

Europe & North Africa



LUSSO

WELCOME TO LUSSO

At Lusso we aim to go beyond the ordinary; sharing our intimate knowledge of destinations, we endeavour to curate meaningful and enriching travel experiences that create lasting memories and promote a deeper understanding of the world we live in. We seek to ensure that a journey not only reflects our expertise and commitment to service but also contributes to a more responsible and sustainable future for travel.

PARTNERING YOUR TRAVEL AGENT

We have spent over 15 years building trusted relationships with the UK's top independent travel agents and consider it a privilege to design holidays for them and their clients. We firmly believe in the knowledge, added value and personal service that your travel agent can provide to you, both in terms of your choice of holiday and in the booking of your arrangements with Lusso. Our team of destination specialists will work in partnership with your chosen travel agent to deliver your ideal holiday – one that is designed around your individual needs, meticulously planned and seamlessly executed.

SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE

It's hard to overstate the value of talking to an expert when it comes to planning a holiday. Especially to a continent as large and varied as Europe. True specialists in their craft, most of our travel advisors have over 25 years' experience working within the industry. They regularly return to the regions and properties within our Europe portfolio, appraising the hotels, talking to the locals and seeking out those one-of-a-kind experiences that make travelling with Lusso far more than just a holiday. They offer first-hand, honest and up-to-date advice, helping you and your travel agent to plan the perfect trip.

OUR PARTNERS

We are incredibly discerning about the partners we work with, endeavouring only to use the best of the best, from airlines and accommodation to local experts on the ground who will take you to the heart of the places they call home. In Europe we have excellent relationships with the finest accommodations, from boutique boltholes and independent hotels to well known leading luxury hospitality brands. We have preferred relationships with many of the world's leading scheduled airlines but also appreciate that, within Europe, it's often practical to fly with a low-cost airline, therefore we'll happily marry your choice of hotels with either low-cost or scheduled flights, allowing you to keep everything on one single, hassle-free booking.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

No two holidays we sell are ever the same. The beauty of tailor-made travel is that every trip is designed around your own exacting requirements and preferences. Our specialist advisors will tailor your journey to match your tastes, interests, budget and timeframe, drawing on their years of experience to select hotels, recommend room types, suggest excursions and activities, and arrange private guides and transfers. Even the itineraries you see in this brochure are merely examples of what's possible in the region. They can of course be booked as you see them on the page, but any part can be adjusted to suit your style of travel.

AT YOUR SERVICE

Our advisors pride themselves on the levels of personal service they provide and will do more than just organise your holiday logistics. Instead, via your travel agent, they'll take time to get to know you as a traveller. That way they can make informed suggestions to craft a holiday you'll adore. After you've booked, our dedicated After Sales team will be on hand the whole time to book additional services or answer questions you may have in the run-up to departure.

PEACE OF MIND

Given the ever-changing and unpredictable nature of travel over recent years, we recognise that providing our clients with flexibility, reassurance and complete peace of mind has never been more important. That's why all of our holidays that include flights are fully ATOL-protected, with all non-flight packages protected by way of a bond held with ABTA.

See the World with Lusso

As well as Europe and North Africa, we offer luxury bespoke holidays to sub-Saharan Africa, the Arabian Gulf, Asia, Bermuda, Bhutan, Canada, the Caribbean, India, the Indian Ocean, Mexico, Sri Lanka and the USA. We also offer luxury cruise holidays with a number of the world's most distinguished cruise lines, including Explora Journeys, Ponant, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn, SeaDream Yacht Club, Silversea and Star Clippers.

Speak to your travel agent about booking a Lusso holiday to any of these exciting destinations. Or for inspiration, visit our website, www.lussotravel.com.

SUPPORTING RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

As a tour operator, we seek to work with hotels and resorts that share our passion for responsible tourism – that strive to minimise their carbon footprint, support local communities and protect the cultures and environments in which they're located. The hotels below are champions of sustainability and the initiatives we describe are just a few examples of the good they're doing. By staying at such places – and many more like them – your holiday will not only reward you personally but will also directly benefit the people and places you visit.



GREECE

Named the World's Leading Luxury Green Resort at the World Travel Awards for four years running, Sani Resort in Halkidiki became Greece's first carbon neutral resort in 2020. The resort's five hotels lie scattered across a 1,000-acre nature reserve and Sani works tirelessly to preserve this environment. It runs guided eco-tours of the wetlands to help educate guests on the importance of sustainability, protects 10 Blue Flag beaches and works in partnership with the Forest Research Institute to maintain its stunning pine forest ecosystem. Guests are even invited to help local communities by donating any unwanted clothes, shoes or toys on the last day of their holiday.



SPAIN

At Son Bunyola in Mallorca, hot water is pre-heated using energy collected from the air conditioning and refrigeration systems. The hotel's thermal insulation has been upgraded and the building has its own water purification system, meaning 100% of waste water is recycled and used to irrigate the gardens, which in turn provide the restaurants with organic herbs and vegetables, with further produce grown in the fruit orchards, olive and almond groves. In 2023, 200 native trees were planted across the estate to help with habitat conservation. And charitable donations to community projects have included €10,000 to help rebuild a church severely damaged by a tornado.



TURKEY

It may sound strange at first but the chefs at Six Senses Kaplankaya are helping to reduce the effects of climate change, preserve local fish stocks and protect the local economy by introducing lionfish to the resort's restaurant menus. An increase in water temperature in the Mediterranean has led to the proliferation of several non-native species, transported through the Strait of Gibraltar and Suez Canal from the warmer Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Invasive species like lionfish are overrunning local fish species and threatening the communities who rely on fishing for a living. Adding them to the menu is a wonderful example of combatting the effects of climate change through new and innovative thinking.

CYPRUS

Thanos Hotels & Resorts, which manages the much-loved Anassa, Almyra and Annabelle hotels, goes above and beyond to support local Cypriot communities, including providing scholarships to students facing financial hardship, supporting animal welfare centres and giving local artists hard-to-come-by opportunities to exhibit their work. What's more, each Thanos hotel has achieved Travelife Gold certification – an internationally recognised award scheme for hotels that have attained the highest standards in environmental management, including stringent policies around energy, water and waste management.



MOROCCO

Keeping cultural practices and traditional skills alive is as much a part of sustainability as preserving fragile ecosystems. At La Sultana Marrakech, guests can join expert-led tours of the hotel's architectural heritage and witness modern-day *melems* (craftsmen) employing age-old techniques to maintain the hotel, from decorative stone and plaster carvers to zellige tile makers. On the coast, La Sultana Oualidia mixes traditional techniques with cutting-edge infrastructure. Made from local stone, its thick brick walls and courtyards help keep fresh air inside, thus reducing the need for air conditioning, while a complex system of recycling, filtration and sterilisation allows the hotel to be 100% sustainable in its use of water.

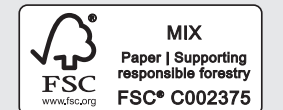
A MORE SUSTAINABLE BROCHURE

We have taken a number of steps to reduce the carbon footprint of this brochure. Firstly, by removing hotel listings we have been able to condense all of Europe and North Africa into one publication. (Please visit our website for descriptions of the hotels we work with.) We have chosen not to date the brochure or to price our itineraries, giving it a longer shelf life and avoiding any wastage of out-of-date stock. Plus the brochure is printed using vegetable-based inks on paper that has come from well-managed, FSC®-certified forests and other controlled sources.

What's more, we have paid to carbon balance the paper through the World Land Trust, which will use our contribution to protect threatened forests in the tropics from deforestation and degradation, preventing the release of CO2 into the atmosphere while preserving invaluable ecosystems.



www.carbonbalancedpaper.com
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EUROPE & NORTH AFRICA

Find your way

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- 80 France & Monaco
- 90 Croatia & Montenegro
- 100 Malta
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- 116 Morocco

It's easy to forget just how lucky we are to have such history, culture and jaw-dropping scenery right here on our doorstep. Athens witnessed the birth of democracy. All roads led to Rome by the end of the 1st century. The Renaissance bloomed out of flourishing Florence. And nearly 800 years of Islamic rule left Andalucia with an architectural landscape of palaces, fortresses, mosques and minarets.

Yet Europe is forever looking forward. Milan and Paris are global fashion centres. The vineyards of Tenerife, Croatia and Malta are giving long-established regions like Burgundy and Tuscany a run for their money when it comes to producing wine. Balkan gems like magical Montenegro are bursting onto the scene with mountain peaks as dramatic as the Dolomites and palazzi as grand as anything in Venice. And exciting new hotels from Turkey's Bodrum Peninsula to lesser-known Greek islands like Paros and Kéa are making holidays possible to corners of the Mediterranean previously off limits to luxury travellers.

For cinematic scenery, try the majesty of the Italian lakes, Morocco's High Atlas Mountains or Crete's grand Samaria Gorge. For old-world charm, seek out the hilltop villages of Tuscany or Provence, or the conical *trulli* that dot the countryside in Puglia. If it's beaches you're after, make for the soft sands and crystal-clear waters of Sardinia's coastline, the bays of the Balearics or the coves of Corfu.

So the question really is not should you go to Europe and North Africa but where should you start. This brochure is designed to help you answer that question. It's not a catalogue of hotels – you can find them on our website – but rather a flavour of what Europe and North Africa have to offer, filled with don't-miss experiences, recommendations from our experts and suggested itineraries. Dive in and take a look. We're sure you'll find something to inspire you.



SON BUNYOLA



THE LODGE
VERBIER



SIR RICHARD BRANSON'S COLLECTION OF UNIQUE RETREATS & LUXURY HOTELS
SON BUNYOLA | THE LODGE | KASBAH TAMADOT | MAHALI MZURI | ULUSABA
MONT ROCHELLE | NECKER ISLAND | THE BRANSON BEACH ESTATE

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SPAIN

Es Vedra Island | Ibiza

Richly varied in its geography, climate and culture, Spain offers something for everyone, from the grand Islamic palaces and white stone village of Andalusia, to the mesmerising sunsets of irresistible Ibiza, Mallorca's mountain towns and the vast volcanic beaches of the sun-soaked Canary Islands.

We have focused these pages on Spain's southernmost, sunniest region and on the island territories of the Canaries and Balearics, home to some of the country's most luxurious hotels and attractive year-round beaches. Away from the coastline, it's the great Moorish cities of Granada, Córdoba and Seville that rightly steal the headlines in Andalusia. Each contains some of the most extraordinary and beautiful monuments to be built in the Middle Ages, including Granada's Alhambra palace, Córdoba's exquisite mosque La Mezquita, and Seville's fabulously ornamented Alcázar palace. The islands too offer more to enquiring travellers than just beautiful beaches. The Canary Islands are home to the world's second largest carnival and the highest mountain in Spain. While the Balearics bulge with picturesque villages, forested mountains and colourful hippy markets.



WHEN TO VISIT

Andalusia is at its best in May, June, September and October, when the countryside is at its most colourful and you can rely on good weather. July and August can be extremely hot, while from November to April the weather is less predictable. The Canary Islands' subtropical climate and warm year-round weather make them perfect for a dose of winter sun, while the Balearics offer hot summers and cooler, breezy winters. Festivals and events are held year-round, with Marbella's Feria de San Bernabé in June and Mallorca's Moors and Christians Festival in August among the most colourful.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Families, Gastronomy, Hiking, History, Nature, Relaxation, Watersports, Wine, Winter Sun



HOTEL DIRECTORY

Spain

Spain offers an exquisite range of hotels, from elegant resorts on Marbella's Golden Mile to wellness retreats on the White Isle of Ibiza. Below is our current portfolio of recommended hotels, correct at the time of going to press. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code opposite.

