do.

Bug Spray

Weeeeeelllllll. I guess it’s not 100% essential, unless you’re travelling through an area plagued with malaria, dengue, sleeping sickness or what have you.

But even if the bites don’t kill you, let’s face it, they’re extremely annoying. And they tend to come out whenever you stray from the cities.

So, sling a travel-sized bug spray into your bag and you’ll be set.

A Hat

Yes, I know. Unless you’re a cowboy, hats aren’t cool. I spent years, YEARS I tell you, thinking that I was OK in hot weather without a hat yet strangely ending up with headaches, nausea and feeling faint. At some point after the mighty 3-0, I started wearing a hat. Outdoors. Almost all the time. Sartorially, the result may have been a failure. In every other respect it was a success.

Wear hats kids. It’s that easy. Look for a packable, crushable one for long-distance travel. Much easier to haul around than a fixed one.

Snacks

Lots of cute young nieces and nephews have reinforced the crucial idea of the



If you're going to be walking for some time, away from the city, you're going to need to go to the loo/washroom/bathroom/restroom (PS – how did it ever get the restroom name?!)

In the wild. Alone. Exposed.

That means, you'll need toilet paper. And something to wash your hands with afterwards. Depending on the environment you're in, you may need something (a plastic bag) to carry away your paper in. So: tissues, hand wipes/sanitizer, plastic bags. **Enough said.**

(And depending on circumstance, the bug spray can become crucial here too.)

Protective clothes

Yes! That's right! We want you to ride out into the wilderness looking like a knight in shining 21st century armour!

If you're walking for a considerable time, then you're likely to be out in nature. If you're out in nature for any period of time then you're likely to be around things that scratch and things that bite.

Long sleeves, more importantly, long trousers protect against this.

If you're walking somewhere where the air is cool then clearly this won't be a problem. If you're walking somewhere hot, you'll need to give this more thought.

Do you want to opt for long cotton trousers? (Look elegant, snag more easily, keep you cool.) Or zip-off trousers in quick-dry fabrics (fashion folk will mock you but your skin and outerwear will stay in one piece. Plus you're protected from insect bites). The choice is yours...

Niceties to Pack for a Walking Holiday

Fancy Walking Socks

I'll admit, I was sceptical.

Socks. SOCKS?!!!!! Then I tried some out. First skiing. Then walking. And...well...cough...splutter...yes, I do think they're worth it.

Decent walking socks come equipped for the weather you're walking in, with reinforced patches at the heel and toe and vents to help cool your feet.

From painful experience, I now always carry something to protect my map...

They're pricy compared to your average sock. But, if you can, I'd say go for it.

There, I'm embarrassed but I've said my piece. **PS** – socks have different temperature gradings for different environments. Make sure your feet are snuggled up into the right ones.

Camera

I've put this here because I realise not everyone shares the same obsession as me when it comes to photography. For me, a camera would be up there in the top as an essential. Regardless of your feelings on the subject, the important thing here refers to how you carry it.

- Do you have a waterproof cover in case it rains/snows/becomes too humid?
- Have you thought about spare batteries/memory cards?
- Do you have a way of carrying any spare lenses? (I've recently fallen in love with the Olloclip, a small plastic device that clips on extra lenses to my iPhone.)

I've tested and paid for a lot of expensive options. But ultimately, I've not found anything better than a large zip lock plastic bag for this.

Torch

If you think there's a chance you won't make it back before the sun sets...

Whistle

Something left over from my Brownie Guide days. Useful for calling for help if you're injured and don't have phone reception.

Walking Poles

If you're walking on steep, slippery, moss-covered rocks then walking poles can help you out. For flat, dry paths, don't bother: they'll just become kit to weigh you down. 🍷

snack. Folks, we need energy. Probably not while we're sat at our desks day in, day out, but when we're out on the open road, we do. Pack something that will feed you well (unless the place you're going to will take care of that by giving you snacks in advance.)

Complex carbs are the key (like trail mix – hey, there's a reason they gave it that name!) so look for some kind of combo of oats, seeds and dried fruit.

Chocolate and sugar-based sweets (like Kendal Mint Cake) are OK too but they are likely to give you energy in one big rush and then leave you a little drained.

