

# BEACH HOLIDAYS



**TAKING IT EASY**  
Kate Humble inspects a turtle, left; Bequia's capital, Port Elizabeth, right

## Turns out I am a Caribbean kind of girl after all...

### BEQUIA

Adrenaline junkie **Kate Humble** didn't think tropical islands were her sort of thing. She just hadn't been to the right one

I'm not very good at lying-in-the-sun type holidays. Even when I'm really in need of a break, I find doing nothing more than turning the page of a book and asking to be brought

perhaps just one more glass of that delicious wine, a novelty which wears off before the end of the first day. But I had had quite a year, was properly exhausted and the idea of being somewhere warm when we were in the grip of winter, with a pile of enticing books and no to-do list became overwhelmingly appealing.

"Have you ever been to Beckway?" a friend asked. "I think it might be exactly the sort of place you are looking for." I had never

**LOW KEY CLASS**  
Bequia has a 'take us as you find us' authenticity

been to Beckway, I was entirely ignorant of its existence. "It's in the Caribbean..." I pulled a face. I'm conscious now that I might be sounding a bit bratty, but a winter holiday in the Caribbean sums up everything I hate about "those sort" of holidays. It's the deeply manicured setting - the perfect beach that has

been raked by some poor bloke at an unspeakable hour of the morning so that the white sand is unsullied by any sort of detritus, like unsightly leaves or seaweed. It's the pool-culture and its uniform of kaftans, tastefully floppy straw hats and jewelled flip-flops. And don't forget the enormous designer sunglasses so you can pretend you are not eyeing up everyone else around the pool and



PORT ELIZABETH: LUDO GRAHAM; GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

The Telegraph

## SKI & SNOWBOARD SHOW

LONDON'S ALPINE FESTIVAL  
OCTOBER 26-29, 2017  
BATTERSEA EVOLUTION

FREE ICE SKATING  
KIDS UNDER 11  
GO FREE  
AUTHENTIC MOUNTAIN  
STREET FOOD  
HOLIDAY ADVICE  
AND OFFERS  
MEET TEAM GB  
50FT REAL SNOW KICKER

Book now  
Quote 'THE TELEGRAPH'  
to save 15% at [skiandsnowboard.co.uk](http://skiandsnowboard.co.uk)

Sponsors and Partners



\*Early bird adult and family tickets only, whilst allocation lasts. Full T&Cs online.

Telegraph TRAVEL

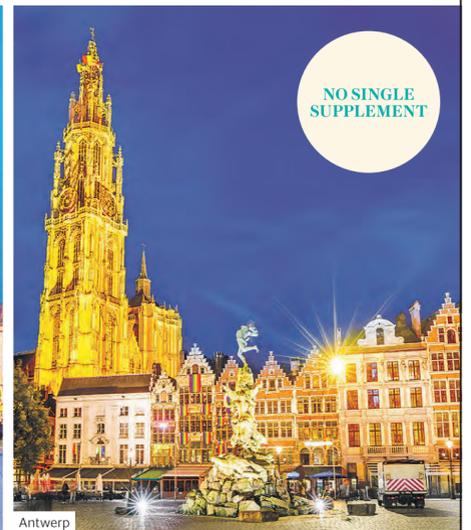
READER OFFER

## FESTIVE RIVER CRUISES

NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENT



Strasbourg Christmas market



Antwerp

Three nights from £399pp

Seven nights from £799pp

### Strasbourg Christmas markets

Explore the illuminated streets and packed stalls before enjoying time in the market at Mannheim.

- > Explore the festive markets and enjoy sightseeing opportunities in Mannheim and Strasbourg
- > Discover Strasbourg, home to the oldest and largest festive market in Europe
- > Dance the night away during the captain's get-together and party night

Departs December 9, 12 and 15, 2017

### Belgium Christmas cruise

Discover the highlights of Belgium as you follow the rivers and canals of this little country.

- > Spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Belgium's cosmopolitan cities
- > Celebrate Christmas with a traditional lunch in Brussels
- > Explore Valkenburg's Christmas markets in the caves
- > Enjoy sightseeing in Antwerp, Hasselt, Bruges, Ghent and Brussels

Departs December 20, 2017

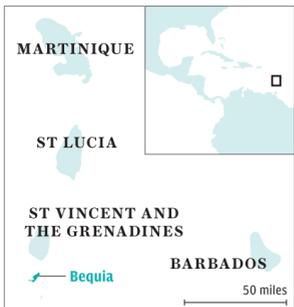
### Your price includes:

- Executive return coach travel
- Return Eurotunnel from Folkestone (Strasbourg cruise) or return ferry crossing from Dover (Belgium cruise)
- Full-board accommodation aboard the MS *Serenity*
- Welcome drink, captain's get-together and party night
- Entertainment every night of your cruise
- Traditional Christmas lunch\*
- Services of a cruise manager