CANARY ISLANDS

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GRAN CANARIA

Seaside Grand Hotel Residencia

LANZAROTE

Princesa Yaiza Suite Hotel Resort

TENERIFE

Bahia del Duque
Bahia del Duque Las Villas
Royal Garden Villas

Royal Hideaway Corales Resort
Royal River Luxury Hotel
The Ritz-Carlton Tenerife, Abama

BALEARIC ISLANDS

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IBIZA

Aguas de Ibiza Grand Luxe Hotel
Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay
OKU Ibiza
7Pines Resort Ibiza
Six Senses Ibiza

MALLORCA

Finca Serena Mallorca
Ikos Porto Petro
Jumeirah Port Soller Hotel & Spa
La Residencia, A Belmond Hotel
Palacio Can Marques

Puro Grand Hotel
Son Bunyola Hotel
Son Bunyola Villas
Zoëtry Mallorca

MENORCA

Vestige Son Vell

ANDALUCIA

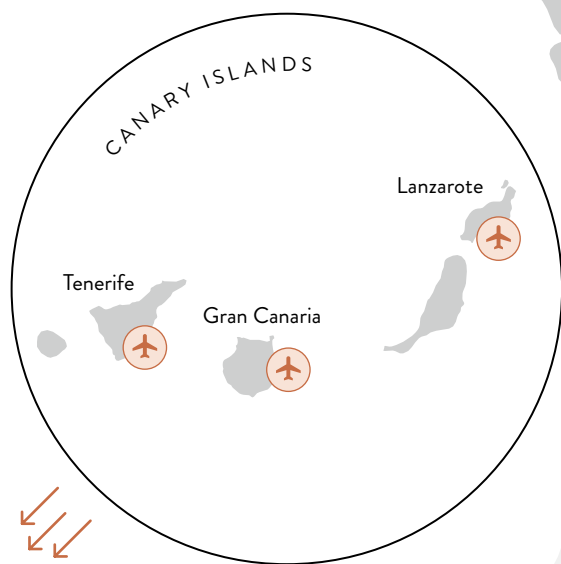
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Finca Cortesin
Ikos Andalusia
Marbella Club Hotel

Nobu Hotel Marbella
Puente Romano Beach Resort

BARCELONA

Grand Hotel Central Barcelona



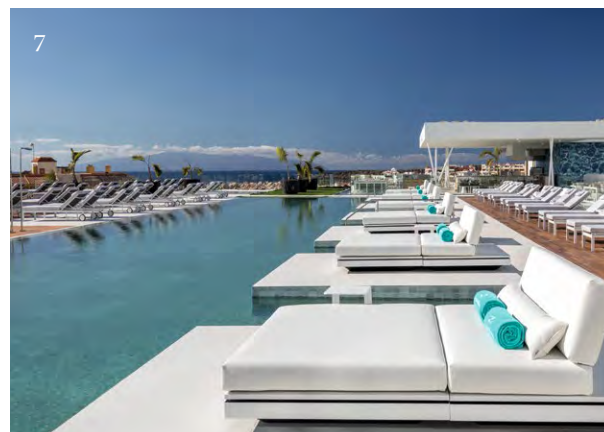
Scan this code to view our full Spain portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Spain's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Son Bunyola Hotel | Mallorca
2. Bahia del Duque Las Villas | Tenerife
3. Puente Romano Beach Resort | Andalucia
4. Six Senses Ibiza | Ibiza
5. Seaside Grand Hotel Residencia | Gran Canaria
6. Marbella Club Hotel | Marbella
7. Royal Hideaway Corales Resort | Tenerife
8. Ikos Porto Petro | Mallorca
9. Finca Cortesin | Andalucia
10. Royal River Luxury Hotel | Tenerife



Canary Islands

Volcanic landscapes and warm winter sun



The Ritz-Carlton Tenerife, Abama

The Canary Islands' enduring appeal is down to a heady combination of four virtues: beauty, variety, accessibility and sunshine. Just four hours from the UK, this clutch of islands off the Moroccan coast offer year-round blue skies, golden and black-sand beaches, breathtaking volcanic landscapes and a formidable food scene.

TENERIFE

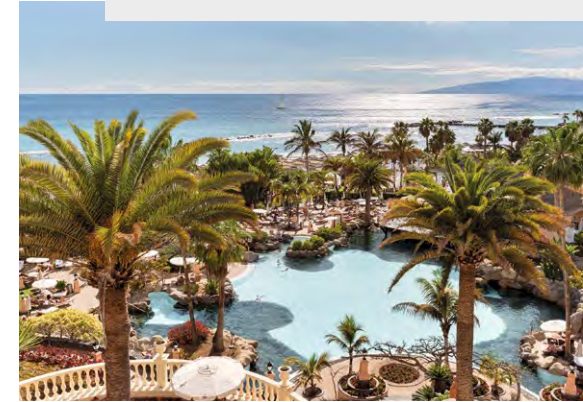
The largest of the Canary Islands, Tenerife is the perfect all-rounder, with everyone from confirmed sun worshipper to ardent hiker guaranteed to find just what they're looking for. Most of the luxury and boutique hotels cluster around Costa Adeje in the sandy south-west, an area also great for dolphin and whale watching. Yet as hard as it may be to leave the comforts of resort life, it's well worth discovering what else the island has to offer. The capital, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, hosts the second-largest carnival in the world (after Rio) for two weeks every February. Fans of Spanish food and old-time charm should head to La Orotava, an unspoiled town perched on a steep hill above Puerto de la Cruz, blessed with stately mansions, cobbled streets, ancient churches and an abundance of beautiful local restaurants. Inland, lush pine forests sweep over ravines and valleys in Corona Forestal Natural Park, while Spain's tallest mountain towers over you as you hike past dormant lava flows and flowering foliage in UNESCO-listed Teide National Park, the slopes of which are also home to Europe's highest vineyards.

"It's no challenge to eat well in the Canaries. Traditional dishes reflect the fertile volcanic soil and the bounty of the seas."

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Bahia del Duque

Reminiscent of a fairytale village by the sea, Tenerife's original luxury resort still sets the standard when it comes to service and surroundings, offering mature tiered gardens, a relaxed vibe and sensational facilities, including five outdoor pools, an award-winning spa and 21 bars and restaurants.



LANZAROTE

If any one island speaks to the volcanic nature of the Canary Islands, it's Lanzarote. More than 100 volcanoes shape its lunar landscape, creating an otherworldly tableau of black and red rock that contrasts sublimely with the deep blue sea and the island's whitewashed villages. With numerous volcanic cones rising from frozen-in-time lava fields, Timanfaya National Park is easily the island's most spectacular site. While there, eat if you can at El Diablo restaurant, where food is cooked using the heat of the volcano. The restaurant is one of many projects designed by visionary Lanzarote-born architect César Manrique, famous for his ability to harmoniously blend nature, art and architecture. A great example is Jameos del Agua, where a restaurant and concert hall have been built around a dazzling azure lake in an underground lava cave. Lanzarote's volcanic soil has also proved perfect for growing malvasia grapes, especially in La Geria, whose world-renowned bodegas are well worth a visit. On the coast, beaches like Famara in the north and Papagayo in the south are among the Canaries' most beautiful, the former great for surfing, the latter ideal for families.



Mt Teide | Tenerife



Papagayo Beach | Lanzarote

GRAN CANARIA

Incredibly, over 40% of Gran Canaria is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which should give you some clue as to the natural beauty of this superbly scenic island. On the south coast this includes the incredible sand dunes of Maspalomas, which occupy an area of around 1,000 acres. The rolling dunes finally give way to one of the island's best beaches, which can easily be walked to from our preferred hotel, Seaside Grand Hotel Residencia. In the centre of the island, the distinctive outline of Roque Nublo stands stark at a height of 80 metres tall, making it one of the world's largest freestanding crags. It offers fine views of Pico de las Nieves, Gran Canaria's highest peak, and the island's other sacred rock, Roque Bentayga. Both rocks were once worshipped by the island's indigenous population, the Guanches. At the solstice, at one ancient site, a single solar ray strikes a circle engraved on a rock centuries ago by Guanche astronomers. You'll also find some of the Canaries' most beautiful villages here, including Teror, known for its 18th-century church, colourful houses and Sunday market; and Arucas, renowned for its rum distillery.



Roque Nublo | Gran Canaria

SPAIN

Balearic Islands

The jewels of the western Mediterranean



Cala Deia | Mallorca

East of the Spanish mainland, the Balearic Islands are as distinct from each other as they are from the rest of Spain. Make for Menorca for squeaky-sand beaches and cobalt-blue water. For a mix of culture and nightlife it has to be Ibiza, with its 3,000-year history and legendary club scene. For those who want it all, Mallorca wins out, with its jaw-dropping mountains, authentic inland villages and spectacular coastline.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Son Bunyola Hotel

Part of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Limited Edition, this beautifully restored 16th-century finca sits against a backdrop of rearing mountains on the north-west coast of Mallorca, offering 27 rooms and suites, two stunning restaurants, a heated outdoor pool and activities ranging from guided walks to art classes.



Es Vedra Island | Ibiza



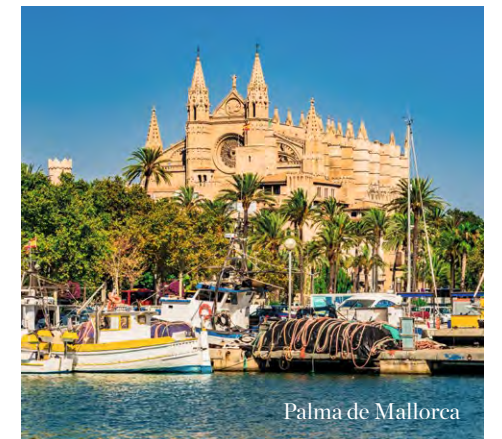
Ibiza Town

IBIZA

Ibiza has a strong claim to being the planet's clubbing capital but look beyond the lineup of international DJs and you'll discover an island of stunning cove beaches, sprawling pine forests and time-warped villages. Dalt Vila, Ibiza Town's UNESCO-listed old quarter, is a maze of medieval walls and charming cobbled streets. Traditional towns and villages like Santa Eulalia and Santa Gertrudis are wonderfully diverting, the former on the coast, the latter filled with gorgeous bars and restaurants in the heart of the island. For shopping, try the colourful hippy markets of Las Dalias in San Carlos or Punta Arabi in Es Canar, the oldest and largest on the island. As for beaches, try the soft-sand strip of Talamanca Beach near Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay, just two kilometres from Ibiza Town, or head north to Cala Xarraca near Six Senses Ibiza, a wild and rocky cove with water so clear you can see the seabed from the surrounding pine forests.

MALLORCA

Palma, Mallorca's capital, is the Balearics' one real city, a bustling, historic place whose grandiose mansions and magnificent Gothic cathedral serve as a backdrop to galleries, museums, a well-preserved Old Town and an excellent cafe and restaurant scene. To the north, the wild and wonderful Tramuntana Mountains roll along the coastline, punctuated by deep sheltered valleys and beautiful cove beaches. Tucked in the mountain folds is Sóller, a delightful little town of old stone houses best reached from Palma on the antique railway – an extraordinarily scenic journey. Besides offering the best hiking in the Balearics, the mountains also camouflage a string of picturesque villages, most notably Biniaraix, Fornalutx, Estellencs and Banyalbufar. There's also the splendid medieval monastery at Valldemossa, where Frédéric Chopin and his lover George Sand famously wintered in the 1830s. And of course there's Deià, a mountain village so beautiful that the poet Robert Graves chose to make it his home. In the north, Mallorca finishes with a final flourish in the rearing cliffs of the Formentor Peninsula, best appreciated from the water, while diversions in the east include the spellbinding Drac Caves, home to one of the largest subterranean lakes in the world.



Palma de Mallorca

MENORCA

Boomerang-shaped Menorca stretches west from the enormous natural harbour around the capital Mahón to the smaller port of Ciutadella, a distance of just 45 kilometres. Both towns have preserved much of their 18th-century grandeur, though Ciutadella has the aesthetic edge, its still harbour flanked by bobbing yachts and waterfront restaurants, its ancient centre shadowed by fine old mansions and an impressive Gothic cathedral. Linking the two through the pastoral interior is Menorca's only main road, off which side roads snake to craggy coves and sandy beaches – arguably the most beautiful the Balearics have to offer. Highlights include Turqueta, Macarelleta and Trebaluger in the south and Platja de Calalleria in the north, a wide scimitar of sand beneath a flawless blue sky.

DON'T MISS

Olive Harvest Experience

Take part in the centuries-old tradition of harvesting olives in Mallorca's breathtaking Tramuntana Mountains. Working on a real olive farm, you'll learn how to pick olives by hand before touring the estate and being rewarded for your work with a mountainside tasting of cheese, bread, wine and delicious olive oil. Only available in October and November.

"For the ultimate Ibiza sunset, join the Sunset Ritual at Pines Resort Ibiza, complete with 270-degree views of the sea and the craggy limestone islet of Es Vedra."

Andalucia

Golden beaches, Moorish monuments and fiery flamenco



El Tajo Gorge | Ronda



Puente Romano Beach Resort | Málaga coast

MÁLAGA COAST

Málaga has shaken off its reputation as being merely the gateway to the Costa del Sol. Revamped and revitalised, the city now boasts a sleek port, an exciting culinary scene and a rapidly growing clutch of must-see attractions, from the ever-popular Museo Picasso – which celebrates the life of Málaga’s most famous son – to the cobbled streets of the old quarter, the mountainside Roman amphitheatre, and the Moorish citadels of the Alcazaba and Gibralfaro.

