

**TRAVEL**  
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**GET YOUR** *skates* **ON**  
by COLIN NICHOLSON

It's the biggest natural ice rink in Europe – and James Bond once famously drove on it. We sent our own special agent to give it a spin...

**A**FTER a few tentative steps on the ice, I push off with one foot, then the other, and glide. And glide. And glide. Then again – one, two, woohoo! I feel as if I'll never stop. This is new to me. In crowded rinks, I'm always turning or stopping to avoid people. Here in the biggest natural ice rink in Europe – and possibly the world – I just have Weissensee (white lake) disappearing into the horizon.

The southern Austrian lake, now reachable from the UK by flights to nearby Klagenfurt, is a geographical oddity. In summer, it's so warm that it's a magnet for swimmers. In winter, it freezes with ice so thick that you can do a 25km circuit on a surface that's usually smoother than an indoor rink.

You don't need to be a pro to enjoy it. I've always loved skating but I'm a keen amateur at best. Beginners can rent stabilising frames for €2 (£1.70) apiece, though it's best to learn without props.

I've signed up to a lesson with Wolfgang Wernitznig in tour skating, a pastime that's



**Blades of glory:** During winter the ice on the south Austrian lake is as smooth as it is thick, as Colin, left, found



**Licence to chill:** Timothy Dalton as 007, above, filmed an all-action sequence, above right, on the lake in the 1987 film *The Living Daylights*

growing in popularity. Some people do it for multi-day treks across frozen lakes, marshes and rivers in the Nordic countries and North America.

The lesson is very different from the handful I've had in the UK, which were all about changing direction, skating backwards – which I can just about do – and the odd spin – which I can't. Like speed skating,

tour skating is all about learning an efficient technique to help you travel a long distance.

You learn to swing your body like a metronome, shifting your weight to send you speeding forwards. I even learnt to put my hands behind my back, like the pro speed skaters. Not

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**MEANINGFUL TRAVEL**



**Noodle-do:** Cook like a Korean

FLIPPING the notion of travelling to 'find yourself', meaningful travel is about finding other people – connecting authentically to the destination you visit through engagement with the local

**WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2024**

From secret locations to lunching with locals, here are the top travel trends for the year ahead

community and soaking up their culture. These longer, slower holidays to less crowded destinations are a regenerative antidote to fast-paced, one-size-fits-all package trips in a bid for travellers to truly appreciate where they are.

**Try:** Intrepid's Discover South Korea trip includes a two-night stay in a Hanok (traditional Korean house).

You can even snap a family pic dressed in hanbok, the traditional Korean clothing, join local monks at a temple for archery, Sunmudo (an ancient Korean Buddhist martial art) and an insightful meditation as well as attend a cooking class to make kimchi and kimbab.

**Prices from £2,025 per person for eight days, [intrepidtravel.com](http://intrepidtravel.com). Intrepid's new Japan Highlights family holiday includes a Taiko drumming**

**workshop in Tokyo, a rural Japanese farm stay and sushi-making classes in Osaka. From £2,192 per person, [intrepidtravel.com](http://intrepidtravel.com)**

**MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL**

Post pandemic, people have realised more than ever that quality time is precious and the world is showing a collective desire to get out and explore more – together.

We're not just talking budget breaks, either; US-based safari company African Travel recently reported that 40 per cent of their family safari holiday bookings last year were arranged and paid for by grandparents wanting to fulfil a bucket-list trip with their families beside

them. Think about the childcare, too – not such a bad idea after all...

**Try:** Rixos hotels offer activities for all ages – from a Rixy Kid's Club to wide-ranging fitness programmes. Their accommodation ranges from standard hotel rooms to villages with private pool plus annexes perfect for grandparents.

**The Rixos Belek is an all-inclusive**

**resort on the Mediterranean coast of Belek, Turkey, from £549, [rixos.com](http://rixos.com)**

Meanwhile how about a cruise with grandparents, too? Ambassador Cruise Line has launched a Multi-Generational Iberian Treasures & North Africa cruise.

Departing on August 10, it takes families across Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar and Morocco, with a special all-ages itinerary and offering a cabin for parents and two children, alongside a separate cabin for grandparents.

**£1,699 per adult, £99 per child for 12 nights, [ambassadorcruiseline.com](http://ambassadorcruiseline.com)**

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**Turkish delight:** Grandparents can enjoy their own annexe at Rixos Belek