

Stay at home

Pen-y-Dyffryn, Oswestry,
Shropshire



This perfectly formed hotel's location, facing the Welsh hills to the west, means superb sunsets are guaranteed. The emphasis here is on home comforts, and dogs are welcome—our reviewer's whippet much enjoyed his stay. A different walk is suggested each breakfast and the restaurant's top-class menu changes daily. Pen-y-Dyffryn has its own stalker, too, so make sure you try the venison.

(01691 653700; www.pen-y-dyffryn.co.uk)

Get away

Riad Farnatchi, Marrakech,
Morocco

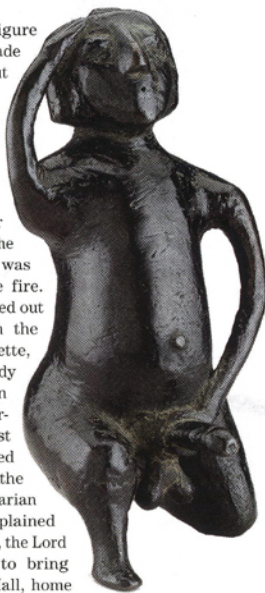


The Atlas Mountains are at their best in late spring, when they're blanketed in wildflowers. Make Marrakech your base for exploring them and book a five-night Toubkal Explorer package through Riad Farnatchi, a luxury hideaway in the oldest part of the *medina*. One night will be spent in a romantic mountain refuge as part of a two-day tour. From £858 per person, based on two adults sharing, excluding flights.

(www.riadfarnatchi.com)

Good to know: Jack of Hilton

THIS bronze figure was probably made in England in about 1300. It's a fireblower or aeophile that operated rather in the manner of a kettle whistle. The hollow interior could be filled with water that was brought to the boil when the figure was placed close to the fire. Steam was then forced out of a small hole in the mouth of the statuette, creating a steady stream of air to fan the flames. This particular figure is first described and named in the 1680s by the Staffordshire antiquarian Robert Plot. He explained that, every New Year, the Lord of Essington had to bring a goose to Hilton Hall, home of the Vernons, and drive it round the fire three times and then lead it off to be killed. During the course of this ceremony, Jack of Hilton had to be blowing on the flames. **JG**



What they said

'See the land, her Easter keeping,
Rises as her Maker rose.
Seeds, so long in darkness sleeping,
Burst at last from winter snows'
Charles Kingsley, in *Easter Week*



Unmissable events

Exhibitions

Until April 15 'School of Paris', Belgravia Gallery, London W1. Vibrant works from the early 20th century, when the French capital was home to Chagall, Kissing and Lansky (020-7495 1010; www.belgraviagallery.com)



Until March 24 Matthew Snowden, Gorstella Gallery, Doodleston, Cheshire. British landscapes (01244 660540; www.gorstellagallery.co.uk)

Fair

March 29 Spring Fair, River Cottage HQ, Trinity Hill, Devon. 10.30am-4pm, tickets £15, children free (01297 630300; www.rivercottage.net)

Point to point

March 30 Vale of Lune, Whittington, Lancashire. Also **Kimblewick** at Kimble, Buckinghamshire, plus 23 other meetings over Easter (Talking Point 09068 446061 or at www.pointtopoint.co.uk)

Days out

Until April 14 Bumblebee Safari, Great Dixter, Rye, East Sussex (01797 252878; www.greatdixter.co.uk)

March 30 BASC Young Shots Instructional Day, Spennymoor Shooting Ground, Co Durham. A full day of teaching, suitable for novices and those with some experience. £40 for members, £50 for non-members (01434 632297; www.basc.org.uk)

Book now

May 24-27 English Music Festival, various venues, Oxfordshire (www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk)

April 12-13 'Nuts and Bolts of the Novel', Hotel du Vin, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Audrey Niffenegger (author of *The Time Traveller's Wife*) takes aspiring writers through the process of penning a bestseller. £375. Preferential rates available at the hotel for participants (www.thewritersacademy.com)

Three wishes: dog mugs

'Start Each Day' mug, £8.50, Enlightened Hound at McLaggan Smith Mugs (01389 755655; www.msmugs.com)



Cocker spaniel 2013 half-pint mug, £19.95, Emma Bridgewater (0844 243 9266; www.emmabridgewater.co.uk)



Blue dog mug, £14, Katharine Pollen (01225 789231; www.katharinepollen.com)