Along the coast in Marbella, Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe-Langenburg established the landmark Marbella Club Hotel in 1954 when the town was just a fishing village, inviting his fellow aristocrats and the celebrities of the day. Marbella has been a magnet for well-heeled travellers ever since, giving it an air of glamour and exclusivity that’s helped spare the town from the overdevelopment seen elsewhere on the coast. Streets are filled with designer boutiques and celebrity-backed restaurants, and the hotels here are among the smartest in Spain, many offering direct beach access along the famous Golden Mile between Marbella and Puerto Banus. A little further along the coast, past Ikos Andalusia, one of our favourite all-inclusive family-focused resorts, is attractive Estepona, whose revamped old town is one of the most beautiful in Andalucia. Beyond that, in the hills, is fabulous Finca Cortesin, a grand and grown-up resort of some 215 hectares, with a Michelin-star restaurant and one of Spain’s greatest golf courses.

“Be sure to visit Ronda. It’s by far the most dramatic of the region’s ‘white villages’, its old and new towns connected by a bridge across a 100-metre gorge.”



Finca Cortesin | Málaga coast



Marbella Club Hotel | Málaga coast

Although famous for its rich Moorish history, Andalucia is also the most quintessentially Spanish part of the Iberian Peninsula – a land of tapas, sherry, flamenco and dancing horses, of beautifully bronzed beaches and huddled white villages. It’s also the country’s sunniest region, opening it up for travel at almost any time of year.

DON’T MISS

Bike The New Golden Mile

Ikos Andalusia offers a relaxing and rewarding 5.2-mile bike ride along the ‘New Golden Mile’, a glittering stretch of coastline between Estepona and Puerto Banus. The route offers extraordinary views of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and, on a clear day, the coast of northern Africa.



Plaza de España | Seville

SEVILLE, CÓRDOBA & GRANADA

Need a break from the beach? Immerse yourself in the rich history of Andalucia by visiting its three great Moorish cities, all of which can be reached in under three hours from Marbella. The region’s capital, Seville, is the birthplace of flamenco and one of the most addictive cities in all Spain. *Jamonés* (hams) swing from the ceilings of hundreds of tapas bars and the air is thick with the sweet scent of orange blossom. The main sites are in the old town, including the immense Gothic cathedral, one of the largest in the world, and the spectacular Alcázar, Seville’s version of Granada’s Alhambra. It’s also worth dropping south to the semi-circular Plaza de España, with its grandiose buildings, canals, bridges and colourful painted tiles. North-east of Seville is Córdoba, home to the Mezquita, a vast 8th-century mosque later transformed into a Catholic cathedral. Then of course there is Granada, whose hillside Moorish neighbourhood the Albaicin – itself a World Heritage site – offers picture-perfect views of the imposing Alhambra, the magnificent red fortress and Islamic palace complex that stands proud above the city.

PORTUGAL & MADEIRA

With an average 300 days of sunshine a year, 394 Blue Flag beaches, sumptuous wines and culture-soaked cities, Portugal's appeal is ever-enduring.

Both Lisbon and Porto make for wonderful city breaks, the former adored for its vintage trams, UNESCO-listed landmarks and thriving food scene; the latter for its picture-perfect Ribeira district and famous port-wine cellars. Of course the bottles of port haven't had to travel far. The terraced vineyards of the Douro Valley lie just inland, sliced through by the Douro River and best observed from Six Senses Douro Valley, the luxury hotel brand's original resort in Europe.

In the far south, the Algarve beckons with its burnt-butter beaches, spectacular golf courses and golden limestone cliffs. Between it and Lisbon lies the Alentejo, a huge swathe of flat open countryside whose whitewashed villages, olive plantations and centuries-old vineyards invite leisurely exploration. It's a different topographic story on the island of Madeira, whose vertiginous green peaks and abundant local flora have earned it the nickname, the Atlantic's 'Floating Garden'.



Camara de Lobos | Madeira

WHEN TO VISIT

Broadly speaking, all of mainland Portugal enjoys hot, dry summers. Autumn is often delightful, with highs of 23°C in the Algarve and Lisbon, warm seas and fewer crowds. Winters remain mild in the Algarve but cooler inland and further north. Madeira enjoys warm, welcoming weather year-round and is especially colourful in April and May when many plants and flowers burst into bloom. Key festivals include Santos Populares in Lisbon and the Funchal Jazz Festival in Madeira, both in June.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Families, Gastronomy, Hiking, Relaxation, Spa & Wellness, Watersports, Wildlife, Wine



HOTEL DIRECTORY

Portugal & Madeira

As with all our destinations, we are always evaluating our Portuguese hotels, ensuring only to offer the best of the best, from clifftop resorts in the Algarve to a landmark hotel in Lisbon and the legendary Reid's Palace in Madeira. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code below.

THE ALGARVE & ALENTEJO

PAGE 28

ALENTEJO

Herdade da Malhadinha Nova

ALGARVE

Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort
 Conrad Algarve
 Domes Lake Algarve, Autograph Collection
 Domes Lake Residences

Martinhal Sagres Beach Family Resort
 Pine Cliffs, a Luxury Collection Resort
 Vilalara Thalassa Resort
 Vila Vita Parc

LISBON, DOURO VALLEY & MADEIRA

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DOURO VALLEY

Six Senses Douro Valley

LISBON

Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon

MADEIRA

Reid's Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Madeira

Scan this code to view our full Portugal & Madeira portfolio.

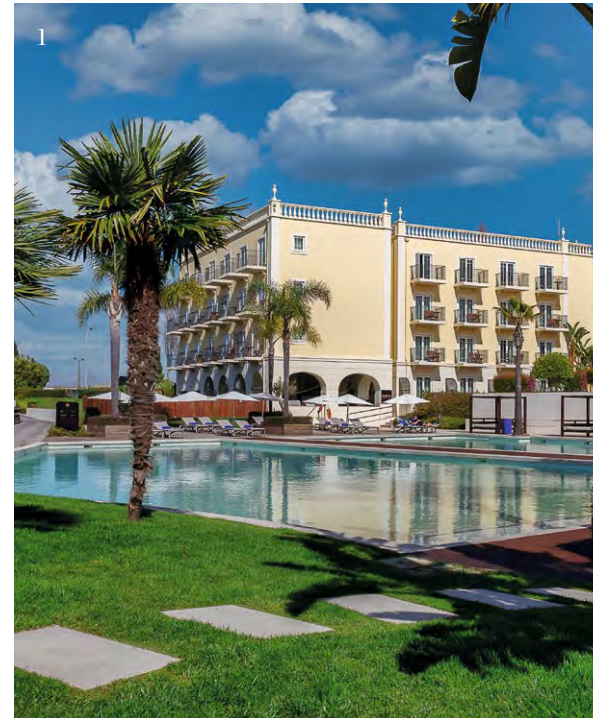


HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Portugal and Madeira's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Domes Lake Algarve, Autograph Collection | Algarve
2. Pine Cliffs, a Luxury Collection Resort | Algarve
3. Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort | Algarve
4. Reid's Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Madeira | Madeira
5. Vila Vita Parc | Algarve
6. Six Senses Douro Valley | Douro Valley
7. Vilalara Thalassa Resort | Algarve
8. Martinhal Sagres Beach Family Resort | Algarve
9. Conrad Algarve | Algarve
10. Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon | Lisbon



The Algarve & Alentejo

Beaches, boat trips and bustling markets



Golden cliffs of the Algarve

The Algarve is arguably Europe's best beach destination, with 85 of its beaches receiving Blue Flag status in 2023. Beyond the beaches, rural life continues as it has done for centuries, especially when you enter the far quieter Alentejo, where farms have passed from generation to generation since the time of the Romans.

“Traditional hand-painted pottery is a wonderful souvenir to take home. Some of the best workmanship comes from Porches Pottery near Lagoa in the Algarve.”

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Shop for souvenirs and artisanal products in the market at Loulé. Just inland from Faro, this supremely scenic town is the handicraft capital of the Algarve.
- Bask in sunshine from tee to green on one of the Algarve's 30 or so gorgeous golf courses. Or book a private lesson to get putting like a pro.
- Join a local fisherman for a morning clam picking on the lagoons and waterways of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, followed by an oyster tasting with local wine.
- Enjoy a guided tour of the estate and winery at Herdade da Malhadinha Nova in the Alentejo, with ample opportunity to try its excellent wines.

THE ALGARVE

Given its 300 days of sunshine a year and 200-kilometre-long coastline, home to many of the country's safest and loveliest beaches, it's hardly surprising that the Algarve is Portugal's most popular holiday destination. Most visitors arrive in Faro and head straight to their resort, but it's worth spending time in Faro old town itself, exploring its narrow lanes, churches and pretty harbour. East of Faro, the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa stretches almost to the Spanish border, a complex system of sandbanks, reefs and islands home to abundant wildlife and traditional local communities. Boat trips can be arranged from some of our featured resorts as well as Olhão, a great place to pick up local artworks, and Tavira, one of the most delightful towns in the whole of the Algarve.



The central coast between Faro and Lagos encompasses many of the region's best beaches and most luxurious resorts, complete with yacht-strewn marinas, internationally renowned golf courses, professional tennis centres and Michelin-starred restaurants. To the west of Vilamoura you'll find the rocky outcrops and cove beaches for which the Algarve is best known. Praia da Falesia, east of Albufeira, is one of the most beautiful, an eight-kilometre stretch of golden sand backed by towering, rust-coloured cliffs. Inland you'll find Silves, the old capital of the Algarve, whose sandstone Moorish castle is testament to the region's history. It was the Moors, after all, who named it al-Gharb (the west) as it was once the western end of the Moorish empire.

The coast becomes progressively wilder as you head west, culminating in the low-key town of Sagres, where Prince Henry the Navigator set up his nautical school in the 1450s, charged with discovering what lay beyond the blank Atlantic horizon. Stand at the cliffs here, or at nearby Cape St Vincent, the southwesternmost point of mainland Europe, and you could easily believe you're at the edge of the world.



ALENTEJO

Just north of the Algarve, the Alentejo covers a third of Portugal's territory yet remains a relatively well-kept secret. This is Portugal's garden, the bulk of the region given over to huge cork plantations, wheat fields and vineyards. Our recommended hotel, a Relais & Châteaux property with a working farm and a winery on site, provides a wonderful introduction to the landscape. The principal town in this part of the Alentejo is Beja, which is well worth visiting for its Roman ruins and impressive Moorish castle. Other notable attractions not far from the hotel include Serpa, a typical Alentejo market town inhabited since Celtic times; the village of Pias, renowned for its vineyards; and the former spa town of Moura, a surprisingly opulent place full of grand mansions, pretty squares and pedestrianised shopping streets. The region's two UNESCO-listed towns, Évora and Elvas, are further north.



Lisbon, Douro Valley & Madeira

Sweet wines and custard tarts



Vintage trams | Lisbon

Away from the Algarve, Portugal's pleasures are many and varied, from the traditional *fado* singers of the capital, Lisbon, through the vineyards that cling to vertiginous cliffs above the golden Douro River, to the network of walking trails that follow the flow of water across the mountains of Madeira.

DON'T MISS Essential Experiences

- Spend an unforgettable evening with a local *fado* singer in Lisbon, learning first hand about this melancholic and heartfelt form of Portuguese musical expression.
- Learn how to make your own *pasteis de nata*, Lisbon's iconic custard tarts, invented in the 18th century by monks at the Jerónimos Monastery in Belém.
- Explore the world of port wine through a variety of tours and tastings at Six Senses Douro Valley. Or come in late September and take part in the annual grape harvest.
- Look out for whales and dolphins as you cruise on a beautiful Princess yacht to the remote Desertas Islands south-east of Madeira, home to rare monk seals.
- Continue the time-honoured tradition of afternoon tea on the terrace at Reid's Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Madeira.



Six Senses Douro Valley



SPOTLIGHT ON... Reid's Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Madeira

For more than a century, everyone who's been anyone on a visit to Madeira has stayed at this landmark hotel, from George Bernard Shaw to Sir Winston Churchill. Now impeccably run by Belmond, the hotel is set in subtropical gardens, perched on a cliff with breathtaking views of the Bay of Funchal.

MADEIRA

With its subtropical climate warmed by the Gulf Stream, Madeira is Portugal's own floating garden, where sea cliffs rise vertically from the seething Atlantic and carpets of green cover sharp basalt peaks and bottomless gorges. A great way to enjoy the greenery is to hike the island's famous *levadas* – 2,500 kilometres of irrigation channels built to carry water from the mountains to the farms, fields and villages below. Alternatively, make the serpentine drive from Ribeira Brava in the south to São Vicente in the north over the razorback spine of the island, enjoying views along the way of Pico Ruivo, at 1,861 metres, Madeira's highest mountain. The capital, Funchal, is a great place to base yourself, home to the island's best markets, museums, restaurants, bars, gardens and galleries. Be sure to take the cable car from the Zona Velha up to Monte, Funchal's aristocratic villa quarter, where visitors can participate in one of the island's more peculiar traditions – skidding down the city's steep streets in a wicker toboggan, steered by men in traditional straw boaters.



