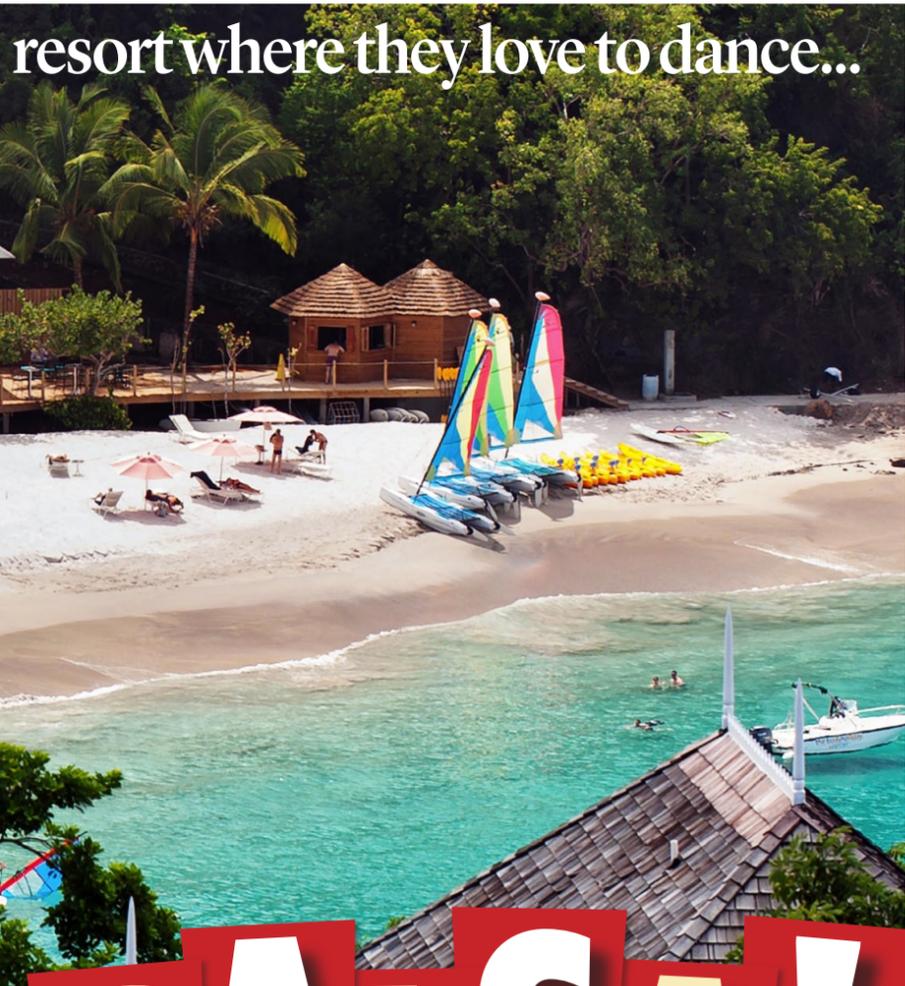


resort where they love to dance...



SALSA!

GETTING THERE

Elegantresorts.co.uk offers seven nights all-inclusive at the five-star **The BodyHoliday** resort from €3,115pp (about €4,000), including return flights from Gatwick. Sunway act as Irish agents for the resort, see sunway.ie or call (01) 231 1800.

the feel-good factor you get from exercise and different therapies.

You could eat healthily at every meal, but you don't have to – there are five restaurants and you can choose from a very wide range of good pasta dishes if you want to! I don't have lots of carbs very often, you know, because my body is a temple!

I'm very toned but I don't totally

exclude carbs – I had a couple of pizzas there, which were lovely.

But most of the time, when I'm away in the heat, I eat grilled fish and salads, that's all I want.

They also have the most amazing juice bar. I used to have a daily ginger, turmeric and carrot juice.

And my holiday reading? My most-enjoyed book this time was Robert Harris's *Dictator*, the concluding volume of his Cicero trilogy.

It covers the collapse of the Roman republic, the subsequent civil war, murder of Pompey and the assassination of Julius Caesar. It's brilliant.

I also gave a 10 to the latest JRobert Galbraith (aka JK Rowling) thriller *Career Of Evil* which was very good indeed. I'd give the BodyHoliday resort a 10, too – that month of dancing sounds like brilliant fun.

a huge hit for families

resorts around the world. Before we went my French friend Celine told me: 'Their Mini Club is super: For Edward?'