Sanitary Stuff

No, guys, I don't mean tampons. (Though, girls, just as an aide-mémoire – maybe?!)



Cycling in France

100 kilometres through
the fairytale Loire

Becki Enright | Borders of Adventure





It's easy to lose yourself in daydreams of bygone centuries when cycling through the Loire Valley. Riverside parks, vineyards and quiet lanes wind you through the green and yellow countryside and its scattered rural hamlets.

The pomp and prestige of royalty and artistry poke through; majestic châteaux and stately family homes where kings and lords once resided and where artists, like Leonardo Da Vinci, came to showcase their work as special guests of the monarchs.

Awakening like a princess in the Château de Chissay – a former royal residence of Charles VII turned boutique hotel – I was briefed on my five-day cycle route that would cover a leisurely

100-kilometre route around Touraine. My bike was adjusted, my panniers were packed and after a very French breakfast of croissants and coffee, I set off on the first leg.

A one-hour-cycle along the banks of the River Cher brought me to the enchanted 16th century Château de Chenonceau, complete with a 500-year-old vineyard clad garden. Built on the piers of an old fortified mill, Henri II gave it to his mistress who wanted to recreate the

image of Ponte Vecchio in Florence and so expanded the bridge and added the two arches. It remains the most visited of all in the valley.

Following the well-marked green cycle signs to the cobbled streets of old Amboise and curving through narrow countryside paths and tiny hamlets onwards to St-Ouen-les-Vignes, I lightly pedaled through rural villages that sat neatly back to back.

Foie Gras of a quality I've never tasted before, sparkling rosé with a hint of raspberry, and succulent beef cooked to my medium perfection was the hearty reward for my 34-kilometre ride that evening. I finished with a selection of cheese (mostly goats' cheese) and a rich espresso. The Loire's giant fields and orchards yield the produce of great gastronomic praise and bear the source of some of Europe's most revered wines.

Amboise is one of the more interesting of all the towns in Loire, whose terraces of square and rectangular buildings house



*Cycling in France,
100 kilometres through
the fairytale Loire*



Combining active, cultural and outdoors sightseeing via the winding roads, forest tracks and valleys of the Loire. Each day ends with the promise of historical, family-run accommodation and the reward of fine regional food paired with some of the best local wines.

old tea shops, handicraft stores and modern hangouts.

Da Vinci (whose last residence, Château du Clos Lucé, is only metres away) stayed at the town's dominating Amboise Château Royal as a guest of King François 1st. The view from the terraces, whose panoramas of Amboise stretch far and wide, showcasing rooftops and church spires and large cavalier towers, are well worth the short climb.

From St-Ouen-les-Vignes came the journey to Chitenay, cycling along the Beuvron River via the tiny riverside town of Chaumont - a peaceful riverside stop where you'll see many more cyclists travel at slower speed. It is here that you enter an archway of trees that takes you towards the old stone bridge and tiny village of Candé-sur-Beuvron.

The legwork was rewarded when I hit the pretty villages of Les Montils. Pastel-coloured doors and windows dotted the streets either side of the still-standing Vieux Porche 12th century archway. One

street was all you needed to feel lost in time, before emerging onto the yellow field roads to the third resting stop.

Da Vinci (whose last residence, Château du Clos Lucé, is only metres away) stayed at the town's dominating Amboise Château Royal as a guest of King François 1st.

Each night, while sampling the local gastronomy further, the sommelier at the Auberge du Centre hotel treated me to wine tastings at my table – white wines with a hint of lemon from La Cave de l'Aubras, the sharp single grape red from Domaine Du Chapitre and local fruity berry options.

Becoming acquainted with the Loire is not complete without a day of château hopping, starting with what is deemed as the finest of them all: the Château de Cheverny. Once you enter the gate, the sea of flat green and ancient trees spreads before you until you walk closer to the glistening white stone. Its interior matches its grand exterior and you will need at least an hour to sample its regal rooms. A short trip to the more hidden, manor style Château de Troussay, whose interior resembles an eclectic antiques shop of furniture and decor, rounded off the 17km round trip.