0330 029 2857 and quote ATPO810  
[telegraph.co.uk/tt-festive-cruising](http://telegraph.co.uk/tt-festive-cruising)

**Terms and conditions:** \*Traditional Christmas lunch is available on the Belgium Christmas cruise only. Calls from a landline and mobile are charged at standard rates. Prices are per person, based on two people sharing the lowest category cabin; cabin upgrades are available at a supplement. Reservations are subject to availability and booking conditions. All prices are correct at the time of going to print. Credit card charges apply. These holidays are operated by, and your resulting contract will be with, The River Cruise Line, a trading division of Arena Travel, Explorer House, 2 Betts Avenue, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, IP5 3RH, ATOL 10117, ABTA Y6426 protected, a company wholly independent of Telegraph Media Group Limited. Please refer to the Data Protection Notice in today's Personal Column.



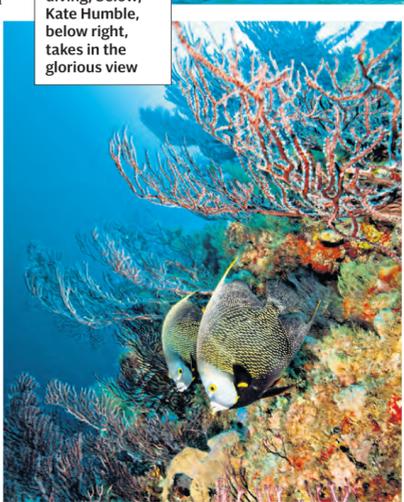


secretly smirking when you spot someone with cellulite, whilst desperately holding in your own tummy. "Bequia [for that is how it is actually spelt] is not like that at all," my friend said. "It's very small, not remotely flashy and very relaxed. Nothing like the more touristy islands you are imagining. Google it." And so I did.

It's 7am. The sun, which has only just slipped casually above the horizon to cast its glow over the rippling Atlantic, is already hot and I'm running with the determined resolve that one feels on New Year's Day. We landed on Bequia yesterday afternoon, delayed by Gatwick fog which meant we missed our connecting flight. We spent the night in a grim resort in Barbados and I lay, sleepless, listening to the sounds of very drunk people stumbling around the disco area by the pool accompanied by a steel band and wishing I had never left Wales. But then a short flight in a tiny plane brought us to a reassuringly basic airport. Our taxi was a pickup truck with bench seats in the back where we sat with our feet on our luggage. The 20-minute drive to the Bequia Beach Hotel was along a rough concrete road which wound its way along the undulating edge of the island, the sea below us on one side, pastel-coloured houses with verandas and goats in the gardens peeping out from a riot of vegetation on the slope above us on the other. Wintry Wales started to feel less appealing.

Bequia is, as my friend told me, small – just seven square miles – and in my imagination at least, it

**STILL WATERS**  
Admiralty Bay, right; Bequia offers colourful diving, below; Kate Humble, below right, takes in the glorious view



resembles some sort of large reptile, an iguana perhaps, one side of its body lapped by the Atlantic Ocean, the other by the Caribbean Sea, its back forming a high narrow ridge between them. Our hotel, the passion project of a Swedish entrepreneur who came to Bequia by yacht, in the days before there was an airport, fell in love with it and never really left, is on the Atlantic side. Old fashioned, comfortable, its rooms and cottages sit amid beautiful gardens on almost the only flat piece of land on the island, the neatly

cropped lawn meeting the narrow strip of white unranked sand that fringes the crescent of Friendship Bay. This is the quiet side of the island. There are no shops, no beach bars, ranks of sun loungers, blaring reggae music or hawkers selling tat. The locals are courteous, but go about their lives without appearing to be interested in chasing the tourist dollar. They fish, they cultivate a few crops, tend their goats. It seemed from the outset that we had found a Caribbean island that felt no compunction to present itself as a carefully fabricated "holiday paradise", but more "take us as you find us".

Celebrating New Year's Eve Bequia-style required us to pile into an island pickup truck and take the steep road up and over the ridge giving us our first view of the Caribbean side. The capital of Bequia – in truth its only town – is Port Elizabeth, which shelters in a corner of Admiralty Bay. This is the island's main harbour and tonight it was full of twinkling lights, dancing on the top of the masts of the many yachts that had come in for what we were told was one of the finest New Year's fireworks displays in the region. We were expecting crowds, cordoned off areas, people bustling about in hi-vis being officious, like bonfire displays at home, but that was because we didn't know Bequia. Our pickup truck drove sedately alongside the



**ESSENTIALS**

Carrier (0161 492 1354, carrier.co.uk) offers seven nights at the Bequia Beach Hotel from £1,820 per person, based on two sharing a Classic Room. Includes breakfast, return flights with BA from London Gatwick to Barbados, onward charter flights and transfers. This price includes a 15 per cent early booking reduction (offer valid for travel April 1 – Aug 31 2018, if booked by Dec 31 2017, with quoted price based on departures on May 5 2018). This includes complimentary use of watersports equipment: kayaks, surfboards, paddleboards and snorkelling gear.

solid minutes the display went on, of a scale and grandeur that wouldn't have disappointed in Hong Kong or London, and then with a flurry of almighty explosions, it was over and the couple of hundred people who had gathered on the shoreline melted away to start their new year.

