

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

LIVING A BALANCED LIFE

MAY/JUNE 2021 £3.90

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The GOOD LIFE

Can I stay hunkered down just a little longer? asks *Alice B-B*



ARE YOU READY? 'Cause I'm not – not in the slightest bit ready for the gates of freedom to be flung open again. The original change was so dramatic: one minute the world felt tiny and my life felt huge as I flung myself weekly around the globe on planes, trains and automobiles, visiting a billionaire's island in Hawaii, meeting shamans, eating fruit that stained my lips bright orange. Then in a flash my life became parochial, mostly concerned with what was for dinner, walking the puppy and inquiring whether Sue the postwoman's wrist was still sore. Now the door's open again and out there is a world I've become a bit terrified of. Not because of the people (though when I do meet friends I talk fast and loud for 15 minutes and then collapse, realising I have nothing fresh to say). No, I'm terrified because of how much I've come to like this small life. How safe and like an old-fashioned hobbit hole it feels. So while I'm happy that businesses can be busy, shops can ring the tills and restaurants can buzz... I'm popping back into my cosy hole again. Just for a while.

AH... BUT THE CONTRADICTION. Scrolling through my photos makes me long to explore. New spa hotel Forestis (*forestis.it*) in the Dolomites is the perfect post-lockdown decompression chamber, built on the site of a former TB sanatorium. The air is giddily fresh, the climate temperate and the water (even in the shower) is the same Plose spring water that's bottled and sold elsewhere for plenty of euros. The eco-conscious details are remarkable: for every tree felled two are planted, the heating uses renewable energy and every room has a 'no housekeeping' button. I long to return to Forestis and walk among those mountains that jut from the ground like the planet's very own teeth. To sweat out the last year in the naked sauna (pretending I'm cool with being starkers!), float on my back in the indoor-outdoor pool. And take a moment for the bluest of blue-sky thinking.

FOR YEARS I'VE STRUGGLED with the West's Marie-Antoinetteish consumption of fresh flowers. The environmental impact of intensive flower farming needs to be clear. I've been to the foothills of Mount Kenya, much of which is given over to rose-growing in a country that struggles to feed itself. And there's the global impact of pesticides, carbon dioxide emissions and fuel-guzzling refrigerated containers flying blooms all over the world. Surely one day we'll look back in let-them-eat-cake horror. So instead I'm giving plants from Clifton Nurseries (*clifton.co.uk*) or my new discovery – a soft rainbow palette of dried thistles from Fox Flowers (*foxflowers.co.uk*). ■

'For years I'VE STRUGGLED with the West's Marie-Antoinetteish consumption of FRESH FLOWERS'



THIS MONTH I'LL BE...

ORDERING supper from delicious D'Ambrosi Fine Foods in the Cotswolds (*dambrosi.co.uk*). **EXCITED** to visit Anya Cafe in Belgravia – the latest venture from superwoman Anya Hindmarch (*anyahindmarch.com*). **HEADING** to my friend Amanda Wakeley's shop for her new Forever Pieces and upcycling service (*amandawakeley.com*).