'Yes, he'll like it but you'll adore it.'

The Mini Club is aimed at children aged four to 10, and Edward's daily activities kicked off with a flying trapeze lesson, followed by tennis, football and swimming. There were breaks for free play, meals and for the raucous evening entertainment.

Sessions ran from 9am until either 5pm or 8pm, meaning I had plenty of time to reconnect with myself and with nature. I suspect this is why Celine suggested I'd love

it. The resort includes a 110-acre sculpture park, and my mornings were filled by yoga or salsa lessons. I also explored the resort on a bike, and tried archery and the trapeze.

Against my better judgment I also tried rock climbing. 'People think it's physical but rock climbing is an exercise in self-belief,' said my instructor Charlie. 'You're going to get to the top today and it will change your life.'

So it did – but that's another story. ■ Clubmedsunway.ie offers seven all-inclusive nights in Guilin from €1,780 per adult and €1,205 per child, including drinks, sports, activities, kids' club, transfers and return flights dep. Sept 1.

TRUTH BEHIND THE MASK OF THE CARNEVALE



ARTISAN: The people and crafts of Venice have been overlooked by tourist hordes

As I write this I can hear a band playing modern jazz somewhere beyond my window. It's pretty deafening for two o'clock on a weekday afternoon.

I am in Venice and, having avoided it for 20 years, I find myself in the midst of the dying days of Carnevale.

I didn't plan to be here for this annual extravaganza. In fact, if I could, I would have avoided it because Carnevale is more to do with tourists than the residents of this city. For the past week I have been encountering people bedecked in costumes and masks – on the streets, on the waterbuses and in the bars. Most weren't speaking Italian.

It wasn't always so. Indeed, one Venetian man I know, now aged around 40, tells me that when he was a boy, each sestiere (neighbourhood), each campo (square) even, had their own celebrations.

That is now a thing of the past and so the annual festivities that began in the 12th century, fell off somewhat some centuries later, were banned by Mussolini in 1930, and revived by local enterprise in 1979, are now simply a tourist magnet and something of a travesty.

Traditionally it was the city's pre-Lent blow-out – Carnevale equating to fare-well (vale) to meat (carne).

In recent years



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it has been all about exorbitantly priced masked balls (€600 a head is run of the mill) at one end of the scale, and tourists parading in cheap masks (most not even made in Venice) at the other.

However, hope is in the air. Last week I met Jane Da Mosto. Contessa Jane Da Mosto, actually, because this South African woman is married to the famous Francesco – he of the various BBC series from *Francesco's Venice to Francesco's Mediterranean Voyage* and *Shakespeare In Italy*.

Jane, an environmental scientist, is heading up a new group called We Are Here Venice, with a view to tackling the real issues that are threatening to destroy her city. The monstrous cruise ships that endanger its very infrastructure are, understandably, right at the top of the We Are Here Venice to-do list.

But in the course of our lunchtime chat in the very un-Contessa-like surroundings of the Rosa Salva café in the shadow of the San Giovanni e Paolo church, we also got talking about Carnevale.

And I told
CRAFT WORK:
A handmade Venetian Murano glass vase



her that, although I know Venice like the back of my hand after two decades of regular visits, I have always avoided Carnevale. That I suspected it did little to support local enterprise and craftsmanship.

That's when she told me that this year, for the first time, effort has been made to introduce a cultural programme and highlight the work of local artisans. It was her husband who was approached to spearhead this initiative. Initially sceptical, he took it on.

And the fruits of his (and, I suspect, his wife's) input have been on display all week in St Mark's Square. Yes, the usual parading in costumes for the 'best in show' type of award is still there, but there have also been display stands with local artisans demonstrating their talents. Like the craftsmen who still make the fórcola (rowlock) and other gondola parts, the maskmakers who persist with age-old, papier-mâché techniques, the glass magicians of Murano. And many others.

It's a start, it seems, a step on the road to recovery for Carnevale. And if visitors actually witness the craftsmanship that goes into making, say, a real Venetian mask, maybe they'll understand that it's better to pay €20 or €30 for the genuine article than €2 or €3 for a fake. And th at that, indeed, is the difference between supporting one of the greatest cities in the world – or helping to destroy it.