The final day's relaxed cycle and longed-for downhill stretch was the perfect ending - an air sprint to the finish line of the most castle-like residence of them all – the Château de Vallagon.

It was a journey that brought me right back to the very beginning. On the banks of the River Cher, where I slept like a princess. 

Kayaking in... the Dordogne

Michael Turtle | Time Travel Turtle





The impressive sight of Rocamadour, founded in the 12th century. The religious complex was built on the side of a cliff and is an important stop for pilgrims.

At times I wonder if I'm doing more floating than paddling. That's not really the point of kayaking. But, then again, it's not that often that I have the opportunity to kayak with scenery like this.

I'm on the Dordogne River in the south of France – a waterway of about 500 kilometres that reaches the sea near Bordeaux. The name alone evokes a romantic notion of French rustic charm with grand castles and lush nature. While this region is popular with tourists, most stay on the land. But the river provides a natural and special way to explore.

I'm spending two days kayaking along the Dordogne – from the town of Meyronne to Groléjac. It's almost 40 kilometres in total, which seems like a good stretch of the river, even if it's less than ten per cent.

There are no rapids, no whitewater challenges. Although the flow is quite fast in places, there are also stretches where I need

to paddle consistently to avoid coming to a complete stop. These are not the bits where I float. The points where I place the paddle across my lap and sit back are when there are straight stretches and a decent current.

Sometimes there are high limestone cliffs on one side of me; other times I can spot a majestic château high above the trees; there are a few places where a bridge crossing the river creates a perfect scene; and at other times it's just the birds and the trees that catch my attention. I'm pretty sure I spot a squirrel swimming between the banks at one point.

I'm not sure I would have thought to have done this if it had just been up to me. Where would I have organised a

Kayaking in the Dordogne

kayak? What would I do with my bags? How would I have known the best stretch to paddle down?

Perhaps I would have found answers for those questions if I had looked hard enough, but luckily everything is being taken care of for me. These two days of kayaking are part of a week-long trip I am doing with Headwater Holidays here in this region of France. It's an independent trip in the sense that I start each day when I want, use the map to navigate my course, and go at the pace I want. What the organisers do is give me the equipment, provide me with instructions for the best route, arrange my hotels, transport my bags to the next one each day, and pick me up at the end.

A duck swims by with a trail of fluffy ducklings following behind her. As I paddle near to them, they seem to get confused and are clearly wondering whether they should turn around to get away from me. I try to shout out that I'm no threat and I'm only going this way because it's the shortest route around the bend in the river. This only agitates them more so I stick the oar in the water and change direction, to go the long way. You have to respect the river in situations like this.

I feel like the river respects me in return. The flow of the water carries me carefully

for the most part and, even in the parts that are slightly faster or bumpy, I keep my balance. After the first hour on the water, I have become comfortable and unpack my camera and phone from the dry bag that I had put inside a waterproof barrel for extra protection.

