

MY FAVOURITE DESTINATION



Venice, Italy

Sir John Ritblat

Chairman, Colliers CRE



Venice in the early morning... The light and clarity is more Guardi than Canaletto. The lagoon is still and the water taxis and the vaporettos have yet to churn up the canals, or the air become heavy with heat and humidity and noise. The Doges stir in their great tombs and evoke memories.

Venice remains magical. The repository of some 1500 years at the centre of history and of the arts still retains its mystical presence. Visited and loved over the centuries by visitors without number, it has seduced a tapestry of admirers. Napoleon added sculptures to the Piazza on the one hand and appropriated the four famed Greek horses on St Marks (happily returned by his successors) on the other. Ruskin, Byron, Casanova and more found 'inspiration' there.

Titian, Tintoretto, assorted Bellinis and painters of the greatest renown are competing for your attention. As do glorious churches and palazzos in hidden waterways

as well as fronting the Grand Canal - aptly termed the Grandest Street in Europe - and the Piazza of St Marco, the Living Room of Europe. The churches attract crowds to worship the Redentore and other Palladio masterpieces, often with Tiepolo ceilings. Nor should the special cuisine go unmentioned with oil and wine from the Veneto and the freshest gamberetti from the lagoon. The Venetians also love Carnival, as evidenced by the many shops selling masks and costumes shown off on Feast Days.

But it is the history of the sea that continues to spell the greatness of Venice. The still extant Arsenale retains the aura of the boatyards where a galley a day could be built and launched for the great fleet, with iron foundries for anchors and guns,



ropemakers and rigging and wood for hulls and masts.

Venice is certainly the Queen of the Adriatic and much else besides. Still wondrous, captivating and uplifting in all its moods, however many the visits.



Lorton Valley, Lake District, UK

Jonathan Edwards

Triple Jump Olympic Gold Medallist and World Record Holder, BBC Sports Commentator and LOCOG Board Member

My favourite destination is the Lorton Valley in the Lake District, comprising Lowes Water, Crummock Water and Buttermere.



Growing up in Blackpool in North West England, the Lakes were very accessible, and so since childhood I have been enthralled by the stunning scenery, great walking and mountain biking, and the great pubs to round off the day's activities.

I always used to go to the Lakes to get

away from everything, and it also provides a gentle start to winter conditioning with some vigorous hill walking! I have to say I have great respect for the fell running fraternity!!

I have been fortunate to travel all over the world, but the Lakes is as good as it gets - it feels a bit like coming home.



Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Wales

Tia Williams

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When trying to think of a favourite destination, I initially dismissed the one that immediately came to mind

as not far enough away actually to be a destination. Not foreign enough perhaps, or not adventurous. But with a green heart and mind it would be hypocritical of me to dismiss this place.

Last year, some friends and I took a little road trip from London up to the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), in Machynlleth, North Wales. Machynlleth is one of those places that instantly calms you. In the foothills of Snowdonia, it's a place where old meets new- traditional slated buildings contrast with wind farms and innovative environmental technologies.

The centre itself is a beautiful wooden building set in seven acres, with a hydro-tram that works by balancing water to lift its load up the steep hill. 'Works' might be a slight exaggeration here, as it wasn't actually working, and apparently it tends not to work.



But this is what CAT is all about - testing technologies to find practical alternatives and rule out impractical ones. The centre was set up in 1973 to explore renewables, organic gardening and sustainable lifestyles and, being a bit of a 'geeco' (eco-geek), I couldn't have been more at home.

Machynlleth is only a small town, with one or two pubs, some little shops, a few nice B&Bs and not a lot else. The centre and the village are the epitome of sustainability. Community connectedness, locally produced everything, and a sense of wellbeing and warmth.

