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BEST 100 HOLIDAYS 2017



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THE BEST 100 HOLIDAYS OF 2017

WIN
A 10-day trip
to Rajasthan
Page 34

Where are you going this year?

Our experts, led by chief travel writer Chris Haslam, have scoured the world to find the destinations you should be packing your bags for in 2017.

Some of these holidays are tried-and-tested classics. Some visit brand-new hotels and resorts. Others are pioneering expeditions to far-flung corners. Whatever your taste, whatever your budget and whether you're flying solo or bringing the extended family, we're confident you'll find a trip to love in this 36-page special issue.

Read on. Start dreaming.

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THE KEY

£	Up to £499 per person
££	£500-£999pp
£££	£1,000-£1,499pp
££££	£1,500-£2,499pp
£££££	£2,500+pp



FAMILY FRIENDLY

HOW IT WORKS

Unless stated, prices are per person, based on two people sharing, and package holidays outside the UK include flights and transfers. All prices were accurate at the time of going to press, but what your holiday finally costs depends on many factors – when you go, how many are in your party, the cost of flights (if not included) and so on. As a guide, we've given each trip a £ rating, showing the average all-in cost per person. Where included, flights are from London; ask the operator about regional departures.

BEACH SEA FOR YOURSELF

1 CORNISH MODERN

There's a reason why this Alex Michaelis-designed white box at the eastern end of Praa Sands hasn't been snapped up for summer: the four-bedroom house is new on the books, so has yet to acquire the automatic "fully booked" status of all the best places to stay in Cornwall. But with its polished concrete floors, ultramodern kitchen, woodburner, wetroom and entertainment den, and the beach mere steps from the plate-glass back door, it soon will. Upstairs, there are three predictably glamorous double rooms, as well as a



bunk room, taking the occupancy to 11 – which makes the hefty price a bit more affordable: from £1,850 a week in low season, or £4,999 at peak times (0330 160 7458, beachspoke.com).

3 THRILL THEN CHILL IN THE UAE

What do you do when half the family wants rollercoasters and shopping malls, but the other half craves healthy exercise and natural solitude? One solution is Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah. Last year, the former opened four theme parks, including Bollywood Parks, Motiengate, Legoland and IMG Worlds of Adventure – the biggest indoor theme park on the planet. Add to that the world-beating Aqua Venture and Wild Wadi water parks, and obscene levels

of retail temptation, and you've got a load of overexcitement you'll need another holiday to get over. So head half an hour north to Ras Al Khaimah: flamingo-filled beaches, craggy mountains and desert wilderness make this the perfect spot for some post-theme-park decompression. A 10-day break, with five nights' B&B at the luxury Jebel Palm Tree Court, in Dubai, then five all-inclusive nights at the beachfront Rixos Bab al Bahr, starts at £1,599 for adults and £699 for kids, including theme-park tickets (020 3733 6507, bestattravel.co.uk).



2 ISLAND-HOPPING IN THE CYCLADES

When you're island-hopping, the sadness of leaving one perfect isle is balanced by the thrill of visiting another. See for yourself on the Cycladic islands of Serifos and Sifnos. Mass tourism has bypassed Serifos, which is odd, because the beaches there are as good as those on hugely popular Milos. Whatever: the place is yours for a week, staying at the Alexandros-Vassilia Hotel, on Livadakia beach. Then hop across to the foodie, less sleepy island of Sifnos for a week at the Erosini Hotel, on Platis Gialos beach. Prices start at £942pp, B&B (0330 160 7463, sunvil.co.uk).