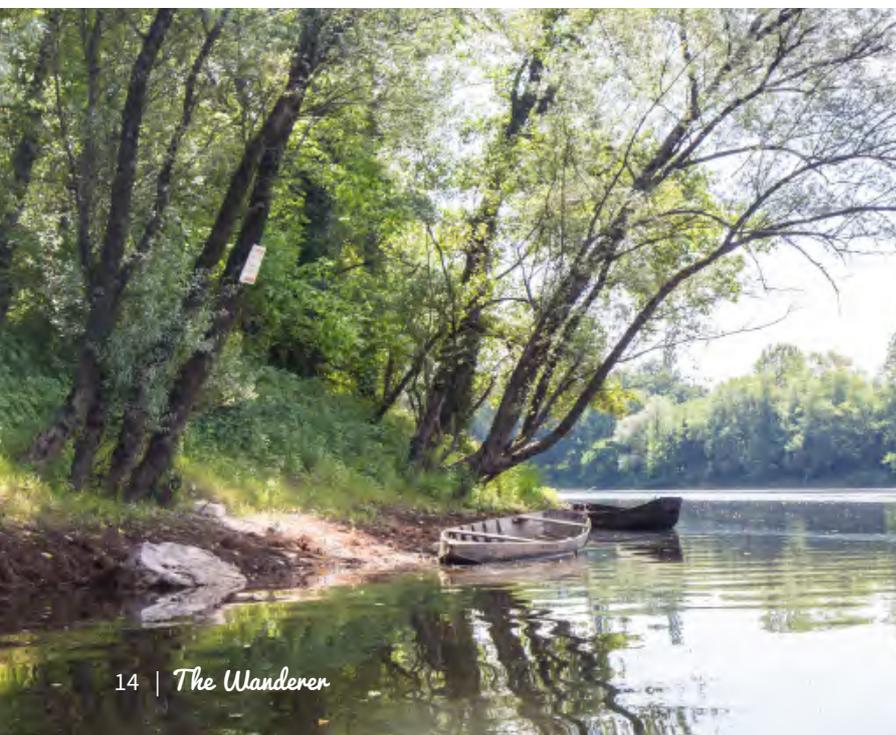
Part of floating, rather than paddling, is so I can take photos and even put a few of them up on social media while I'm still on the river. To my mind, this isn't laziness. It's about enjoying the day as a healthy combination of exercise and relaxation. When I do a long stretch of intense paddling for 30 minutes, I can feel the burn in my arms. But when I sit back and look at the cliffs and the approaching bridges, I appreciate my location more than the activity that has brought me here.

Along the way, I pass dozens of campsites. There are elderly couples sitting on foldup chairs in front of their large tents; children are playing in the water by the riverbank; a solitary man is standing slightly upstream with his legs submerged, fishing. These people are all appreciating the river in their own way and I'm pleased for them. While I am glad I am travelling along the waterway and seeing the changing scenery, at least these campers are connected to this flowing artery of the region. They know, that's why they have come. 🍷

Below left: Wooden boats along the side of the Dordogne River;
Below right: Fine dining at the hotels along the route.



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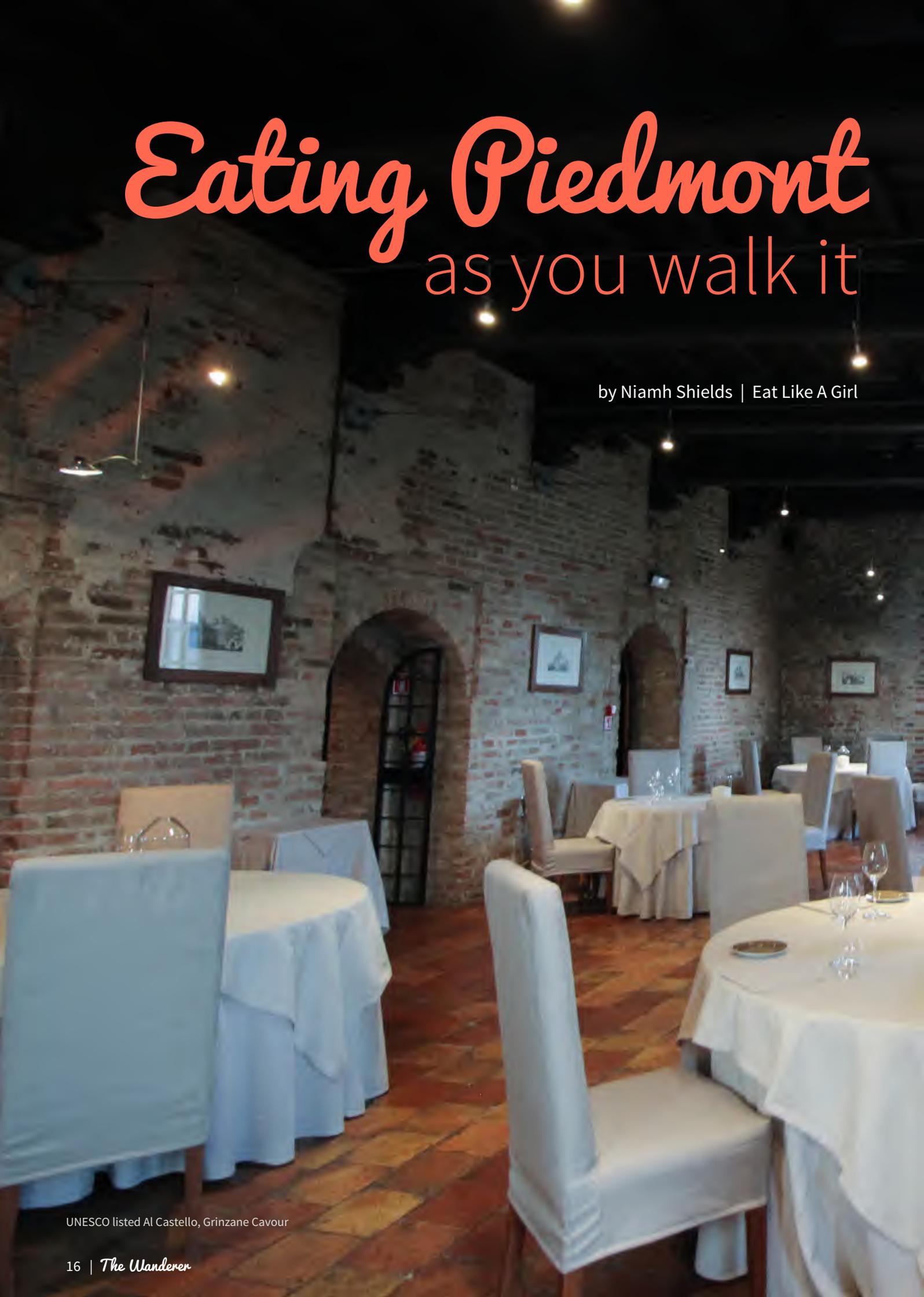


