CHATEAU DE

COMMARQUE

OR parents who love being in the outdoors, passing on a sense of adventure to children can be rewarding but time-consuming and logistically challenging.
Take it from Zoe Hart, a

US-born, Chamonix-based mountain guide and Patajust released a series of adventures that she, husband Max Turgeon and their sons. Mathias, 13, and 10-year-old Mica have experienced together.

Titled Parenting: Disaster Style, the short movies follow the family on ski touring, coastal climbing and Alpine climbing adventures in France and Italy.

The term 'disaster style' refers back to the adventures that Zoe and Max threw themselves into before becoming parents. Some of those adventures had the potential to be disastrous due to awful

weather conditions or other challenges along

the way.

They're far from disastrous parents, of course. Max is a mountain guide and film-maker while Zoe is one of only a small number of fully-qualified female guides in Europe with the International Federation of Mountain

Guides Associations.
When first son Mathias was born, they carried on with their adventurous way of life – with all the pros and cons that involved – so that they could share the outdoor spaces which had shaped their own lives.

In the last few years, they've camped in Australia, canoed rapids in Canada and climbed peaks in the surroundings of the Chamonix valley.

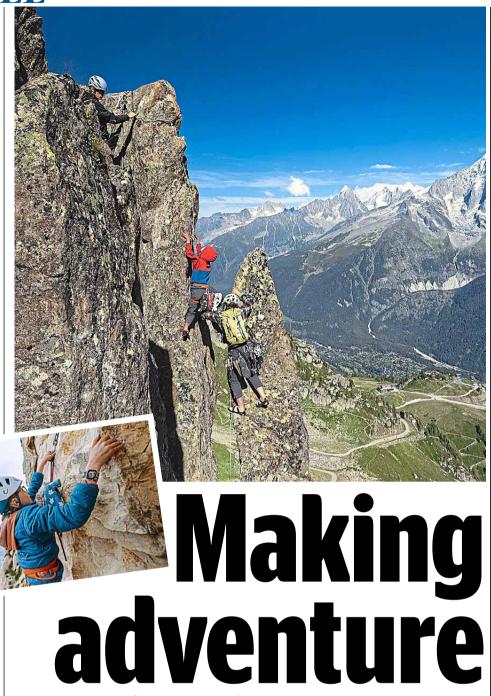
AVING those adventures together cements the family, says Zoe. As well as teaching the boys new skills, outdoor excursions teach them about decisionmaking, consequences, reward, choice, resilience and the fact that they always have the option to say no if they're uncertain

about an activity.

They also teach Zoe and sider what will happen if I with me: will they be able to call rescue?' she says. 'Are we in a place where rescue will be possible? Our adventures have also taught me that children are capable of way more than they think they are.

'The goal is not for them to have bad experiences, the goal is for them to become good, resilient peo-ple who know that to take pleasure from the mountains and the outdoors, they also have to give something back.'

At a time when getting children off their screens is almost impossible for many parents, adventures in the great outdoors are a great way for kids to be in the



child's play

Encouraging your little ones to have an outdoor spirit is challenging but rewarding

A SENSE OF ADVENTURE **MURPHY**

Teachable moment: Zoe Hart climbing with her son Mathias and. inset. Mica gets to arips with a tricky outcrop

moment and away from the pressures of social media. So what tips can Zoe offer to Irish parents keen to get their children outside?

'Family adventures don't have to be epic,' she says. They can be small, slow, simple and close to home while you plan bigger adventures for holiday time. Find something that fits into your life because otherwise, you probably won't do it. If you're living in Dublin, nature is right on your doorstep with big parks and the coastline.

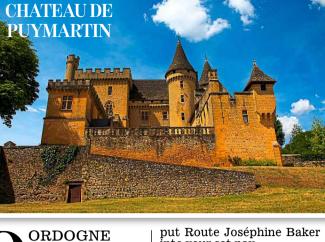
Mica's adventures to date have been more substantial than running wild in Irish fields. He faced his fear of climbing during a tiring ski tour in Italy's Aosta Valley

vertical 350m stairway. loved the fact that he manbrought us to a hut in the nountains,' says Zoe. What if your children

don't like a particular activity? 'Don't panic,' she says. 'If they don't like it now, leave it for a while, they might like it later on. Mica didn't like being in cold water when he was younger, now he's into surfing. The boys hated climbing when they were younger so we left that alone for a while then came back to it. It's

good to try different things.'
While Mica surfs and snowboards, Mathias skis and kite-surfs and both ■ TO BE inspired by and

learn more about Zoe's family adventures check out Parenting: Disaster Style on YouTube. Films will be released on June 18 & 25 and July 2.