4 LAST CHANCE TO SEE THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS

New destinations come along all the time, and the old ones get buried under concrete. Which brings us to the Andaman Islands, a paradise archipelago on the east side of the Bay of Bengal. The 530 islands are closer to Bangkok than they are to Delhi, but India owns them and that's that. Most are deserted, others are protected, and just a dozen or so, dominated by Havelock Island, are open to tourists. It's a langouros

place of tin shacks, bath-warm seas and swimming elephants – but this idyll could be coming to an end, as the Indian government has announced plans to develop five more islands. Taj Hotels is building a 100-room resort on 45 acres of beachfront on Havelock, and a £1.2bn redevelopment of Port Blair is afoot. Go now, before it changes for ever: a nine-night trip split between the chic Barefoot at Havelock and the boutique, British-owned Jalakara starts at £2,195 (020 8265 3064, millspotter.com).



5 A BUDGET FIND IN GALICIA

If you were looking for a room on the Galician coast, you'd probably drive straight past Hotel Alen do Mar, with its unfashionably retro sign and a reception area that looks like a Seat dealership... and you'd never know what a treasure you'd missed. But now the secret is out. Last year, a Spanish newspaper rated the 11-room property on the Fisterra peninsula one of the top three beach hotels in the country – and when you get past check-in, you'll see why. The rough-walled rooms are scattered through a pine forest that, in early summer, is ablaze with wild flowers. It has boutique-quality bathrooms, beds as soft as clouds and terraces with views of Playa Langosteira, the best beach on this spectacular coast. It takes a minute to reach the sand and just 10 more to arrive at Don Percebe, a seafood joint in Langosteira. Doubles start at £84 a night in high season (00 34 981 740745, hotelendomar.com). Fly to Santiago de Compostela with Ryanair.



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THE BEACH TREND

CAMBODIA'S BEACHES

LAURA GOULDEN



Washed by the Gulf of Thailand, Cambodia's beaches are every bit as Instagrammable as those of its neighbour to the west – and, crucially, they're quieter. They've also recently become that bit better connected to the rest of the world, thanks to direct Cambodia Angkor Air flights from Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) to Sihanoukville, which launched last summer. Sihanoukville is also accessible via an hour's flight from Siem Reap or a 3½-hour drive from Phnom Penh.

This improved access to one of the last unspoilt regions in Southeast Asia (once you get out of Sihanoukville itself) has been duly noted by some of the world's dreamiest hotel brands – and the first of what is likely to be a flurry of openings is slated for the second half of 2017.

Leading the charge is **Alla Villas Koh Russey** (kohrussey.com), which is due to open in August on a private island a short speedboat ride from Sihanoukville. It will sport seriously slick white and wood decor, and have a vast spa. Room rates are likely to be about £250 a night, which

could be worse, considering that the Villa properties are the brand's most upmarket offering, and that rooms at the equivalent Balinese outpost cost at least twice as much.

Alla will be followed, towards the end of the year, by a **Six Senses** (sixsenses.com) on nearby Krabey Island. The decor will fit the brand's signature rustic-luxury mould – expect lots of turquoise scatter cushions and billowing muslin – while outside it's all untouched white beaches and jungle.

What's that? You can't wait that long? It is possible to go now, but the only high-end base is the glamorous **Song Saa Private Island** resort (songsaa.com). Rooms here start at £880 a night, but

Turquoise Holidays is offering a week-long stay at **Song Saa** with Angkor Wat from £2,335pp, including flights (turquoise-holidays.co.uk). The more budget-minded traveller might prefer a cute, affordable boutique base such as **Tamu** (doubles from £86; tamucambodia.com), on laid-back Otres Beach, south of Sihanoukville.

Song Saa, top, and Krabey Island

14 SNAZZY CAMPING, BRITAINY

£ If you get it right, a week's camping in France is pretty much the perfect family holiday. It's cheap, the wine is fabulous and the kids, in the brief moments when you see them, will be having a ball. A new operator, Firefly, has a portfolio of French campsites that offer all of the above. Our pick is Escalle St Gilles, on the vast Groasguen beach, where "camping" translates as a three-bedroom, two-bathroom

mobile home with a flatscreen TV, a raised deck and a boutiquey sail canopy. Facilities include a water park, a spa, a kids' club and a bar. A week in August starts at £666 for six (0330 160 7461, fireflyholidays.co.uk). Brittany Ferries has return Portsmouth-St Malo crossings from £545.



