



LONDON CALLING

The first day out after having a baby is a big occasion so needs to be memorable and most importantly, a chance for you and your partner (Mum in particular) to relax and enjoy a few hours of bliss. For anyone living in or around the capital then the Hotel Rafayel (www.hotelrafayel.com), situated on the Left Bank in Battersea and one of the world's first environmentally-conscious luxury hotels, is the perfect spot for that mini-break. Embracing cutting-edge green technologies without comprising on 5-star luxury, quality or comfort. Naturally the spa is the first point of call for a new mother to allow for some much-needed pampering, while Dad can make use of the well-appointed gym. With both of you feeling refreshed time to head to the signature restaurant – Banyan on the Thames – overlooking, as the name suggests, the river, where the food has an Asian blend and is fresh and cooked to perfection. For an after dinner drink, the roof terrace provides a stunning, and unmatched, 360° view of London where guests you can enjoy panoramic views over the river and city skyline. www.hotelrafayel.com



FATHER ON THE PHONE... ARDAL O'HANLON

Ardal O'Hanlon is performing in a stand up set about pregnancy, parenting and raising small children in association with Huggies

FQ: Do kids offer an endless supply of material to a stand up comedian?

AO'H: Absolutely! You react to what you see and what you experience and kids are always amusing.

FQ: Did your routine change after becoming a father?

AO'H: It did, the profile of the audience is always quite young so I resisted it originally but you realise it's a huge part of everyone's lives and it is such a dramatic change and your life becomes governed by kids so it would be stupid not to. As a comic you tend to deal with neurosis and anxiety and that's the funny stuff.

FQ: Has becoming a father changed you?

AO'H: Without a shadow of doubt, I was quite self-centred before I had kids and very preoccupied with career and comedy but you immediately reorientate. I was hopeless for the first few months, I tried to prepare but I actually got quite depressed about how little I could do. We were so blasé the first time around that we took Scrabble in to play in between contractions! After that initial shock, I grew into the responsibility and then you begin to relish it.

FQ: Do your kids think you're funny?

AO'H: Not as funny as a rude noise! My wife is quite old-fashioned so they don't watch much TV and weren't aware of what I did until their mates talked about it at school. Secretly I think they are quite proud and they love Father Dougal but they wouldn't show off about it.

FQ: Do you think they will follow in your footsteps?

AO'H: The boy (8), has said he wants to and he certainly tries around the house and the two girls (12 and 10) love to sing and dance. But in the same way I rebelled against my father's conservative career and lifestyle, they may rebel against my bohemian acts.

FQ: What did your parents make of your career choice?

AO'H: They were really worried. They had high hopes for me, in fact my mother still wants me to be a scientist, she has only just stopped sending me prospectuses for law school. We grew up in rural Ireland and my parents were very conservative and industrious. They dedicated their lives to me following their professions. It was a hard choice but they saw merit in Father Ted and they are proud and happy now.

FQ: Is parenting more nerve-wracking than stand up?

AO'H: Over time, yes – the problems just mount!

ESCAPE FROM THE KIDS

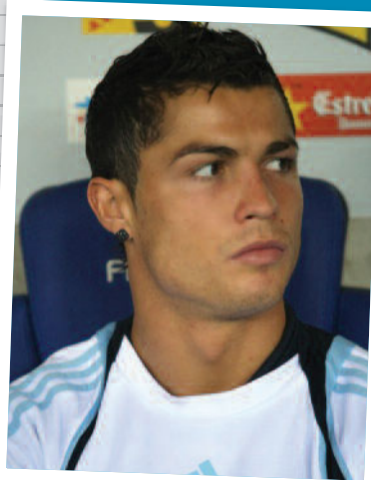
So the last embers of late summer sun are fading into a crisp autumnal brace and the routine of school beckons. For some, a joyous foray, for others, the semblance of shackles, but for the parent it signifies a shift from the energy-sapping fluidity of six weeks to a gruelling schedule – time to get away.

Breaking up the long slog from summer holidays to Christmas – via a fly-by week in October – a long weekend away from it all makes the world of difference. With the help of www.findyouaplacetostay.com, people can find the exact accommodation they want without having to conduct time-consuming online searches, trawling through thousands of irrelevant search results. Users simply place a notice on the site outlining exactly what they are looking for along with any specific requirements (e.g. number of people, date, price, location) and the appropriate accommodation providers will contact you. With hidden gems such as Towcester's wonderful Old Barn at the Old Minthouse and the distinguished Bull at Burford, (pictured) there is something for everyone. As well as the stand-alone site, www.findyouaplacetostay.com features on Britain's national tourism website www.visitbritain.co.uk



FINDSYOU
aplacetostay.COM™

Most consumers search for accommodation online, but find it time consuming, advertised rooms aren't available, specific needs cannot be met and the list goes on. With this service, people simply post what they want on the site and the request gets matched against the 60,000 accommodation providers on the network that have what they are looking for.



"HE'S CALLED CRISTIANO RONALDO," CONFIRMED THE FOOTBALLER'S SISTER ON BEHALF OF HERSELF AND HER MOTHER. "CRISTIANO CHOSE THE NAME, BUT WE LIKE IT."

CRISTIANO WAS CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF HIS SON ON HOLIDAY WITH GIRLFRIEND IRINA SHAYK WHEN HIS SISTER BROKE THE NEWS. GOOD TO SEE THE REAL MADRID SUPERSTAR IS NOT AS OBSESSED WITH ORIGINALITY AS HE IS WITH HIMSELF.

WISE WORDS

SPECIAL OFFER: Bathtime with your little one is great tonic for many Dads after a hard day at the office. Go to www.babybathtime.co.uk and when you buy the award-winning Cuddledry® apron towel (RRP £24.99) and Flexibath™ (RRP £29.95), in bestselling neutral colours, you'll get a top quality bibi bathwater thermometer (RRP £3.50) and all-natural baby shampoo from the acclaimed Creatures collection (RRP £8.50) for free.