Our days quickly acquired a rhythm. I would wake early and run as dawn lightened the sky and the first rays of the sun cast their warm light over the ocean. I'd exchange brief morning pleasantries with the man who

was always sweeping his steps and the other who sat on his porch chair, a book on his knee. Back at the hotel we'd meet on the beach, walk to the far end of Friendship Bay and swim back for breakfast. We'd take the steep road up to the ridge, always pausing at the top for the view, before walking down to the jetty by the little dive centre.

The diving off the shores of Bequia is not in any way spectacular, but to spend an hour or so in the warm waters of the Caribbean in the company of some very pretty fish is every bit as relaxing for me as lying by a pool. We would then wander along Front Street, sometimes pop into the bookshop, with its surprisingly eclectic collection of books and enticing chandlers' maps. We'd find somewhere for lunch and then saunter back in the sultry afternoon heat, perhaps via Princess Margaret Beach and Lower Bay, to sit on our balcony with a book until it got too dark to read.

And thanks to a tip-off from a Bequia regular, we discovered Fernando, a local fisherman and chef who has a tiny restaurant on his veranda. We'd walk the half-hour there, eat whatever Fernando had caught that morning and walk back beneath a moon bright enough to cast a shadow. We had, we realised, stumbled on a rare gem, a tiny tropical island that far from surrendering itself to the fickle demands of tourism, has quietly, resolutely hung on to its identity. It is that fact, I think, that ultimately made it such a relaxing and restorative place to be.

For our comprehensive guide to the Caribbean, see telegraph.co.uk/tt-caribbeanguide

**We'd walk the half-hour there, eat what Fernando had caught that morning and then walk back**

groups of people who were starting to gather on Front Street, the gravelly road that runs parallel to the water front. The town's other street – Back Street – runs parallel to that, one block behind. We stopped right by the harbour and got out. "Where do we go now?" we wondered, because there was no cordoned off area, no signs, no crowd standing cheek by jowl, looking up expectantly at the night sky. Instead the people who were there, mainly local families and small groups of teenagers, the boys with carefully sculpted hair and artfully low-slung jeans, the girls all sass, and heels and earrings, were promenading, eating pizza, chatting, laughing and hanging out. There was no sense of anticipation that anything else was going to happen.

We looked at our watches. It was just a couple of minutes before midnight. We walked out to edge of a wooden jetty. A few others did the same. A flare went up from one of the yachts in the harbour, a lurid pink trail across the dark sky. Was this the cue to start? It appeared not. Midnight came and went. Could the display, which by now we were imagining would amount to a couple of underwhelming Roman candles and a Catherine wheel, be happening somewhere we just hadn't found yet? And then "weeeee... BOOOOM!" the sky was light up by a million golden stars and as they showered down, more and more exploded against the inky blackness – greens and blues and silvers and reds. The air was full of whizzes and bangs, of oohs and aahs and the intoxicating smell of dynamite. For 20



**Inghams Lakes & Mountains**  
The Finest Scenic Holidays, Walking and Tours  
**Summer 2018**  
Book now for the best offers and choice

For offers & information  
Visit [ingham.co.uk/summer](http://ingham.co.uk/summer)  
Call 01483 345 967

AUSTRIA • FRANCE • GERMANY • ITALY  
NORWAY • SLOVENIA • SWITZERLAND

**Christmas Luxury Jersey** WAS from £699 NOW FROM ONLY **£399** SAVE £400 on 7nights!!!

DEPARTURES 20, 21, 22, 23 or 24 December  
FAST FERRY FROM POOLE

OR ADD £100 & FLY ANY DAY  
Gatwick, Stansted, Liverpool, Exeter, Manchester, Birmingham, Southend, East Midlands, Bristol, Southampton

Includes taking YOUR car  
Superb 4\* Royal Hotel  
Delicious half board at Hotel  
Welcome cocktail  
All rooms ensuite with TV  
Special Christmas Day Lunch with 'all the trimmings'  
Queen's speech with mince pies

4nights £699-£399  
5nights £799-£469  
6nights £849-£539  
7nights £899-£599

Booking Hotline 01983 72 11 11 [islandgetaways.co.uk](http://islandgetaways.co.uk)

Telegraph TRAVEL EXCLUSIVE OFFER

SAVE UP TO 30%

One night from £130pp  
Two nights from £199pp

**Montagu Arms, New Forest**  
Telegraph recommended

Enjoy a charming stay at this picturesque country house in the New Forest. The AA-Rosette food and timeless décor combine to create a magical atmosphere.

