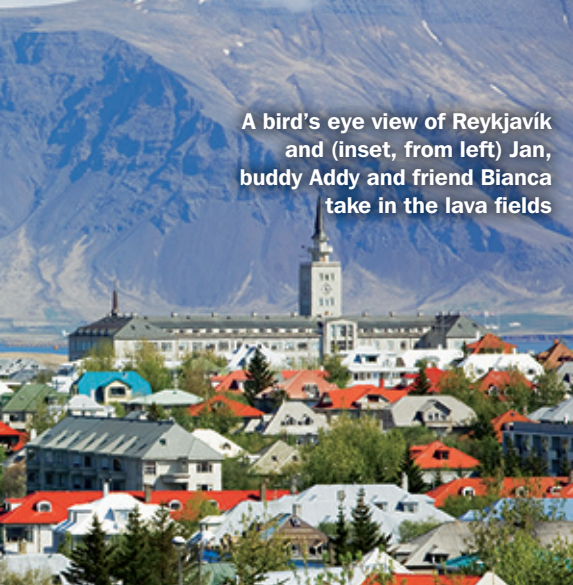


A bird's eye view of Reykjavík and (inset, from left) Jan, buddy Addy and friend Bianca take in the lava fields



ice cream in Iceland was worth braving the cold.

We popped into Matur og Drykkur for a fine fish lunch and for dessert, we drove to the outskirts of Reykjavík to meet chocolatier Hafliði Ragnarsson and sample his handmade chocs. It was a tough job but Addy and I were in chocolate heaven.

One of the capital's most striking modern buildings is Hallgrímskirkja church, which looms like a space rocket above the old town. Another domed space-age edifice lies on top of Öskjuhlíð hill called Perlan or the Pearl. High under a reflective dome there is a revolving restaurant and cocktail bar giving striking views of Reykjavík. It's a great spot for fine dining.

A break in Iceland wouldn't be complete without a massage and an outdoor dip so we drove to the NLFÍ Spa and Medical Centre in Hveragerði for some R&R. A massage undid the knots in my neck then it was time to make a splash outside in the hot tub. I strongly urge a quick dash to beat the icy temperatures, but once in the tub it was sheer bliss.

I discovered some real Reykjavík gems on my stopover thanks to my buddy Addy.

Jan Brierley

Return economy flights with Icelandair from Manchester to Reykjavík start at £167 (020 7874 1000). Icelandair's stopover buddy service is free to book. Buddies can be reserved when booking a transatlantic stopover until April 30. See icelandair.co.uk/stopover-buddy. For prices at the Apotek hotel, visit keahotels.is/en/hotels/apotek-hotel.

Zürich, Switzerland

Standing in front of a room of people, my heart beat fast as I prepared to lie. I had been instructed by mentalist Tobias Heinemann to answer a question and he would tell me if I was being truthful or not. I stepped forward and opened my mouth only to be told I was lying before I even spoke. Sitting down sheepishly, I wondered how he had known, before coming to the conclusion that my poker face is not what I think it is.

The rest of his show at the Kameha Grand Zürich Hotel was extraordinary. He predicted audience members' answers, guessed at their past and at one point, while blindfolded, successfully imitated another audience member's sketch – she had drawn two swans and a frog.

This was all a taster for the innovative new service the hotel is providing – private Michelin-starred meals with Tobias, an artist who is internationally respected for performances that include mental and psychological experiments. He is a mind reader, a human lie detector and a body language expert. Basically, he is the Swiss Derren Brown.

After our private performance we quizzed Tobias as we enjoyed a tasting menu in the hotel's fine-dining restaurant YOU, which was awarded its first Michelin star in October. In between courses of Scottish smoked salmon, pigeon with radicchio and succulent prime beef, he explained that even as a child he knew he had a special gift and, conveniently, could always help his dad find a set of lost keys. Tobias trained as a performer at the

Doreen Bird College of Performing Arts in London,



The luxurious lobby of the Kameha Grand and (inset) Jaymi in Zürich

taking his talents home to Zürich, then being given his own series on Swiss TV and eventually getting involved with the Kameha Grand.

As part of its Exactly Like Nothing Else package, guests will be presented with the restaurant's menu but will only think about what they would like to eat. At the end of his private performance, they will then be served what they wanted after Tobias has read their minds.

After an evening of entertainment they will retire to one of the hotel's unique themed suites, with rooms including unusual features such as a roulette table, a treadmill or typewriters. While traditional hotel rooms may have a minibar and mini toiletries, my burlesque-themed suite came with a gigantic round bed and a case full of whips, blindfolds and tassels!

Clearly, the Kameha Grand is no ordinary hotel. And Zürich is no ordinary destination. Nestled on the north bank of Lake Zürich, it is a city of contrasts, from the classic architecture of the centre to the bustling hip party district in the west. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the avant-garde art movement Dada and we were treated to a tour of the major spots where the genre was pioneered. The city's two-month-old Museum of Digital Art showed that artistic heritage has continued, with exhibitions that used sight, sound and touch to incredible effect.

Navigating the centuries-old streets I thought of the image I'd had of Zürich: stark, modern and business-like. As I gazed across I realised it was an unexpected gem. From mind reading, experimental modern art and even its picture-postcard view, there was nothing on this trip that I could have predicted.

Jaymi McCann

SWISS operates 200 weekly flights to Switzerland from Heathrow, London City, Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham and Dublin from £38 one way. Kameha Grand Zürich (www.kamehagrandzuerich.com) offers double rooms from £136 per room per night room only. The Exactly Like Nothing Else package costs £2,208.

