

# THE WEEK

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## Holidays in the winter snow

### Watching the northern lights

Tromsø is a winter wonderland, says Imogen Stubbs in *Harpers & Queen*. This prosperous Norwegian harbour town, surrounded by mountains and fjords, has everything one could wish for in the festive season: "snow, skating, sleighs, fairy lights, reindeer", as well as incredibly warm-hearted people. Because it is permanently dark and there are candles everywhere, the town has a church-like atmosphere. It is cosy too, with "shops lit by crackling log fires and steamy cafés serving huge mugs of hot chocolate". Despite the darkness, there is plenty to do outdoors. You can sledge and cross-country ski by moonlight, or ride a husky dog-sleigh wearing a torch on your head and reindeer skins heaped on your lap. Even more fun is a ride on "that mythical thing: a one-horse open sleigh". If you're lucky, the night will be lit by the northern lights, streaks of glowing emerald across the dark sky. For children, it's "like being in one of the Spielberg films they might otherwise have been watching for the umpteenth time".

*Scantours* (020-7839 2927) has three-night trips to Tromsø from £480.



The northern lights: emerald streaks across the dark



Explore the virgin snows of Annapurna in Nepal

### Skiing the Himalayas

For the first time, the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal has granted a licence for heli-skiing, creating unlimited opportunities for skiers and snowboarders, says Patrick Thorne in *Condé Nast Traveller*. Intrepid off-pistors will be dropped at the top of uncharted mountains into ski runs so virginal that the first to the bottom has the slope named in his honour. Every first descent will be recorded on special maps showing the run, the pioneer's name and an account of the first descent. "We're talking about skiing the biggest, highest and most outrageous mountain range in the world," says Craig Calonica, director of Himalayan Heli Ski Guides. Calonica, a former US ski champion, has been skiing the Himalayas for 22 years. Accompanied by a range of experienced European and American guides, he visits terrain to suit skiers of differing ability. This winter, groups will test out the Annapurna region, the base of Mount Everest and Tibet. *Himalayan Heli Ski Guides* (00 33 6 23 080826 / [himalayanheliskiguide.com](http://himalayanheliskiguide.com)). From £3,500 per week.

### A winter walk in Norfolk

A walk on the Norfolk coast is the perfect way to clear your head, say Vincent Crump and Jeremy Lazell in *The Sunday Times*. On a sunny winter morning, when a pearly mist rises off the land, the light can be amazing. Best of all, you're likely to have the scenery to yourself. For a picturesque five-mile amble, try the walk between Hunstanton and Holme. Start beneath Hunstanton lighthouse, heading east past "angel-cake cliffs layered with ginger sandstone and creamy chalk". Beyond are the dunes, a "vast canvas" where waders "scurry officiously between rock pools". After a couple of miles, turn inland, through the Holme Dunes Nature Reserve, where orange-bellied knots dot the silver grass like Smarties. To return, just follow the North Norfolk Coastal Path along the River Hun. The nearby Lifeboat Inn is the perfect place to warm your cockles. An ancient smugglers' alehouse, this labyrinthine pub is stocked with local produce: a steaming bowl of Brancaster mussels, served beside one of the inn's open fires, is "the smart choice". *The Lifeboat Inn* (01485-512236), Thornham. Doubles from £96.



Hunstanton beach: in winter, you might have it all to yourself

### The best hotel bathrooms



**Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Maldives**  
The bathroom itself (above) is "standard five-star stuff" – lots of marble and toiletries – but its wall-size window looks across a turquoise lagoon to infinity. *Abercrombie & Kent* (0845-070 0615) has a week in a lagoon suite for £1,625.

**Boulders Lodge, Singita Private Game Reserve, South Africa**  
Who said you had to spot game from a truck? asks Matt Rudd in *The Sunday Times*. Here you can watch them from your very own watering hole: a free-standing cast-iron bath. Candles, petals and champagne on request. *Bakers Yard Wild Africa Safaris* (01483-445620) has seven nights for £3,909.