15 EDEN IN THE ADRIATIC, CROATIA

££ Croatian tourism began right here on St Clement's Island, back in 1906. One hundred and eleven years later, the same family are running the place. The lush, exotic vegetation makes it something close to Eden plunked in a bright blue sea; slick and modern it ain't, but if you appreciate faded glamour and a laid-back vibe, the island's Palmizana resort fits the bill. It offers six bungalows, seven villas, a restaurant and a tiny beach. A week starts at £425, excluding flights (00 385 91 478 3111, palmizana.com). Fly to Split with easyJet.

16 IBIZA STYLE IN SRI LANKA

£££ Ibiza-style house partying has arrived in Sri Lanka with the opening of the adults-only KK Beach, on the palm-fringed sands of Koggala, eight miles east of Galle. It's more like a villa than a hotel, with six sleek suites and hip public areas decorated with an ever-changing collection of Sri Lankan art (which you're encouraged to put on your account). There's a pool, and a menu of gentle Sri Lankan curries and western dishes served with a local twist. If you can bear to be torn away from the beach-club atmosphere, free shuttles will take you inland for cocktails, dinner and more local art and design at the property's sister hotel, Kahanda Kanda. A week starts at £1,499, B&B (01494 678400, turquoiseholidays.co.uk).



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17 FANTASY BEACH HUT, AQUITAINE

£ A few hundred yards off the beach in the French Atlantic resort of Hossegor, there's a serpentine underwater canyon. Swells push deep water up it and, as the valley floor rises, the water is forced upwards, making it the world's most powerful wave machine and turning Hossegor into the surf capital of Europe. But you don't need to be a surfer to soak up the vibe. The Lac d'Hossegor, just behind town, is great for younger children, with sandy beaches and warm, calm water. The hippest place to stay is Cabane de la Plage, a fantasy beach hut that opens onto the sands – three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a chic kitchen and a terrace. A week for six in July or August starts at £2,168 (0330 160 7462, alternative-aquitaine.co.uk). Fly to Biarritz with Ryanair.

18 CAPRI'S BIG SISTER, ITALY

£££ Volcanic Ischia is prettier and cheaper than its celebrity little sister, Capri, yet it receives a fraction of the visitors. The most attractive of its six towns is Lacco Ameno, in the northwest, a place of boogalovilla, cafes, and, in the meticulously

placed deckchairs of the lovely Spiaggia di San Montano, proof that something the Italians really know how to organise is a beach. It's also home to the Negombo Thermal Gardens: the Mediterranean version of Reykjavik's Blue Lagoon, with a dozen wonderfully landscaped pools at different temperatures scattered

among the rocks and trees. The top tip is not to come in July or August, when it's hot, crowded and expensive. Wait until November and all of those numbers will drop. A week's half-board at the romantic Garden & Villas resort costs £1,315 in August, but a month later it's £965 (020 7359 3938, realtholidays.co.uk).

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19 MINIMALISM AND MINDFULNESS IN THE ALGARVE

££ Scandi design comes to the western edge of Europe at this minimalist cliff-top hotel just outside Sagres. The low-rise whitewashed concrete blocks are the last thing you'd expect to find down a dirt track, but the Lisbon-based boutique-hotel firm Memmo didn't choose the place for the access; it chose it for the magnificent sea views and golden beaches of

the Algarve's west end. There's a youthful feel here, driven by Baleeira's surf culture – something the hotel plugs into with its own surf school. Don't worry if you're not a plank-rider: yoga, cycling, guided walks along the Rota Vicentina, wreck-diving, fishing trips and cetacean-watching are all on offer, while the spa and a restaurant with a wood-fired oven offer a glimpse of a future where Ikea does pizza. A week starts at £658, B&B (0800 294 9323, classic-collection.co.uk).