Sea cliffs | Madeira

DOURO VALLEY

Wine has been produced in the Douro Valley for some 2,000 years, with Vinho do Porto (port wine) much in demand since the 18th century. This long tradition of viticulture has produced a beautiful landscape of terraced vineyards climbing skywards from the winding Douro River. In many places the vines are still tended to by hand as tractors are unable to negotiate the steep incline. At Six Senses Douro Valley, a 19th-century port-producer's manor transformed into a high-design hotel and spa, you can relax on the terraces high above the river, sipping local vintages while musing on the Douro's journey to the sea. Much of the port produced in the upper Douro comes down river to mature in the famous port wine lodges of Vila Nova de Gaia, located just across the river from Portugal's stunning second city, Porto. Tours of the best lodges (Sandeman, Graham's, Cockburn, Taylor's) are an integral part of any visit to the city.

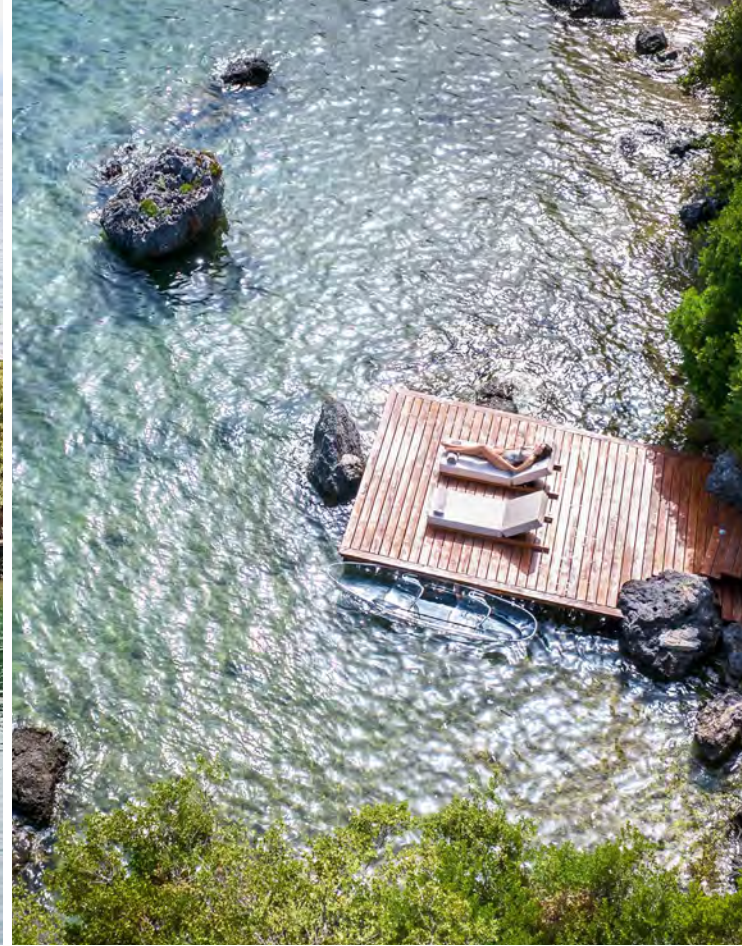


Belém Tower | Lisbon

LISBON

Spread across seven hills overlooking the Tagus River, the Portuguese capital is undoubtedly one of Europe's top city-break destinations. Come to ride vintage yellow trams to hilltop viewpoints, tour museums filled with glittering royal coaches, and wander after dark through the buzzy Bairro Alto, a maze of narrow streets where trendy bars and restaurants rub shoulders with traditional *fado* houses. Visit Belém to try its famous *pasteis de nata* (custard tarts) before climbing the medieval Belém Tower and marvelling at the UNESCO-listed Jerónimos Monastery, which houses the tomb of Vasco de Gama. Lose yourself in the winding, narrow streets of the Alfama, Lisbon's oldest and most atmospheric quarter. And leave time to head west to nearby Sintra, the summer residence of the Portuguese kings for more than 500 years and once described by Byron as 'perhaps the most delightful village in Europe'.

THE PRIVATE WORLD OF KOMMENO PENINSULA



ULTRA-LUXURIOUS WITH STUNNING VIEWS



corfuimperial.com grecotel.com

GRECOTEL

CORFU, GREECE

CORFU IMPERIAL

AT KOMMENO PENINSULA

A world of seaside olive trees, marble & palms, beach coves, fine dining and a lovely promenade. It is a room with a view or a palazzo over the water.



*La
bella
Vita*



GREECE

Assos Kefalonia

From the ancient Acropolis and the ruins of Delphi to Crete's Minoan palaces and the monasteries of Mount Athos, there's barely a plot in Greece without a battle, myth or miracle attached to it.

The stylish resorts of the Athenian Riviera provide a wonderful opportunity to combine the history and culture of the Greek capital with a taste of beach life. Far to the north, the outstretched fingers of Halkidiki are home to some of Europe's finest family hotels. While south of Athens in the Peloponnese you can stand in the stadium that hosted the first Olympic Games before relaxing on the beaches of gorgeous Costa Navarino.

For many, of course, the greatest siren call of all are the myriad Greek islands. But with over 200 inhabited islands to choose from, often the hardest challenge is finding the one that's right for you. Perhaps it's care-free Kefalonia, home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the Mediterranean. Or quiet Kéa Island, an under-the-radar gem with a spectacular new One&Only hotel. Or maybe you'd prefer to tailor your own tour, like our island-hopping journey on page 48. Thankfully our experts are here to help. With countless trips between them to a vast array of islands, they'll work with your travel agent to plan your perfect Grecian getaway.



WHEN TO VISIT

Aside from Athens, which can be visited year-round, Greece is a seasonal destination with a Mediterranean climate of hot, dry summers cooled by the meltemi winds. May to October is best for island hopping, with water temperatures warm enough for swimming. Spring and autumn are ideal for hiking and sightseeing in Athens. Greek Orthodox Easter sees joyous celebrations right across the country, while the Athens and Epidaurus Festival, one of the oldest arts festivals in Europe, is the highlight of the capital's summer calendar.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Families, Gastronomy, Hiking, History, Relaxation, Romance, Touring, Watersports

Greece

We've travelled far and wide to curate our portfolio of luxury Greek hotels. Whether you're looking for a romantic island bolthole or a family resort with everything included, we've got a solution to your holiday conundrum. Our portfolio, however, is always evolving. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code opposite.



ATHENS, THE PELOPONNESE & HALKIDIKI

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ATHENS

One&Only Aesthesis
The Dolli

HALKIDIKI

Eagles Palace
Eagles Villas
Ikos Oceania

Ikos Olivia
Porto Sani
Sani Asterias
Sani Beach
Sani Club
Sani Dunes
The Danai

PELOPONNESE

Amanzoe
Mandarin Oriental, Costa Navarino
The Romanos, a Luxury Collection Resort
The Westin Resort, Costa Navarino

IONIAN COAST & ISLANDS

PAGE 42

CORFU

Angsana Corfu Resort & Spa
Domes of Corfu, Autograph Collection
Domes Miramare, a Luxury Collection Resort
Grecotel Corfu Imperial
Ikos Dassia

Ikos Odisia
MarBella, Mar-Bella Collection
Nido, Mar-Bella Collection
The Olivar Suites

KEFALONIA

Eliamos Villas Hotel & Spa

PARGA

Elix, Mar-Bella Collection

ZAKYNTHOS

Lesante Cape Resort & Villas
Lesante Blu Exclusive Beach Resort
Porto Zante Villas & Spa

THE CYCLADES

PAGE 44

KÉA

One&Only Kéa Island

MYKONOS

Domes Noruz Mykonos
Kalesma Mykonos
Katikies Mykonos
Kenshō Ornos
Myconian Ambassador
Myconian Imperial
Myconian Utopia
Myconian Villa Collection
Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort
Mykonos Riviera Hotel & Spa
O by Myconian Collection

Panoptis Escape
Royal Myconian
Santa Marina, a Luxury Collection Resort

PAROS

Acron Villas Paros
Cosme, a Luxury Collection Resort
Parilio

SANTORINI

Andronis Arcadia
Andronis Concept Wellness Resort
Canaves ENA
Canaves Epitome
Canaves Oia Suites

Canaves Sunday
Domes Novos Santorini
Grace Hotel, Auberge Resorts Collection
Katikies Chromata Santorini
Katikies Garden Santorini
Katikies Kirini Santorini
Katikies Santorini
Katikies Villa Santorini
Mystique, a Luxury Collection Hotel
Santo Pure Oia Suites & Villas
Vedema, a Luxury Collection Resort

CRETE & KOS

PAGE 46

CRETE

Cayo Exclusive Resort & Spa
Daios Cove
Domes of Elounda, Autograph Collection
Domes Noruz Chania, Autograph Collection
Domes Zeen Chania, a Luxury Collection Resort
Elounda Bay Palace
Elounda Beach Hotel & Villas

Elounda Gulf Villas
Elounda Mare Hotel Relais & Châteaux
Elounda Peninsula All Suite Hotel
Nana Princess Suites, Villas & Spa
Phaea Blue Palace
St. Nicolas Bay Resort Hotel & Villas
Thalassa Villas

KOS

Ikos Aria
OKU Kos



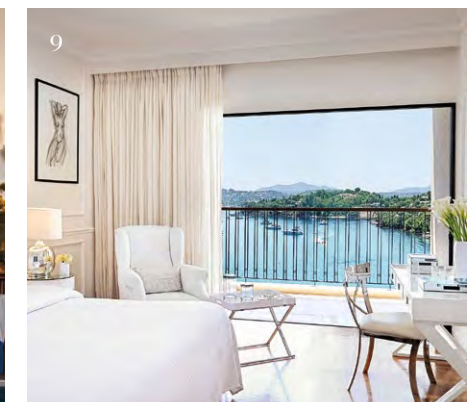
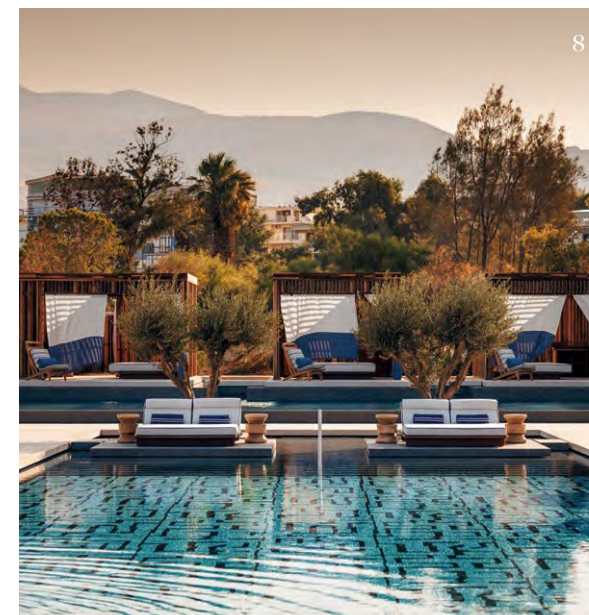
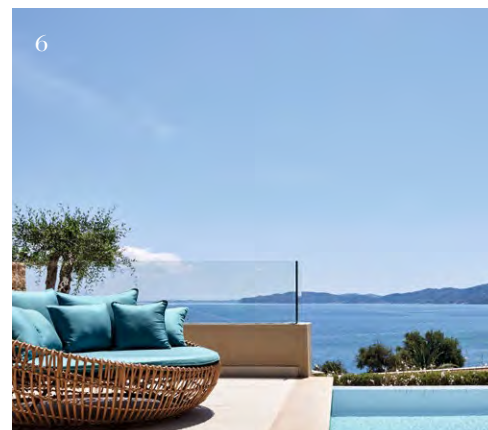
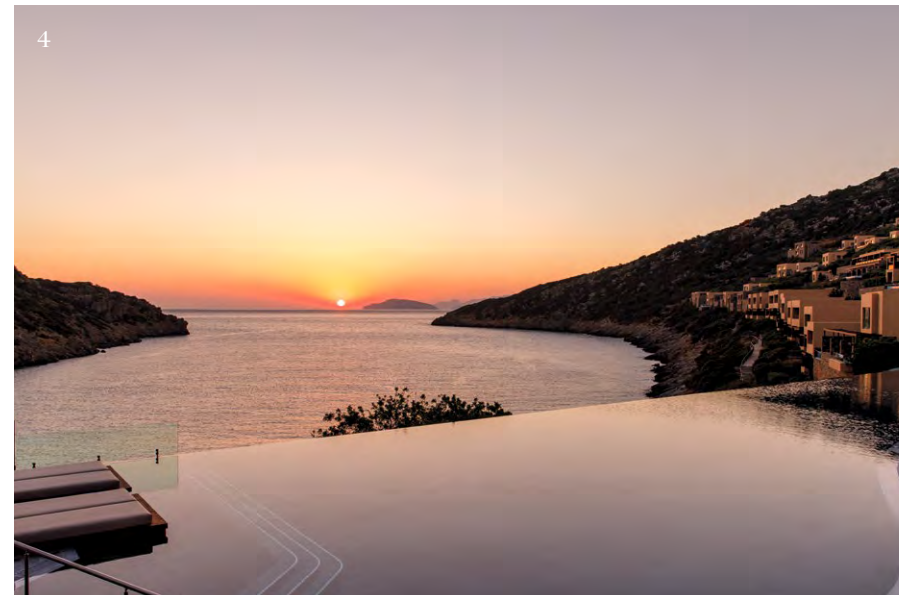
Scan this code to view our full Greece portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Greece's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Porto Sani | Halkidiki
2. Domes of Elounda, Autograph Collection | Crete
3. Canaves ENA | Santorini
4. Daios Cove | Crete
5. The Romanos, a Luxury Collection Resort | Peloponnese
6. MarBella, Mar-Bella Collection | Corfu
7. Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort | Mykonos
8. One&Only Aesthesis | Athens
9. Grecotel Corfu Imperial | Corfu
10. Ikos Aria | Kos



Athens, The Peloponnese & Halkidiki

Discover the stories that have shaped the Western world



The Mani | Peloponnese

Many visitors ignore mainland Greece in their rush to the Greek islands. But to do so is to miss out on many of Greece's greatest treasures, from ancient sites steeped in myth and legend to picturesque towns, breathtaking beaches and lost-in-time villages.