boasts more han 1,000 castles and manor houses, making it one of the most chateaurich regions in France, with approximately

one every 5-6sq km. This means that exploring Dordogne is best done by car. By French standards, the roads here are very manageable: well-maintained, scenic and not at all intimidating to drive, as long as you don't get distracted by all the stunning chateaux peeping out through the lush green hillsides.
Traditionally, the region is

divided into four areas: Périgord Vert (Green) for its lush forests; Périgord Blanc (White) for limestone pla-teaus and farmland; Périg-ord Noir (Black) for dense oak woods and truffles: and Périgord Pourpre (Purple), famed for its wine

This is a place that punches above its weight in culinary terms. Famous for foie gras, truffles, walnuts and duck confit, Dordogne also boasts the Bergerac AOC in the south-west, producing excel-lent wines – reds like Pécharmant and sweet whites like Monbazillac.

I came for the castles, and I planned to visit a range spanning from the medieval period to the 18th century.

CHATEAU DES

MILANDES
TUCKED into the hills of Périgord Noir, Chateau des Milandes is a Renaissance jewel, with turrets, stained glass and delicate stonework the fairytale chateau I had hoped for. But what truly sets it apart is its former owner – legendary cabaret star and World War II resistance fighter Josephine Baker, who made the chateau her home in the 1940s.

Today, the rooms hold a permanent exhibition that offers an intimate insight into her extravagant, trail life. Vintage posters, glamormemorabilia line the walls. but perhaps the most moving space is the original kitchen, where photographs capture Baker with her 12 adopted children – her 'rain-bow tribe' and the heart of her

dream for racial harmony.

The chateau's manicured gardens offer breathtaking views over the Dordogne Valley, and throughout the day there are spectacular birds of prey shows that add a the-atrical touch. There's also a relaxed bistro and café, with

indoor and outdoor space. It's easy to find too - just put Route Joséphine Baker into your sat nav.

CHATEAU DE **PUYMARTIN**

MIDWAY between the medieval town of Sarlat and Les Eyzies, Chateau de Puymartin is a striking fortress with a rare claim – it's still inhabited by descendants of its original family. Built in the 13th century, it was seized by the English during the Hundred Years' War, then destroyed by Sarlat's consuls to prevent further occupation. It was rebuilt in the 15th century, restored again in the 19th and has remained in the same family's care ever since.

Inside, Puymartin is a time capsule – original furniture Aubusson tapestries, carved woodwork and a superb collection of 17th-century paintings give it the feel of a lived-in museum. Every cas-tle needs a ghost story – here it's the 'white lady', impris-oned in the tower for adultery. The chateau's atmospheric gloom suits the tale.

It's also very family-friendly, with interactive areas designed for children. The outdoor café serves seasonal dishes made from local ingredients, fresh, wholesome and totally free from processed shortcuts.

CHATEAU DE COMMARQUE

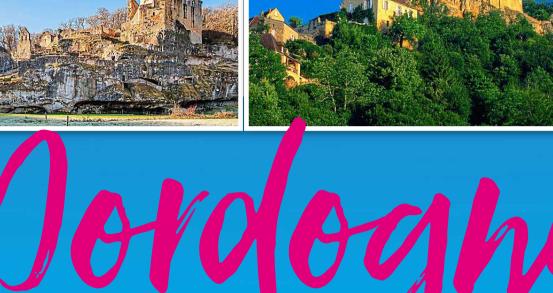
I TYPICALLY lean toward the elegance of Renaissance chateaux, but Chateau de Commarque's haunting medieval ruins have a unique pull. Built in the 12th cenfury to protect a key crossroads in the Vézère Valley, it once housed up to six noble families, each with their own tower-hall, a rare snapshot of feudal coexistence

Abandoned in the 16th century and swallowed by forest, the fortress remained When rediscovered in the 20th century, it was almost perfectly preserved.