Clockwise from top: A vintage car in the town of Saint-Sozy; The local market at Souillac; Taking a break in the town of Martel; The kayaking equipment provided; A fork in the road in the French countryside.



Eating Piedmont as you walk it

by Niamh Shields | Eat Like A Girl



UNESCO listed Al Castello, Grinzane Cavour



Walking Piedmont allows you to see it in a way that is impossible from the window of a car, train or bus.



Dining at the UNESCO listed Al Castello in Grinzane Cavour

Walking Piedmont you get to explore the gorgeous vineyard terraces, the hazelnut woods, the meandering small rivers. You also get to visit lots of gorgeous local restaurants that you may not otherwise see, and you are so hungry when you get there. After your walk, food has never tasted so good. And it is practically calorie free, right? **Yeah, of course it is, so let's eat.**

These are the restaurants that you must not miss when you are walking Piedmont. They are all characterful and serve excellent food. You will have some of the most amazing pasta, but don't neglect the wonderful crudo (chopped raw Piedmontese beef), the truffles, Bra sausage and the lovely cheese. The wines from Piedmont are renowned and I would encourage you to try as many as you can, and indulge in the wine delivery service that Headwater offers, and bring as much as you can home.

Al Castello in Grinzane Cavour

Who wouldn't want to eat in a UNESCO protected castle on the top of a hill in a Piedmont town? Marc Lanteri is chef here, originally from Tende in the French Alps, and his food reflects both cultures, but with a twist. Marc started cooking with Alain Ducasse at Louis XV in Monte Carlo, before working in Paris and then in Piedmont where he has worked primarily in Michelin-starred kitchens since. There is a terrific wine list too,



Amy and Marc Lanteri at Al Castello, Grinzane Cavour

which Marc's wife Amy, front of house and a sommelier, looks after.

Hand chopped raw beef (or crudo, as it is called here), served with beautiful raw red prawns from San Remo and perfectly ripe buttery avocado is simply unmissable. Marc serves a twist on the local pasta dish; here tajarin comes with Piedmont hazelnuts and a wonderful rich ragù of pigeon and chanterelle mushroom. Piedmontese beef is served as a steak with potatoes and mushrooms and Barolo wine reduction.

Ristorante L'Argaj in Castiglione Falletto

Ristorante L'Argaj has a lovely patio overlooking terraced vineyards as well as the surrounding towns. I had lightly fried courgette flowers, not stuffed but stiff and proud in their batter, and all the better for it. Lasagnetta with buffalo mozzarella and courgette was a light small flavourful lasagne crisp, with cheese on top.