ATHENS & THE ATHENIAN RIVIERA

Both a modern city and a living museum, Athens merges past and present like nowhere else on Earth. Crowned by the Parthenon, the magnificent Acropolis stands sentinel over it all, its monuments and sanctuaries gleaming white in the midday sun before gradually taking on a golden hue as the sun begins to set. Although visible from almost everywhere in the city, some of the best views are from Filopappou Hill and from the exceptional Acropolis Museum. Other highlights include the Theatre of Dionysos, the world's first theatre; the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the largest temple in all Greece; and the ancient Agora, where Socrates once expounded his philosophy. South-east of the city lie the stylish resorts of the Athenian Riviera, the playground of celebrities in the 60s and 70s that's now enjoying a renaissance thanks to new hotel openings like One&Only Aesthesis.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Enjoy a private dinner on the rooftop terrace of a 19th-century mansion in Athens, embracing glorious views of the floodlit Acropolis.
- Watch the sun set over the Aegean from the imposing ruins of the Temple of Poseidon during a private tour of the Athenian Riviera.
- Soak up Greek island life on a day trip to Dokos and heavenly Hydra, a car-free island with a gorgeous port of exquisitely preserved stone houses.
- Play a round of golf at one of Costa Navarino's four signature courses in the Peloponnese.
- Venture south from Halkidiki on a day trip to the incredible rock-perched monasteries of Meteora.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

The Danai

This family run member of The Leading Hotels of the World commands an enviable position on the bluffs of Sithonia, the second 'finger' of the Halkidiki peninsula. Ultra-smart in appearance yet relaxed in atmosphere, the resort features immaculately designed suites and villas, a destination spa, private beach and one of the most lauded restaurants in all Greece.



Acropolis | Athens



Sithonia Peninsula | Halkidiki

HALKIDIKI

Halkidiki's trio of peninsulas trail like tentacles into the northern Aegean Sea and are home to some of the best family-oriented resorts in all Greece, including the award-winning Sani Resort, which counts five hotels in total, spread out along a sandy beachfront on the Cassandra Peninsula, and the all-inclusive Ikos resorts, Olivia and Oceania. Both the Cassandra and Sithonia peninsulas offer white-sand beaches to rival the Greek islands, wild interiors cloaked in pine forests, wide bays and steep cliffs that plummet towards tranquil, hidden coves. Most of the easternmost peninsula belongs to Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain, whose 1,400 or so monks continue a 1,000-year tradition of religious practice in the 20 remote monasteries that pepper the peninsula. Women, even female animals, are banned from Mount Athos but cruises to admire the monasteries (from afar) depart regularly from Ouranoupoli in the secular portion of the peninsula.

THE PELOPONNESE

Attached to mainland Greece by a narrow isthmus, the Peloponnese is one of the most beautiful and history-soaked regions of the country. Tap into the past at the theatre of Epidaurus, one of the best-preserved classical Greek theatres in existence, or at ancient Olympia, birthplace of the Olympic Games. Follow the narrow, cobbled streets of picturesque Nafplio down to high-end boutiques and charming quayside cafes. Explore the pristine coves and timeless villages of the Mani, the southernmost promontory of mainland Europe. Pop to nearby islands like Hydra and Spetses for a taste of island life. And bask in the beautiful beaches of Messinia, the finest on the peninsula, where you'll also find Costa Navarino, a truly stunning destination famous for its world-class resorts, gorgeous golf courses and laudable commitment to sustainable development.



Theatre of Epidaurus | Peloponnese

GREECE

Ionian Coast & Islands

Cliff-backed beaches and electric-blue seas



Shipwreck Beach | Zakynthos

The Ionian Islands appear like a chain down the west coast of mainland Greece. The best known is Corfu, famous for its wide array of beaches, excellent restaurants and mix of French and Venetian architecture. To the south, Kefalonia's harbour towns are a symphony of colours, while Zakynthos offers shipwrecks and iridescent waters teeming with turtles.

CORFU

Corfu is the It Girl of the Ionian Islands, with world-class resorts ready to cater for every type of traveller. Looking for peace and quiet? Consider adults-only Nido or Domes Miramare, or escape to the sanctuary of The Olivar Suites. Travelling with the family? Then Angsana Corfu or Grecotel Corfu Imperial could be just what you're after. Want the peace of mind that comes with an all-inclusive stay? Choose the stylish resorts of Ikos or Marbella, Mar-Bella Collection. Wherever you stay, cosmopolitan Corfu Town is well worth a visit, with its pretty cobbled streets, world-class museums and fascinating mix of Venetian, British and French colonial influences. Elsewhere on the island are some of Europe's best beaches, including Blue Flag beaches Dassia and Kommeno, family favourites Glyfalda and Agios Ioannis Peristeron, and out-of-the-way gem, Porto Timoni. The north-east of the island is especially endearing, its idyllic bays proffering the same 'delectable landscape' that Lawrence Durrell fell for in the 1930s. For many, however, the most beautiful part of Corfu is inland, where rolling olive groves and grand old manor houses are reminiscent of Tuscany. Climb the island's highest peak, Pantokrator, or visit Old Perithia, Corfu's 'Ghost Village' now protected by UNESCO.



Porto Timoni | Corfu

DON'T MISS

Paxos & Antipaxos Private Cruise

Take your own private yacht from Corfu to the unspoiled islands of Paxos and Antipaxos. Swim in crystal-clear seas, explore dinky harbour towns each one prettier than the next, follow ancient mule trails to traditional tavernas, and snorkel in the Blue Caves, gouged from the sides of Paxos's limestone cliffs.



Elix, Mar-Bella Collection | Parga

ZAKYNTHOS

Zakynthos is one of Greece's greenest islands. We mean this literally. On the coast, emerald hills slide into the sapphire-blue Ionian, while the mountainous interior – all sleepy stone villages poking out of pine forests – is great for hiking and biking. But we also mean it figuratively. There are wildlife reserves here home to deer, chinchilla and dozens of other species. And much of the coast is a nature reserve where endangered loggerhead turtles come to lay their eggs. The turtle beaches are off limits but there are countless other bays and coves to explore, the most famous being Shipwreck Beach on the north-west coast, where a rusting liner leans into chalky-white cliffs.



Assos | Kefalonia

KEFALONIA

Kefalonia's star quality was clear to see long before it was thrust into the spotlight as the backdrop to the 2001 film, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. For starters, it's home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the Mediterranean, including pine-fringed Horgota and milky-white Myrtos, the island's pin-up. To these you can add secret snorkelling spots like Dafnoudi and Emblisi, where slabs of limestone turn the water electric blue; the photogenic harbour towns of Assos and Fiskardo; and natural attractions like the Melissani Cave, a subterranean cenote hidden away for thousands of years before it was discovered after an earthquake hit the island.

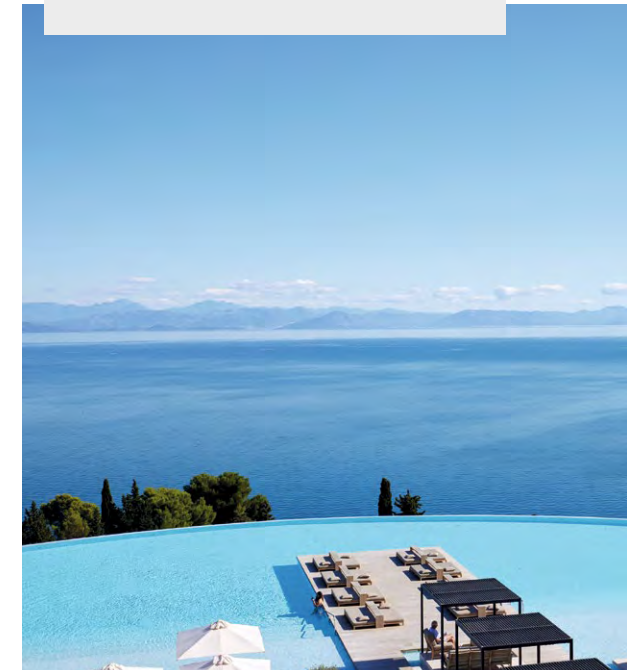
SPOTLIGHT ON...

Angsana Corfu Resort & Spa

It's hard not to be impressed by this lavish spa and beach resort on an idyllic, lush green hilltop overlooking Benitses Bay. Built around Corfu's largest infinity pool, both the main building and stunning pool-villas offer breathtaking views of mainland Greece and the Ionian Sea.

PARGA

Situated on the Greek mainland, Parga is the closest notable town to the gorgeous oceanside retreat, Elix, Mar-Bella Collection, though many guests choose to fly to Corfu and take the hotel's boat across the water to the resort, which offers breathtaking views back at Corfu, Paxos and Antipaxos. Parga itself boasts a ruined castle above a sandy bay, a charming old quarter and a seafront fizzing with bars and tavernas. From Elix itself you can hike to secret beaches and ancient monasteries, or kayak around the pristine shores, narrow inlets and lush green islands off the coast of Sivota, a traditional fishing village just north of the hotel.



The Cyclades

The gorgeous Greek islands of popular imagination



Oia | Santorini

Terraced hillsides, whitewashed villages overlooked by windmills, blue-domed churches and even bluer seas all characterise the Cyclades, which pepper the Aegean from Kéa in the north to Santorini in the south.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Sail around Santorini in a private yacht, swimming off remote beaches in crystalline waters, bathing in hot springs and securing a front-row seat for the sunset of your dreams.
- Discover the secrets of Santorini wine making at a traditional vineyard before savouring the famed assyrtiko wine, accompanied by Cycladic cheeses and local delicacies.
- Depart Mykonos by private yacht to explore the archaeological sites of UNESCO-listed Delos and turquoise snorkelling spots of tranquil Rineia island.
- Enjoy a seafood feast at a bohemian beach picnic on Mykonos, complete with freshly caught oysters and octopus and a choice of white wine, ouzo or champagne.
- Hire a yacht for the day to explore the remote islands around Paros, visiting the Blue Lagoon, the sea caves of Antiparos and the uninhabited island of Despotiko.

SANTORINI

Watching the sun sink into the indigo waters of Santorini's largely submerged caldera may be a romantic cliché but it still takes your breath away. One of the biggest volcanic eruptions in history blew out Santorini's heart around 3,500 years ago, creating the sea-drowned crater around which the island curls, as well as gorgeous black-sand beaches and multi-coloured cliffs 300 metres high. Many of the best hotels and restaurants cling to the clifftops in spots like Oia and Imerovigli, at times spilling like icy cornices down the terraced rock. The eruption also preserved the fascinating Minoan site of Akrotiri (well worth a visit) and created the fertile ground for the assyrtiko grapes used to produce some of the finest wines in Greece. Other notable distractions include the capital, Fira, whose caldera-edge views give way to bustling, narrow streets full of shops, bars and restaurants, and boat trips to the small volcanic islands inside the caldera, where craters still smoulder and you can swim in volcanic hot springs.