In the 1960s, Count Hubert de Commarque, a descend ant of the original lords, bought the site and began painstaking restoration Beneath the ruins, he discovered a cave with 12,000-year-old carvings, proving numans had occupied this spot for over 15,000 years.

Today, Commarque is a working archaeological site. Count Hubert's presence still looms large – if you are lucky, you may even spot him overseeing operations when you visit.

Commarque may lack romantic turrets, but its raw authenticity and deep historical roots are



CASTELNAUD





CHATEAU DE CASTELNAUD

BUILT in the 12th century on a rocky outcrop, Chateau de Castelnaud faces its his toric rival, Chateau de Beynac, across the Dor-dogne River. Its strategic position made it a key stronghold during the Hundred Years' War, frequently switching hands between the English and French before being reclaimed by Charles VII in 1442.

Later, it played a significant role in the Wars of Religion before falling into disuse in the 17th century.

family began restoring the

a museum of medieval warfare. Today, it attracts over 230.000 visitors annually showcasing a vast collection of weapons, armour and fullscale siege engines. There is even an entire room dedicated to the crossbow, which was both fascinating and

mildly terrifying. Brave the ramparts if your legs can withstand the steep climb, and vou can eniov val ley views as dramatic as the cňâteau's history

CHATEAU DE **FAYOLLE**

BUILT in 1766, Chateau de Fayolle is steeped in history, but its public life is just ence and Gregory Mangeret have big plans to restore the property and transform it into a hub for theatre, festivals and creative events. Though steeped in history, Fayolle had never been open

to the public, until now That sense of local pride is palpable, with volunteers pitching in to bring the chateau back to life. After a decade of abandonment, it became a cult spot for urban explorers. As a clever nod to that, the new owners now offer an Urbex-style tour visitors climb through a window and, by torchlight, explore unrestored rooms

frozen in time. It's raw, real and ideal for

usual manicured chateau experience.
If climbing through a bro-

ken window isn't how you imagined your tour of a chateau to go, they also organise the Servants' Tour, which adds theatre and humour, with actors dressed as 18th-century staff guiding guests through the estate. With 55 hectares of grounds still being uncovered. Favolle's semi-derelict charm is part of its magic, and the owners are wise to let that character shine through.

ACCOMMODATION

OF COURSE, all this travel me think, why just visit them

Dordogne is full of charming historic properties that let you live the château dream

overnight.
En route to my accommo dation I passed Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère, which is worth a stop for its absurdly pretty stone buildings and river views. It's officially one of France's most beautiful villages and plays host to a celebrated classical music

celebrated classical music festival each August.

Nearby Montignac, home to the famous Lascaux caves, offers an excellent base in the shape of Hotel de Bouilhac (from €172), a 17th-century townhouse with cool, contemporary rooms and one of the best restaurants in the region restaurants in the region, Ro·bo, run by Kiwi chef Nick It's ambitious cooking, but fantastic, and it was lovely to see them both there work ing when I visited.
In Saint-Cyprien, Hotel

L'Abbaye (from €328) blends 18th-century charm with sleek modernity, perfect for exploring the Périgord Noir's 'golden triangle'. Another family-run business, the owners personally check guests in. We had a dinner reservation at Agustines res-taurant in the heart of the

village, so they gave us a lift in their vintage Renault. I drove on to the Isle Valley to stay at Chateau de Lalande (from €540), a four star retreat near Saint-Astier With its classical interiors and peaceful atmos phere, it's the ideal place to wind down if you've spent days driving, climbing steps and towers, and maybe overindulging in fole gras Because yes, you will eat well in Dordogne, and duck, in all its forms, is on every menu in every restaurant.

But the region has a proud and punchy culinary identity that goes well beyond duck. There's an abundance of walnut, black truffles and incredible river trout, washed down with plenty of excellent local wines.

Well, it's only fitting that Bergerac produces majestic wines to match all the majestic castles.

Dordogne will give you incredible views, gripping history and a culinary landscape as layered as its castles; just don't forget your walking shoes – and maybe a bottle of Monbazillac for

TRAVEL FACTS

Fly with Aer Lingus Dublin to Bordeaux from €17 return, aerlingus.com. See dordoane-perigordtourisme fr for more details. For more from Sara. follow @less ordinary traveller on Instagram