Telegraph Travel's Fiona Duncan says: "This smart village hotel makes a sophisticated and relaxing place to stay while exploring the New Forest."

Travel between Oct, 2017 and Mar 29, 2018.  
Book by Jan 31, 2018. Your price includes:

- One or two-night stay • Full New Forest breakfast
- Five-course surprise tasting menu in the award-winning Terrace Restaurant on one night • Complimentary cream tea • Complimentary tea and coffee served daily
- Late checkout at 12pm • Use of Careys Manor Leisure Facilities • 10 per cent discount at SenSpa
- Complimentary upgrade to a Superior room

0333 331 9268 and quote TELP  
[telegraph.co.uk/tt-montagu-arms](http://telegraph.co.uk/tt-montagu-arms)

**Terms and conditions:** Not available on Saturdays. Offer subject to availability. Free room upgrade on first come, first served basis. Price is based on two adults sharing a double/twin room. Payment must be made in full at time of reservation. Changes subject to hotel's terms and conditions. Offer is non-refundable and non-transferable. One-night stay: from £129.50 per person Sun-Thu. From £169.50 per person on Fri. Two-night stay: from £199 per person Sun-Thu. From £259 per person Fri. Terrace Restaurant is closed on Mondays.

**Christmas in GUERNSEY & JERSEY**  
SUPERB FESTIVE BREAKS

3, 4, 5, 6 & 7 night deals from just... **£399**

For a glitzy Christmas choose the famous 4\* Royal Hotel or a Luxury traditional Christmas at 4\* St Pierre Park Hotel

DEALS INCLUDE TRAVEL BY SEA OR AIR, SUPERB HOTELS, HALF BOARD AND A FEAST OF A FESTIVE CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

[www.islandgetaways.co.uk](http://www.islandgetaways.co.uk)  
Call 01983 72 11 11

**DARTMOUTH HOLIDAY HOMES**  
2018 BOOKING NOW OPEN!

01903 833082  
[www.dartmouthuk.com](http://www.dartmouthuk.com)

Ireland

Set on the Wild Atlantic Way Connemara  
4\* Cashel Country House Hotel Special  
10% Discount for booking direct  
Tel 0035385 31000 [www.cashelhouse.ie](http://www.cashelhouse.ie)

MercuryHolidays OFFER CODE: MVID20

**5★ MADEIRA**

Discover madeira

A week Full Board 'Dine Around' from **£399\***

**5★ Vidamar Resort Hotel Madeira**  
This prestigious 5-star hotel offers excellent facilities, picturesque ocean views and is located close to Madeira's capital, Funchal, providing easy access to the city's attractions.

Included in this price:

- Breakfast and dinner daily. 'Dine Around' in a choice of up to 4 restaurants for your evening meal
- Air-conditioned en-suite room with sea views & a balcony overlooking the gardens
- Return flights from London and Manchester. Other regional airports are available at a supplement
- Return transfers and rep. service in resort
- FREE Wi-Fi throughout the hotel

Plus:

- No supplement for single travellers in garden side seaview rooms\*
- FREE upgrade to a superior front seaview\*

2017/18 DATES & PRICES - DEPARTURES AVAILABLE UNTIL DECEMBER 2018							
Half Board 'Dine Around'	1 week	10 nights	2 weeks	Half Board 'Dine Around'	1 week	10 nights	2 weeks
October	from £615	£999	FULL	February	from £499	£599	£749
November	from £499	£629	£849	March	from £529	£699	£929
December	from £429	£579	£729	Apr/May	from £599	£779	£1029
January	from £399	£569	£715	June	from £649	£829	£1049

**CALL 0843 224 1530**  
or visit [www.mercuryholidays.co.uk/mvid20](http://www.mercuryholidays.co.uk/mvid20)

ABTA Travel with confidence

Our lines are open 7 days a week Monday-Friday: 9am-9pm, Saturday: 9am-8pm & Sunday: 10am-9pm

\*From price applies to departures 07-17/01/18. #Applies 01/11-22/12/17, 02/01-28/02/18 & 01-30/06/18 when staying 14 nights and over, subject to availability. \*Applies to arrivals 02-15/01/18 if booked by 31/10/17 and stays 15/05-30/06/18 if booked by 31/01/18. All offers are subject to availability and can be withdrawn without notice. Terms & conditions apply. Prices are per person based on 2 adults sharing. Prices were costed on 05/10/17 & are subject to change since going to print. Calls will cost 7 pence per minute plus your telephone company's phone charge.