KÉA

Until recently the closely guarded secret of holidaying Athenians, little-known Kéa island has grabbed the attention of discerning travellers thanks to the opening of a stylish new clifftop resort from One&Only. The closest of the Cyclades to Athens (an hour by ferry or 15 minutes by helicopter), Kéa provides stark contrast to its Cycladic neighbours. No white-washed cubist houses or blue-domed churches here. Instead, you'll find an island of lush natural beauty – of oak forests, olive groves, vineyards and steep valleys, where activities range from hiking and mountain biking to diving local shipwrecks. In fact, so fertile is the interior that Kéa remains Greece's only self-sustainable island, a fact best appreciated when tucking into the fresh produce at any number of local restaurants.



Hora | Mykonos

MYKONOS

In the peak summer months, Mykonos earns its reputation as the St Tropez of the Aegean, with exclusive beach clubs pumping out house music, harbours filled with superyachts and no shortage of high-end hotels, designer boutiques, fashionable nightclubs and gourmet restaurants. But there's more to Mykonos than just glitzy excess. Hora, the island's well-preserved port and capital, is a tangle of narrow alleyways, cobbled streets and whitewashed buildings, overlooked by the town's famous windmills. Elia has a beautiful Blue Flag stretch of beach and offers a host of watersports. The sheltered waters of Fokos Bay, in the north, provide delightful swimming for all ages, with a renowned taverna nearby for when you've worked up an appetite. While the nearby island of Delos, 30 minutes away by boat and mythical birthplace of the god Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, remains one of the most important archaeological sites in all Greece.

PAROS

If you're looking to escape the crowds of Santorini and Mykonos, you'd do well to consider Paros, whose stylish boutique hotels are fast making a name for themselves. Unspoiled and authentic, the island is characterised by its secluded coves, cubist villages, long sandy beaches and half-abandoned marble mines, where stone was cut for both Napoleon's tomb and the *Venus de Milo*. Highlights include the capital Parikia, whose pristine Old Town is a labyrinth of boutiques, cafes and restaurants, and Panagia Ekatonpyliani, the oldest church in Greece in continuous use. Also don't miss the picture-perfect fishing village of Naoussa, where cafes line the quay next to a half-submerged Venetian castle, or mountainside Lefkes, the capital under Ottoman rule and Paros's highest and most charming inland town. Still not quiet enough for you? Then perhaps take the boat to Antiparos, where out-of-the-way beaches and traditional tavernas lie waiting to be explored.



Traditional street | Paros



Oia | Santorini



One&Only Kéa Island

“Enjoy the charms of each island individually, or revel in their contrasts on an island-hopping tour. See page 48 for a taste of what's possible.”

Crete & Kos

Splendid beaches and ancient treasures

Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history and the freshness of its bountiful cuisine. Kos, meanwhile, is the 'Garden of the Aegean' – a dolphin-shaped island in the Dodecanese offering luxury accommodation to both couples and families.



Elounda Gulf Villas | Crete



Elafonisi Beach | Crete

"It's no coincidence that most of our Crete hotels look out across the waters of the Bay of Mirabello, which literally translates as 'beautiful view'."



Chania | Crete

CHANIA & WESTERN CRETE

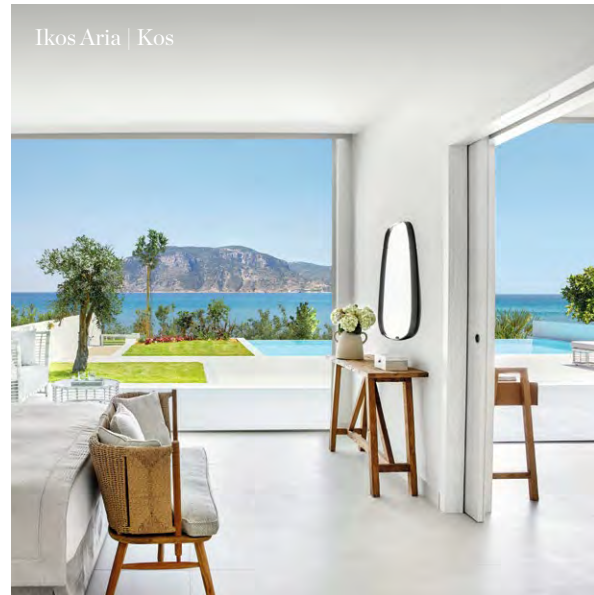
If you want to experience Crete at its most beautiful and traditional then Chania and the west is a good place to be, with both Domes Noruz Chania and Domes Zeen Chania providing wonderful basecamps from which to explore. Historic pastel-coloured houses rim the waterfront promenade of Chania's splendid Venetian harbour, the winding streets behind filled with interesting shops and some of the island's best restaurants. Hikers come from all over the world to trek the grand Samaria Gorge, one of the longest in Europe, snaking down through an ancient riverbed to the Libyan Sea. The beaches in the west are not to be sniffed at either, especially Elafonisi, a symphony of pink-white sand, turquoise water and rose-coloured dunes; and Falasarna, famous for its pink-cream sands and stunning sunsets. And let's not forget Balos, whose magical teal lagoons at the western edge of the Gramvousa Peninsula are easily among the island's most photogenic spots.



Samaria Gorge | Crete

KOS

Fringed by the finest beaches in the Dodecanese and cut through by lush valleys, Kos is an island of endless surprises and varied treasures. Among the highlights are the ruins of the Asclepion, the most important healing sanctuary in the ancient world, founded by Hippocrates himself, the 'Father of Medicine', who was born on Kos in the 5th century BC. Relaxation was key to treatment here, an idea fully endorsed today by the owners of OKU Kos, an adults-only hideaway on the island's north coast. Other worthwhile distractions include the island's thermal springs, the nearby volcanic island of Nisyros, and the capital Kos Town, whose harbour is fronted by a medieval castle with commanding views across the straits that separate Kos and the Turkish coast. Guests of family-focused resort Ikos Aria can explore the island with complimentary use of a Tesla for a day.



Ikos Aria | Kos

DON'T MISS

A Boat Trip To Spinalonga

Ponder the past on a private boat trip to Spinalonga, the former leper colony that shot to stardom thanks to the bestselling novel, The Island. All our Elounda hotels in Crete offer tours to this fascinating outpost, which was home to a Venetian fortress long before it was used to quarantine lepers.



Spinalonga | Crete

ELOUNDA & EASTERN CRETE

Although home to the highest concentration of Greece's 5-star resorts, Elounda retains a charming down-to-earth feel, its harbour lined with attractive shops, bars and tavernas. Just five kilometres north is Plaka, a bijou village with a clutch of boutiques and traditional tavernas. South of Elounda is Agios Nikolaos, one of the loveliest towns in Crete, helped in no small part by its show-stopping setting on Mirabello Bay. Boats depart from all three locations to must-see Spinalonga, the Venetian fortress turned leper colony that forms the backdrop to Victoria Hislop's award-winning book, *The Island*. But there's more to eastern Crete than just the sensuous curves of Mirabello Bay. Both the Heraklion Archaeological Museum and the Minoan Palace of Knossos provide fascinating windows into Crete's ancient past. South of Knossos is Iraklio Wine Country, responsible for about 70% of Crete's excellent wine production. While way to the north-east, popular Vai beach is an exotic ribbon of white-gold sand backed by a forest of tropical palm trees.



Kalesma Mykonos

13-DAY TAILOR-MADE ITINERARY

Athens & The Cyclades

DURATION

12 nights / 13 days

SUMMARY

3 nights Athens • 3 nights Mykonos
3 nights Paros • 3 nights Santorini

INCLUDES

12 nights' accommodation on a bed & breakfast basis, international flights to and from the UK, domestic flights within Greece, ferry crossings as specified and private transfers throughout.

Tours, excursions and activities mentioned are examples of what we can arrange. Ask your travel agent for the full range of options and a personalised quotation.

This indulgent island-hopping journey combines the sights of ancient Athens with two of the most beloved islands in all Greece, Mykonos and Santorini, with time to slow down in between on picturesque Paros.

DAYS 1-3: ATHENS

Arrive in Athens and transfer to the The Doll, a stunning boutique hotel in the heart of the city, whose rooftop terrace complete with restaurant and infinity pool offers breathtaking views of the Acropolis and Parthenon.

The next few days are free for you to explore the ancient capital. Get a taste for the city on a privately guided food tour, visiting the vibrant food market, meeting local artisans and learning about traditional Greek cooking. Hop between tavernas along the narrow streets of Plaka, the oldest and most character-filled neighbourhood in Athens. See the Acropolis appear in its original glory using AR technology on a private tour of the Parthenon and Acropolis Museum (see right). Or ask Poseidon for smooth sailings in the days to come by visiting the ruined temple devoted to the sea god on a private tour of the Athenian Riviera.

DAYS 4-6: MYKONOS

Transfer to the airport to catch your short flight to Mykonos, where you'll be met and transferred to Kalesma Mykonos. Dazzlingly designed, Kalesma resembles a white-washed Cycladic village as it tumbles down the hillside towards the turquoise waters of Ornos Bay. Suites and villas are gorgeous to behold and come with private pools, sunrise views and beautiful bespoke furnishings.

With both Mykonos Town and such celebrated beach clubs as Scorpios and JackieO' less than 20 minutes away, you're perfectly placed to enjoy the island's fabled nightlife. For daytime pursuits, we recommend exploring the old capital, Hora, a warren of narrow alleyways and white cubist buildings. Its waterfront quarter is particularly charming, filled with boutiques, galleries, bars and restaurants.



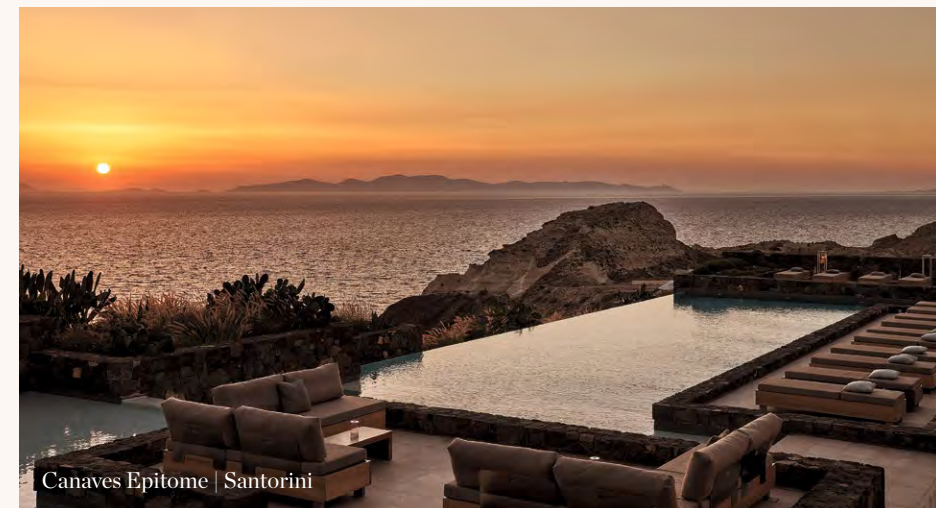
Plaka | Athens

Other options include making your own bread on a traditional farmstead (see below) and sailing to the UNESCO-listed island of Delos, most of which is an open-air museum, covered with mosaics and classical remains.

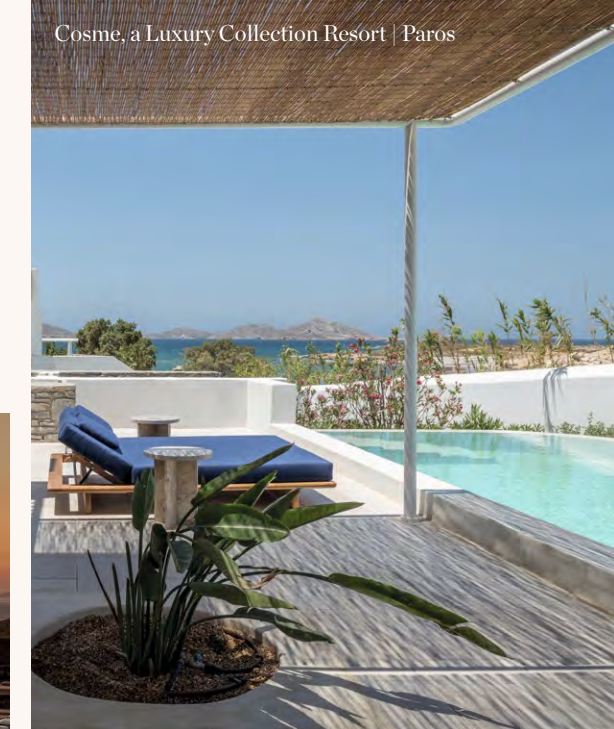
DAYS 7-9: PAROS

Enjoy a private transfer to the port at Mykonos and a fast ferry to Paros before transferring to Cosme, a Luxury Collection Resort. Set in a half-moon bay, this boutique hotel is next to the charming town of Naoussa and boasts a full-service spa, an infinity pool with cabanas and sun loungers, plus two terrific restaurants, including one on the beach with stunning sea views.

