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## Paul Hollywood 'I've been to 47 cities in 12 months'

The 'Bake Off'  
judge reveals his  
travel secrets  
page 21



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page 7

TRAVEL SECTION  
OF THE YEAR

# TRAVEL



## Take a deep breath...

Michelle Jana Chan (yes, that's her with the dolphins!) plunges into the Big Blue with freediver Hanli Prinsloo in Mozambique

**I**f you have seen Luc Besson's 1988 film *The Big Blue*, you will know about the moment when the sport of freediving was propelled into the public consciousness. One character, Enzo Molinari, aims to dive the deepest, holding his breath the longest and pushing his body to the limit. The other, Jacques Mayol, is less interested in breaking records. For him freediving is about expressing his love of the ocean – and of dolphins. "I don't dive to conquer the elements," he said. "The sea is my lover; I make love to her when I dive."

Much as I am swayed by records, summits and certificates, I wanted to freedive not with weights and balloons but in the most natural way possible alongside the world's great marine creatures: dolphins, sharks and other favourites. In fact, like

Michelle swims amongst a pod of dolphins, above, record-breaking freediver Hanli Prinsloo, below



many people, I had perhaps unknowingly been freediving all my life: swimming underwater, holding my breath for a few seconds, perhaps to retrieve a penny from the bottom of a pool. That was a revelation: if you too have ever held your breath and swum underwater, you have freedived. Without the need for much equipment, freediving is uncomplicated. It is also very appealing in an age when we are shedding gear to go rock climbing, running without shoes, indulging in wild swimming, even decluttering our homes and our head spaces. Freediving is particularly of the moment – and it is flourishing. Scuba programmes provided by Padi (the Professional Association of Diving

Continued on page 2

INTERVIEW

# Travelling life



Paul Hollywood, Baker



Latchi in Cyprus, above, holds very special memories for Paul Hollywood; Joe's in Miami, below, is the place for stone crabs

**'I hate queuing. I just want to get a move on!'**

**How often do you travel?**

Constantly. Filming *Paul Hollywood - City Bakes 1* was in Miami, New York, Paris, Copenhagen, St Petersburg, Munich, Naples, Madrid and Warsaw to taste and make their specialities. At last count, I've been to 47 cities in the last 12 months.

**Your earliest memory of travelling abroad?**

When I was little we visited various campsites around Conway, north Wales. My first major holiday abroad was to Ibiza with my parents when I was five. I vividly remember the plane touching down and that the hotel had great swings with lots of little lizards darting about that I was determined to catch.

**What do you need for a perfect holiday?**

Anything remote or quiet, whether it's in the countryside, up the west coast of Scotland or smaller boutique hotels that aren't crowded. Ironically, when I was in Dubai with the BBC Good Food Show, even though it's an urban area, when you see the vast panorama from the top of the Burj Khalifa, it feels remote, as if it's just sprung up out of the desert.

**Most unusual place you've been?**

St Petersburg. I was filming there just after Christmas, and it was the most beautiful city I've ever been

to. The winter and summer palaces make Buckingham Palace look like a two-up, two-down!

**Most relaxing destination?**

Cyprus has special memories for me - we stay at the Anassa Hotel, near Latchi on the Greek side. I used to be the head baker and I met my wife Alex there in the Nineties, when she was a scuba diving instructor in Paphos. We even got married there. The rooms are great, and there's a private beach where we can really unwind.

**Most unusual thing you've eaten on your travels?**

The sheer amount of cabbage and vinegar I had while filming in Warsaw was just too much - even the rye bread was loaded.

**Favourite city for food?**

Oooohhhh, can I have more than one? I love Rome for their calzones and New York City for the variety of quality eateries, but I absolutely fell in love with Miami for the stone crabs at Joe's, just off Ocean Drive - the best I've ever had, and the Cajun food. The steaks



out there are colossal - it's like having a shark and a cow on your plate. They don't do things small there.

**Favourite restaurant?**

The Gavroche in London - what Michel Roux does there with French food is amazing.

**Worst travel experience?**

This was equal parts awful and comical. I was staying in Cyprus at a hotel I won't embarrass. The porter came to collect the bags from our room at the end of our stay, and he loaded my big onto the trolley, which was on a slope outside, and the slope lead to the pool. You can see where this is going, can't you? As he nipped inside to get another bag, the trolley took off at speed and crashed into the water. I raced after it and jumped into the pool to get my soaking wet bag out. Imagine the sight as we arrived at the airport, my bag like a sieve with water pouring out of it. Everything was ruined. I was not a happy bunny.

**Favourite airline?**

I love flying Emirates or Virgin when I'm flying long-haul. Their first class service is just out of this world.

**Best travel advice?**

It's the polar opposite of most people, but I absolutely hate carrying a ton of stuff onto a plane.

I check in all my luggage and literally go through security with nothing other than my coat in which I have my iPhone and iPad. This is despite me joking at the check-in desk that I'd like one bag to go to Glasgow and the other to Paris, and see the look of confusion on their face when they say they can't do it, and I say, "Well you did it last time!"

**Best health trip while travelling?**

I don't drink much alcohol on the plane, apart from maybe a glass with dinner, and I drink lots and lots of water.

**What do you hate about holidays?**

Queuing - to check-in, for security, to collect your bags, and especially to get off the plane. I just want to get a move on.

**Where next?**

India, South America and New Zealand - the rich culture and the incredible food in all three has me itching to find a reason to go - maybe there's my next programme!

Interview by Sarah Ewing

'The Great British Bake Off' is at 8pm on Wednesdays on BBC One. Paul will be cooking live at the BBC Good Food Show in Belfast, Glasgow, London and Birmingham. For more information, see [bbcgoodfoodshow.com](http://bbcgoodfoodshow.com).