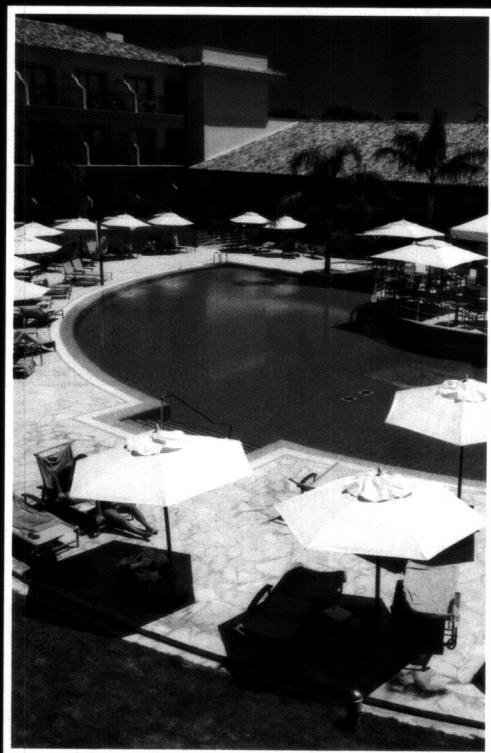


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Letters



► Pangbourne (Where to stay, November 2008) needs amending. While a car is always useful for exploring an area, it is hardly essential in this case, as the railway station is a two-minute stroll from the Elephant and trains to London and Oxford run every half hour, with further connections to Windsor, Stratford and the West Country.
Janetta Taylor, Pangbourne

The strain of the train

A warning to anyone planning to take the train from Paris to Moscow: an easy trip it isn't. Did you ever wonder what happened to all the old non-high-speed trains? They are on the Paris-Moscow route and look just like the ones I took when I backpacked across Europe 20 years ago. Despite what my travel agent and the reservation company had told me, there was no buffet car: I walked the full length of the train looking for it. There was a small kitchen on board, but we were not as well prepared as many of our fellow travellers, who had brought cooking utensils and coffee cups. For two days, we had no food. There was no shower, so we used face-wipes to freshen up. The beds were hard as rock, and even if you did manage to get some sleep you were woken by music blaring from other passengers' old-fashioned boomboxes. In Belarus we had to disembark and spend four hours resolving visa issues (you need a visa to pass through the country

on the way to Russia). It's here that the train wheels are changed from Western to Eastern style, and it is worth the trip on its own to see how the carriages are jacked up in the air as one set of wheels is swapped for another. Back en route to Moscow, the communal male/female loos really became an issue, particularly with the amount of beer some of our fellow passengers were drinking. When we finally arrived at the Ararat Park Hyatt Moscow, they took pity on us and gave us a major room upgrade – never has anyone been so grateful. I thought your readers should know what to expect prior to booking the train to Moscow. I wish I had.
Janice Schacter, via e-mail

Stop this metric madness

I am a subscriber to your magazine and enjoy the pictures and information you provide. But why do you give distances in kilometres and speeds in kph? As far as I am aware, distances in the UK are in miles and speeds are in mph – my car instruments confirm that. Why not use these measurements in your magazine?
Peter B Lawson, Hertfordshire

The editor replies: We understand your frustration, but it is our policy to adopt the measurement system of the country an author is writing about. Imperial measurements are used in features on the UK and the USA, for example, and metric in those on most other countries.

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