Rich in tradition and both natural and man-made wonders, Paros moves at a much slower pace than Mykonos. Take time to relax on its long sandy beaches, explore its charming rural villages or let us organise something special like a private cooking lesson in the traditional farmhouse home of a welcoming Greek cook.



Canaves Epitome | Santorini



Cosme, a Luxury Collection Resort | Paros

DAYS 10-13: SANTORINI

Transfer to the port and take the ferry to Santorini, whose sea-filled caldera offers some of the most spectacular views and sunsets in all Greece. Your home for the final three nights will be Canaves Epitome, one of the best hotels on the island for enjoying the sunsets, thanks to its position on the western extremity of the island's northern arm.

When not relaxing at the spa or admiring the views from the infinity-edge pool, we recommend booking a private tour or excursion to help get to know the island. Stop by the studio of a local artist and potter and learn how to make your own piece of Cycladic pottery. Visit a vineyard and discover for yourself how the island's volcanic soil enhances Santorini wine (see below). Or escape the crowds completely on a guided hike along the island's hidden footpaths, with nothing to distract you save for breathtaking views of the indigo Aegean. Transfer to the airport on day 13 in time to catch your flight home.

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES - OUR SUGGESTIONS



Acropolis Private Tour

Witness the Parthenon and other monuments in their original glory using augmented reality on an iPad provided by your guide. Then tour the incredible Acropolis Museum, whose exhibits include the original Parthenon marbles interspersed with replicas of those held in the British Museum, allowing the frieze to be seen in its entirety for the first time in over 200 years.



Bread Making on Mykonos

Join a local family in their Myconian farmstead to learn the secrets of traditional bread making in an old-fashioned wood-fired oven. Then, with the smell of freshly baked loaves in the air, join the family for a typical Greek breakfast in the farm's courtyard, where you'll be able to enjoy the bread you've just made as well as other delicious products of Mykonos.



Wine Tasting on Santorini

Take a tour of a traditional vineyard, learn about the characteristics of volcanic soil and discover the art of Santorini viticulture before visiting three award-winning, family-owned wineries. Explore the versatility of the assyrtiko grape, the 'king grape' of the island, and taste all varieties of Santorini wine, along with delicious cheese and other local bites.

Photo credit: Anassa

CYPRUS

The promise of Cyprus is one of dazzling beaches, shimmering blue seas, endless summers and tables groaning under platters of meze and bottles of sweet, chilled wine.

Birthplace of Aphrodite and the crossroads of three continents, Cyprus has been seducing and inspiring travellers for thousands of years. The south-west coast is a great place to base yourself, with no shortage of high-end hotels to choose from around Limassol, Pissouri and Paphos in particular. Beyond them, to the north, rise the forested mountains of the Troodos Massif, dotted with traditional villages, picturesque churches and monasteries hiding icons from the very first days of Christianity. To the west, jutting almost defiantly into the Mediterranean, is the Akamas Peninsula, a pristine environment of valleys, gorges and wide sandy bays, where green and loggerhead turtles still come to nest in summer.

Thanks to its small size and excellent road network, you can get to virtually anywhere in Cyprus in a day, allowing for some wonderfully varied holidays. Where else in the Med can you visit mountain vineyards, explore ancient tombs, snorkel turquoise waters, and in winter, even ski?



Ancient ruins near Limassol

WHEN TO VISIT

Spring is the ideal time to visit Cyprus, when skies are blue, the air is warm and balmy, the uplands are a luxuriant green and there are wildflowers everywhere. Greek Orthodox Easter is an especially fun time to visit, with colourful events taking place right across the island. Summers are hot, leaving the sea warm enough to swim in right through until October. Winters are quieter with cooler weather.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Families, Hiking, History, Relaxation, Romance, Spa & Wellness, Watersports, Wine



HOTEL DIRECTORY

Cyprus

From luxury hideaways on the fringes of Akamas National Park to full-service beach resorts brimming with charm and Cypriot character, Cyprus has some of the finest hotels in the Mediterranean. To view our most up-to-date portfolio, please visit our website or scan the code below.

CYPRUS

AKAMAS PENINSULA

Anassa

LIMASSOL

AMARA

Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa

PAPHOS

Almyra

Annabelle

Constantinou Bros Asimina Suites Hotel

Elysium

PISSOURI

Columbia Beach Resort



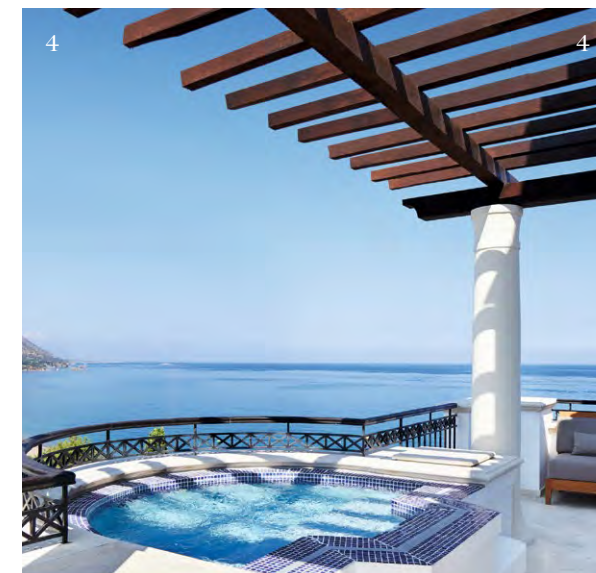
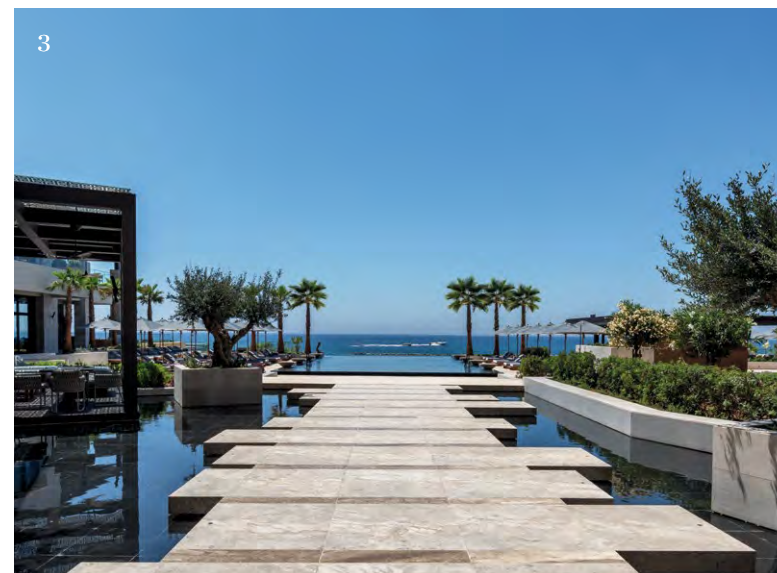
Scan this code to view our full Cyprus portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Cyprus's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa | Limassol
2. Almyra | Paphos
3. AMARA | Limassol
4. Anassa | Akamas Peninsula
5. Annabelle | Paphos
6. Columbia Beach Resort | Pissouri
7. Elysium | Paphos
8. Constantinou Bros Asimina Suites Hotel | Paphos



Cyprus

Landscapes steeped in myth and legend



Aphrodite's Rock

Cyprus has long been a honeypot for holidaymakers, lured by the irresistible promise of sea, sand and sunshine all year round. On the eastern fringes of the Mediterranean, it famously basks in 30°C days from June to October, making it a popular spot for some late-season sun.



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Anassa

Located on the fringes of the Akamas Peninsula, Anassa regularly tops polls of the island's best hotels. Given its gorgeous cliffside villas, award-winning spa and gourmet cuisine, it's easy to see why.

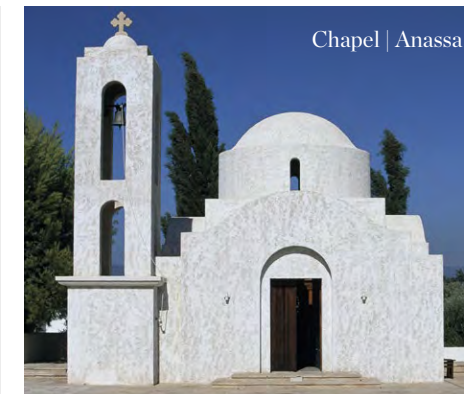
PAPHOS & PISSOURI

Paphos district, which takes up the whole of the western end of Cyprus, is probably the most varied and attractive region on the island. Most visitors gravitate towards the gorgeous sweep of coast south of Paphos town and south-east towards Pissouri, close to Aphrodite's Rock, where legend has it the goddess of love and beauty first rose from the sea to make Cyprus her home. Paphos town itself is split into two parts. In Kato Paphos (Lower Paphos), among the hotels, bars, restaurants and souvenir shops, are a number of fascinating historical sites, including the 16th-century castle, frequently used as a backdrop for concerts, plays and operas, and an unmissable archaeological park, home to a series of Roman mosaics, each more impressive than the next. Ktima Paphos (Upper Paphos), three kilometres north, is more sedate and atmospheric, with its old Turkish Quarter and fine views towards the harbour.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Hire a car or a private guide to explore the Troodos Mountains, home to traditional villages, scenic walking trails and beautifully frescoed churches, 10 of which are protected by UNESCO.
- Glimpse life as it was lived 2,000 years ago at the Kourion archaeological complex near Limassol, the greatest Greco-Roman site on the island.
- Immerse yourself in Cypriot mythology on a voyage by boat to Aphrodite's Rock, where the goddess of love first emerged from the sea.
- Enjoy a culinary tour from the Annabelle hotel, including a family-run halloumi workshop, a winery tour and tasting and a delicious, freshly cooked lunch.
- Discover the pleasures of Cypriot winemaking in the company of an award-winning sommelier on a 'Secrets of the Vine' tour from the Almyra hotel.



Chapel | Anassa

AKAMAS PENINSULA

At the island's western edge, the Akamas Peninsula is one of Cyprus's last remaining wildernesses, attracting walkers, nature lovers and off-road enthusiasts in equal measure – there are no main roads, just dirt tracks and footpaths, but if you don't fancy hiring a 4x4, a range of excellent jeep safaris can help you explore the area. A number of well-marked walking trails also crisscross the peninsula, including the eight-kilometre Aphrodite Trail, which begins and ends at the Baths of Aphrodite, a spring-fed pool in a natural cave where according to legend the goddess of love met her greatest amor, the handsome young Adonis. Above all, the peninsula is known for its extraordinary range of wildlife, including green and loggerhead turtles that come to nest at Lara Beach, a stunningly unspoiled spot in the far south-west. Also worth a detour is the delightful fishing village of Latchi, near the sensational Anassa hotel.



Paphos coast and Aphrodite's Rock

LIMASSOL

Multicultural Limassol is Cyprus's second city and the island's gastronomic capital, with no shortage of both traditional and modern restaurants. Several are helmed by celebrity chefs, including Ristorante Locatelli and Matsuhisa Limassol at the 5-star hotel, AMARA. Wine lovers are particularly well catered for, firstly by the city's wine festival in September, but also by the excellent wine museum in the nearby village of Erini, and by the region's three wine routes (there are three more in Paphos), which provide the lowdown on over 5,000 years of wine production on the island. Along the city's seafront a 16-kilometre pedestrian and cycle path links the old town with sandy beaches further east. Leave the coast behind and you'll find a number of fascinating archaeological sites, the great Crusader castle of Kolossi and a wealth of pretty hill villages to explore, including Lefkara, known worldwide for its delicate lace embroidery and exquisite silver craftsmanship.



Fishing boat | Paphos

Our Forte

Making every stay unique



CHARLES AND LYDIA
FORTE AT VERDURA
RESORT, SICILY



ROCCO FORTE HOTELS

HOTEL DE ROME BERLIN · HOTEL AMIGO BRUSSELS · THE BALMORAL EDINBURGH · HOTEL SAVOY FLORENCE
BROWN'S HOTEL LONDON · THE CHARLES HOTEL MUNICH · MASSERIA TORRE MAIZZA PUGLIA
HOTEL DE LA VILLE ROME · HOTEL DE RUSSIE ROME · ROCCO FORTE HOUSE ROME · VILLA IGIEA PALERMO
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ITALY

For centuries, Italy has attracted people from all across the world. Its dreamy light and sumptuous landscapes seem made for romance and its three millennia of history and culture seduce just about everyone.

