

FALLER

EMBER 13 99

CHRISTMAS
HOPPING:
HOW TO MAKE
MARGINALLY
LESS HELLISH

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DUMBSHELL

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Single?

Meet 175
of the hottest,
funnest, cleverest,
richest, sexiest
& most
adorable
people

*You won't just
want them - you'll
have to have them.
Right now!*

PARTY
GAMES:

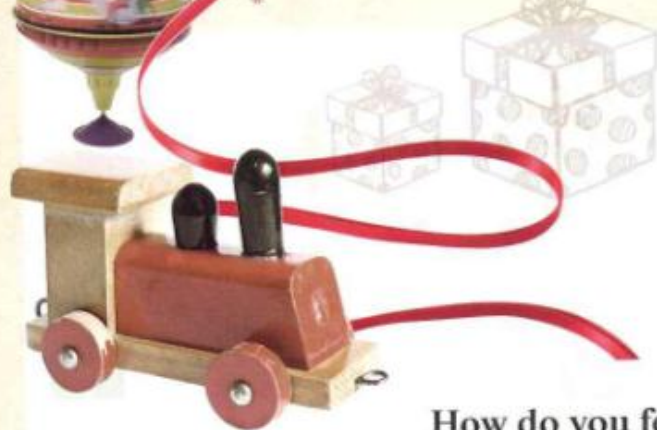
How to cheat,
get naked & win

ANNA FRIEL is

SANTA

AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE





WHERE

...FOR A BREAKAWAY

Do you still need

YES

How do you feel about a city Christmas?

The bustlier
the better

Savvy style with
bucolic benefits

Bring on
the beach



BUZZY CITY KICKS

The Prince, Melbourne, Australia

Those attractive little foxes of Melbourne fashion land – the dudes, the glittering, the inked-up and the loud – make a beeline for this glampuss hotel because they love to sip cocktails and then eat in its 'book early to avoid being desperately upset' restaurant, Circa. Christmas lunches here are amazing. Don't you just love a cool, less-is-more front desk – one PC, one phone – operated by a lush young thing who leaps into action if you ask where the covergirls hang out? Try nearby Di Stasio restaurant or tiny-but-fab Lost for Words café. Then get massaged with honey in the spa, or ask if Mink, the hotel's fancy underground bar with 70 types of vodka, will open up early just for you. The 40 cute (meaning quite small) rooms, some of which need the odd nip and tuck, have lovely coco-chocolate carpets, hog-bristle-white walls, Venetians and low-slung beds. The water is incredible – wowzers – and makes your hair irresistible. Upstairs is the Deck, an entertaining area with white furniture and see-through, Moorish metallic screens leading to a 10-metre swimming-pool. So arabica-coffee junkies and style sluts on the prowl who love all things, like, totally delicious, will adore it here; the iPad will go 'plink' with happiness when you make a booking.

BOOK IT

Doubles, from £133.
theprince.com.au or 00 61 3 9536 1111



COACHING INN REFUGE

The Olde Bell, Berkshire

It's practically the oldest inn in the world (parts date back to 1135), with all the mod cons you want and none of the ones you don't. If you bring a DVD they can find you a player, but otherwise, clutter is a no-no. Think about it. Christmas. Without clutter. Even furniture is kept to a minimum, with not an overstuffed chintzy sofa to be found – just clever colour pops, ginormous beds (you'll think you are sleeping alone), Welsh woolen blankets and lovely gloopy products in the bathrooms. Did we mention this was a new Ilse Crawford-designed establishment? So that's how it manages to be wholesome and chic. And did we say it's only 40 minutes' drive from London, in the absurdly picturesque village of Hurley, ablaze with tithe barns and log fires? The kitchen's unfussy – a menu stuffed with Modern British classics. For parties of 10 to 40 there are the five rooms in the Malt House where Christmas creatures can tuck into roast Woburn turkey, pigs in blankets, duck-fat potatoes and buttered Brussels. Or keep it quiet and wallow in a claw-footed bath watching *Lord of the Rings*. On Boxing Day, after rambling in the meadow gardens, there'll be ploughman's, pickles and sandwiches. All crooked and inglenook, chunky local ales and wheeling bicycles – this is a haven for tired Hobbits who want to keep it low-key.

BOOK IT

Doubles, from £139.
theoldebells.co.uk or 01628 825881



BAREFOOT BEACH BABES

Tides, Mexico

When Tim Robbins made his prison break in *The Shawshank Redemption*, he high-tailed to the Mexican beach town of Zihuatanejo. While this seaside resort of low-rise shacks tumbling down dusk-coloured hills into the Pacific has the feel of a place where people come to live the easy life, at Christmas there's a frisky party undertone. Run away with a lover to escape the whole-family shenanigans and suck up tropical-thatch festivities instead. There are fountains and pools dotted about and jungle-lined paths where you get lost trying to find the spa or tennis court. There's plenty to look at from your sunlounger – locals picnicking at the weekend and children playing football on the white sand. For Christmas lunch there's roast turkey, beef, duck and chicken, but forget all that and tuck into delicious shrimp tacos. The Coral beach bar looks like something Elvis might have installed at Graceland (and is no less charming for it). The laidback attitude suits the Zihuatanejo vibe, a bay surrounded by surf breaks. Book one of the suites with their beachy interiors – tiled floors, wicker daybeds, bamboo armchairs – and private splash pools on verandas with killer sunset views. On New Year's Eve everyone gets jiggy: a local band goes guitar crazy; and there are cook-outs on the beach and dancing all night long.

BOOK IT

From £2,395 for a six-day stay, flights included.
abercrombieandient.co.uk or 0845 618 2163