How could I resist the milk-fed suckling pig to finish?

I couldn't and it was very good served with Pink Lady apples and fennel. After all of that walking I still had room for dessert – this rarely happens, I always prioritise savoury – and had ripe peaches (which I had been looking at longingly on the trees as I walked), lightly oven roasted with chocolate gelato and almond sauce.

UNESCO listed Al Castello, Grinzane Cavour





Arriving at Trattoria della Posta in Monforte d'Alba

Rosso Barolo in Barolo

I loved everything about Rosso Barolo: the room, the service, the lovely wines by the glass and the food. I started with vitello tonnato (sliced veal with tuna mayonnaise), particular to the region. I think this is the best version of that dish that I have ever had. For primi, I had a wonderful tajarin with fresh summer truffles; tajarin is a local fine pasta noodle and it was handmade, of course.

Trattoria della Posta in Monforte d'Alba

I only realised after eating at Trattoria della Posta that it was featured on The Trip to Italy last year. In a country house a few kilometres outside of Monforte d'Alba, the first thing I noticed was the beautiful large country kitchen which you can see from the reception desk. I sat outside in the hint of a breeze and chose between primi and secondi – I know, but truly, I can't do a crazy large lunch and a large dinner too, this much I have learned.

Ravioli verdi di caprino con salsiccia di Bra e porri at Trattoria della Posta in Monforte d'Alba

There was a very enticing rabbit roasted in lardo on the menu but the pasta was too good: I chose ravioli verdi di caprino con salsiccia di Bra e porri – green ravioli filled with a fresh goats' cheese with cooked Bra sausage on top. It was gorgeous, the pasta so thin and delicate, the cheese bright and so fresh and the sausage a beautiful crumbly contrast. I also had a very pleasant vegetable soup; why I ordered hot soup on such a hot day, I will never know. I will be back for the rabbit some day.

Il Giardino da Felicin in Monforte d'Alba

Il Giardino da Felicin is bubbling. A restaurant set in a garden, also a hotel, the terrace was packed and



The wine cellar at Il Giardino da Felicin in Monforte d'Alba

very lively the evening that I ate there. The food is based on tradition but is not conventional. I had a beautiful handmade pasta, but I also had a salad which is a twist on fried chicken (it is tasty and fun). The details are impressive: tiny herbs picked fresh from the kitchen garden garnish the dishes, and the flavours are bright; the tomatoes in particular were divine. There is an impressive cellar for wine lovers wishing to explore the region with dinner.

Osteria dei Catari in Monforte d'Alba

The night I arrived in Monforte d'Alba, I was taken by the sight of this little alley, painted in bright colours with a cat at the top of it. I was still making my way to the hotel, but I made sure I found out what was down there, and it was Osteria dei Catari, one of the restaurants at which I had planned to eat at. It was another open courtyard restaurant (you can eat inside in the winter as with da Felicin.) The Monfortina ham with summer truffle was gorgeous, the colour seductive and the flavour intense, almost like a bresaola. For primi I had buckwheat maltagliati (misshapen pasta) with Bra sausage and fresh tomato. They really care about the sourcing here, sourcing mainly from local small farms, and you can taste it. 🍷



Further reading

travel blogs



*Read more about these journeys
through Italy, France and Austria
through the material gathered below.*





What is Headwater Holidays?

When is independent travel not independent? It's a riddle that I have pondered for the past week as I have made my way through France's Dordogne region. This isn't a usual trip for me. These days, I tend to do very disorganised travel on my own where nothing is booked in advance, or very structured trips that are designed to maximise content for this blog. This French experience is neither. But I like it... [Read more...](#)



Market Day, Souillac, France

As I've been travelling around the Dordogne River – through the Dordogne department itself as well as the Lot department – I've been seeing a lot of rural areas. Along the water, through forests, past rolling fields. Most of the communities I have passed through have been small hamlets where the houses with beautifully manicured gardens cluster around a small church or a small square... [Read more...](#)



Walking Piedmont: Roddi to Grinzane Cavour & Dinner at Al Castello

Sunday morning was the day of my first Piedmont walk. And it was HOT. Italy is experiencing a heatwave right now. I gathered my bags and had my briefing with the Headwater team before they dropped me at my first stop. A little about the Headwater setup first. As you will have read in my last post on Piedmont, my trip to Piedmont was part of the... [Read more...](#)



Walking Piedmont: Castiglione Falletto for Dinner & First Tastes of Barolo Wines

Have you ever had a nemesis? Something that makes you want to swear and shout, a thing that you think that you can't beat but you still try, something that makes you want to throw your arms in the air and fall down and not think of getting up again for a while? Maybe just stay there, you know, forever. Was it ever a vineyard on a hill? Yeah. I am deadly serious... [Read more...](#)



How to Live Longer, Improve Your Sex Life, Memory and Sleep

Well, today marks an important milestone for me as a project I hold dear to my heart (in many ways) gets started. Today is the first day of a 30 day venture called #30activedays that, you guessed it, involves 30 active days. The idea first sprang from a conversation I had with Headwater Holidays, a relaxed activity holiday company that this year celebrates 30 years... [Read more...](#)



A Miracle In Rocamadour

If you found a body in a cave in France, 3,000 kilometres from Jerusalem, what would be your first thought? Perhaps you would check with the local authorities to see if anyone had gone missing. Perhaps you would assume they were homeless and had crawled into this small space for protection from the elements. Perhaps you would have no idea and not jump to any conclusions. Whatever your reaction, I'm guessing you would not automatically think that the body belonged to a saint who had met Jesus... [Read more...](#)



Cycling, Countryside And Gastronomy – 100 Kilometres Of... Relaxation?

It was the first time I had cycled so many kilometres over a number of consecutive days. 100 kilometres, in fact, eased out over five days with two leisurely days wedged in between. The Loire Valley's long and scenic cycle routes made my days' long outer-city cycle adventures in Asia's Bangkok and Mandalay look easy... [Read more...](#)



Walking... And Thinking

I love walking for the time it creates. I never see it as an activity that takes me away from something better. It is where I can lose sense of the hours and create space for myself in my head. It's when I'm walking that I formulate my ideas, test my theories, look back and look forward. It's my time and it always seems endless when I'm in it... [Read more...](#)



A Gorgeous Day in Barolo, Piedmont (and Where to Eat)

Barolo is an aspiration, in every way. I want to drink the wine, all the time. The Barolo, the Arneis, the Barbera and the Chardonnay. I had wanted to visit there for a while; who wouldn't want to go to the epicentre of Barolo production, home to truffles in summer and winter? The food must be good too, right? Getting to Barolo (when already there) is a mission, when on foot, at least. I could not believe my eyes when faced with a sneaky hill seemingly hidden... [Read more...](#)



Walking Piedmont: From Barolo to Monforte d'Alba (& Where to Eat)

I left Barolo full of the joys of spring, or was that the intense heat of summer? The first half of my walk was joyful, through the upper terraces of the Barolo vineyards, passing gardens rich with vegetable bounty, courgette flowers, plums, so many tomatoes. The occasional yappy dog; they do love them in Italy. I knew I was tired when I was overtaken by an elderly man walking two tiny dogs... [Read more...](#)



What To Pack For A Cycling Holiday

Comfortable trousers (called pants in some parts of the world) are a must. So, actually, are comfortable pants (I'm not entirely sure what pants are called in the US. Underpants? Pantlets?) This is far more important than when you're walking. It may sound obvious but you need to bend and straighten your leg repeatedly, without the fabric all bunching up... [Read more...](#)



Swimming in a UNESCO World Heritage Site

I don't know why I'd never thought of this before. I'd admired lakes from afar, softly framed by frozen snow. I'd seen them blur past windows and windscreens and snapped them from cobbled lanes and cloistered churches. But until this summer's sojourn through Austria by bicycle, I'd never thought of them as the best place to travel to for a sun splashed day out. As part of my #30ActiveDays challenge... [Read more...](#)



Headwater
The Old School House,
Chester Road,
Northwich,
Cheshire CW8 1LE
Tel: 01606 720099
Email: sales@headwater.com
Web: www.headwater.com

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