There are more World Heritage sites in Italy than in any other country. You can wander Roman ruins, hike in the Dolomites, snorkel in Sardinia, gaze at Lake Garda or ride into Venice aboard the timeless luxury of the *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*.

For a gastronomic treat you can't go wrong with Tuscany, home to olive groves, truffles and the vineyards of Chianti. Though if you're looking to escape the crowds, its neighbour Umbria should be high on your list. For culture, book ahead to see da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in fashionable Milan; watch *Aida* performed by a cast of hundreds in the Arena de Verona; or wander the Uffizi in fabulous Florence.

Or perhaps you'd prefer the Amalfi Coast, where vertical cliffs plunge into impossibly blue seas and storybook towns emerge from the folds of thick and scented lemon groves. Or a stay in Sicily, where pristine beaches compete for attention with fine-dining restaurants and mighty Mount Etna. Whatever your reason to visit, Italy's *dolce vita* never fails to delight.



Lecce | Puglia

WHEN TO VISIT

Spring and autumn are great times to visit Italy, when the weather is more temperate and the crowds less overwhelming. Spring sees wildflowers carpet the countryside while September and October witness grape and olive harvests and markets brimming with truffles and chestnuts. Key events include Venice Carnival in the two weeks leading up to Lent, and outdoor concerts and performances held throughout the summer in Ravello and Taormina.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Gastronomy, History, Lakes & Mountains, Nature, Rail Journeys, Romance, Shopping, Spa & Wellness, Touring, Wine

Italy

Whether you dream of a timeless Tuscan castle, a rustic retreat in the Puglian countryside or a pied-à-terre in Rome, our seasoned travel experts have carefully selected the best hotels in Italy for you to choose from. For the most up-to-date portfolio, visit our website or scan the code opposite.

TUSCANY & UMBRIA

PAGE 66

TUSCANY

Borgo Pignano
Castello di Casole, A Belmond Hotel, Tuscany
Castel Monastero
COMO Castello del Nero

Hotel Byron
L'Andana
La Roqqa
Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco

UMBRIA

Hotel Castello di Reschio
Tenuta di Murlo

LAKES & MOUNTAINS

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DOLOMITES

Forestis Dolomites

LAKE COMO

Grand Hotel Tremezzo
Passalacqua
Villa Sola Cabiati

LAKE GARDA

Lefay Resort & SPA Lago di Garda

LAKE ISEO

L'Albereta

AMALFI COAST & CAPRI

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AMALFI COAST

Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel
Caruso, A Belmond Hotel, Amalfi Coast
Palazzo Avino

CAPRI

Capri Palace Jumeirah

PUGLIA

PAGE 72

Borgo Egnazia
La Fiermontina

Masseria Torre Maizza, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Palazzo Bozzi Corso by La Fiermontina

SICILY & SARDINIA

PAGE 74

SARDINIA

7Pines Resort Sardinia
Abi d'Oru Beach Hotel and Spa
Conrad Chia Laguna Sardinia
Forte Village Resort

SICILY

Grand Hotel Timeo, A Belmond Hotel, Taormina
Rocco Forte Private Villas
Verdura Resort, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Villa Igiea, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Villa Sant'Andrea, A Belmond Hotel, Taormina Mare

ITALIAN CITIES

PAGE 76

FLORENCE

Brunelleschi Hotel
Hotel Savoy, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Il Tornabuoni
Villa San Michele, A Belmond Hotel, Florence

ROME

Anantara Palazzo Naiadi
Hotel de la Ville, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Hotel de Russie, a Rocco Forte Hotel
Six Senses Rome

VENICE

Ca' di Dio
Hotel Cipriani, A Belmond Hotel, Venice
JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa
The Gritti Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel
Venice-Simplon-Orient-Express, A Belmond Train, Europe



Scan this code to view our full Italy portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Italy's finest hotels



SPOTLIGHT ON

1. 7Pines Resort Sardinia | Sardinia
2. Borgo Egnazia | Puglia
3. Verdura Resort, a Rocco Forte Hotel | Sicily
4. Grand Hotel Timeo, A Belmond Hotel, Taormina | Sicily
5. Passalacqua | Lake Como
6. Hotel Castello di Reschio | Umbria
7. Forestis Dolomites | Dolomites
8. COMO Castello del Nero | Tuscany
9. Palazzo Avino | Amalfi Coast
10. The Gritti Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel | Venice

Tuscany & Umbria

Hilltop towns, tasty truffles and powerful red wines



Todi | Umbria

From olive groves and cypress trees to romantic villages perched on rocky hilltops, the landscape of Tuscany has become a symbol of Italy as a whole. Umbria, of course, has charms of its own, treating visitors brave enough to step off the beaten track to an equally rich tapestry of enchanting landscapes and historical treasures.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Join an expert truffle hunter and his specially-trained dog in search of one of Italy's most prized ingredients. Includes lunch with truffles and local wine. Available in both Tuscany and Umbria.
- Capture classic Tuscany on a guided Vespa tour, riding through the hills of Chianti passing vineyards, villages and olive groves. Some tours include meals and wine tasting.
- Set sail for the breathtaking islands of Elba, Giglio and Giannutri in the gorgeous Tuscan Archipelago, the largest marine park in Europe.
- Sniff and swill your way through some of the region's best wines on privately guided tours through the vineyards of Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino or Montefalco.



Tenuta di Murlo | Umbria

UMBRIA

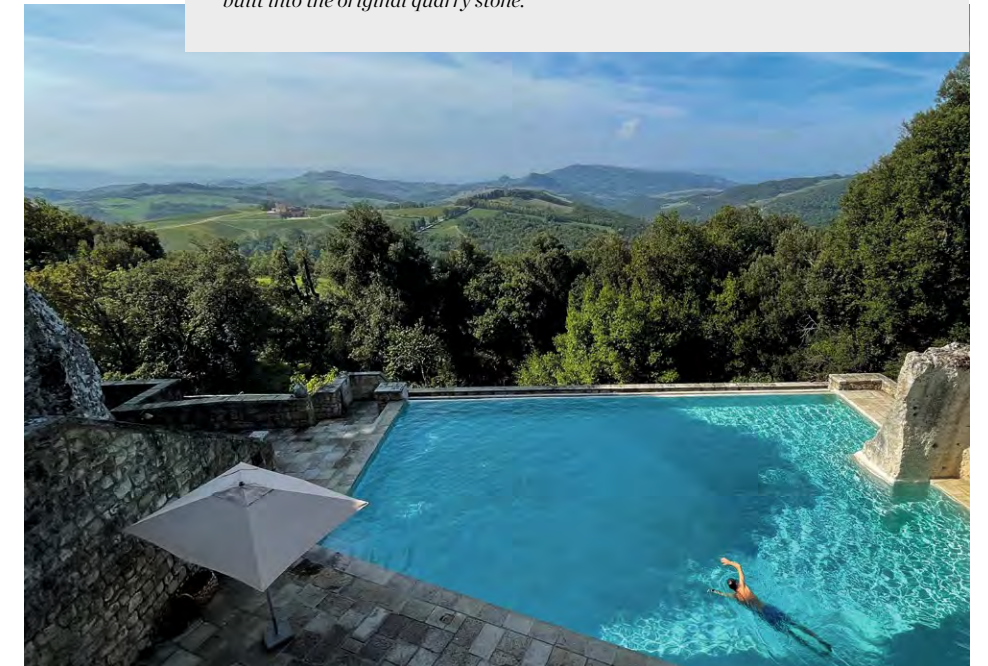
Often referred to as 'the green heart of Italy', Umbria is a profoundly beautiful and largely unspoiled region of forested hills, lakes, valleys, olive groves and vineyards. It's also home to a dozen or so classic hill towns, each resolutely individual and crammed with enough artistic and architectural treasures to rival bigger and far more famous cities. The Duomo in Orvieto, for example, is one of the greatest Gothic buildings in the country – a riot of columns, spires, bas reliefs and sculptures that caused Pope Leo XIII to call it “the Golden Lily of Italian cathedrals”. The town itself sits on a tabletop plug of volcanic lava known as tufa and rises 300 metres straight up from the valley floor.

Sharing top billing with Orvieto are Perugia, known for its chocolate and jazz festivals, and Assisi, birthplace of St Francis and famous for the extraordinary frescoes by Giotto in the Basilica di San Francesco. To truly get a feel for Umbria, however, it's essential to leave time for its more understated charms, such as Todi, an increasingly chic but still unspoiled hill town; Gubbio, arguably the most picture-book pretty of Umbria's medieval towns; and Lago Trasimeno, the largest lake in the Italian peninsula, with plenty of opportunities for swimming and watersports. Two exceptional estates, Reschio and Tenuta di Murlo, both north of Perugia near the Tuscan border, make wonderful bases for exploring the area.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Borgo Pignano

Deep in the heart of the Tuscan countryside, this stunning retreat includes 750 acres of organic farmland, a Green Michelin Star restaurant and an infinity pool built into the original quarry stone.



TUSCANY

If one part of Italy holds more allure than any other it must be Tuscany. The region's cities boast an astonishing legacy of art and architecture, from the Renaissance masterpieces of Florence (see p76) to Pisa's tilted tower and the medieval charms of Lucca, Siena and San Gimignano. The latter is a popular day trip from Florence. Often referred to as a 'medieval Manhattan', its beautifully preserved streets are dominated by a forest of 12th- and 13th-century towers built by the village's noble inhabitants as competing symbols of their wealth.

In contrast to the cities' high culture is the slow pace of life enjoyed in the countryside. For a lazy vineyard-hopping drive, follow the Chianti Road from Florence to Siena through a landscape of rolling hills, medieval castles and stone farmhouses. Then continue south to the picturesque hill towns of Montalcino and Montepulciano, famous for producing some of the most prestigious red wines in all Italy. Or base yourself in one of the region's storybook hotels for leisurely days spent hunting for truffles and feasting like royalty.

With so much to explore inland, it's easy to forget that Tuscany has a coastline too. For a dose of sea air, head to Forte dei Marmi, Tuscany's most glamorous coastal resort. Or escape the summer crowds in La Maremma, one of the least spoiled regions of Italy, blessed by a gorgeous coastline and some of the sunniest weather in the Mediterranean.



San Gimignano | Tuscany

ITALY

Lakes & Mountains

Deep blue waters and striking mountain backdrops



Varenna | Lake Como



Loreto Island | Lake Iseo



Santa Maddalena | Dolomites

The Italian Lakes have attracted tourists since the days of the Grand Tour, when they became the playgrounds for wealthy Europeans during the 17th and 18th centuries. With their sumptuous villas, lemon groves, vineyards and cinematic scenery, they offer a taste of the Mediterranean in the foothills of the Alps.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Explore Lake Como by private boat, taking in such sights as Villa del Balbianello, Isola Comacina (the only island on the lake) and beautiful Bellagio.
- Make a day trip to Milan to admire one of the world's most powerful works of art, da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, or venture to Verona to declare your love beneath Juliet's balcony.
- Enjoy a cruise on Lake Iseo and a visit to Monte Isola before transferring to Franciacorta to taste its prized sparkling wines, accompanied by salami and Grana Padano cheese.
- Watch the sunset over the peaks of the Dolomites with an aperitif in hand from one of the highest rooftop bars in the world at Forestis Dolomites.

LAKE COMO

Lake Como is perhaps the best known of Italy's great lakes. Its deep blue waters, wooded hillsides and elegant villas have been a place of respite for the high at heel since the 17th century. Shaped like an upside-down Y, the three arms of the lake converge on the attractive town of Bellagio, with its cafe-lined waterfront, gardens of bright flowers and lively port full of fishing boats. Other lakeside towns such as Tremezzo, Varenna and Menaggio are perhaps even more picturesque, boasting luxurious lakeside villas like Villa Sola Cabiati, the former summer residence of the Dukes of Serbelloni, available to hire for exclusive use. At the southern end of the lake, not far from the city of Como with its impressive medieval Duomo, is sumptuous Passalacqua, named by industry experts as the best hotel in the world.

THE DOLOMITES

The snaggletooth peaks of the UNESCO-listed Dolomites are surely among the most arresting sights in Italy. Some of the finest views are from Forestis Dolomites, an eco-friendly wellness retreat on the sunny southern slopes of the South Tyrolean Alps. From there, when not relaxing at the spa or walking in the forests where wild Celts used to roam, it's easy to access the many alpine resorts that the Dolomites have to offer, from which well-marked trails provide summertime walkers with some of the best hikes in the country.

LAKE ISEO

Sandwiched between lakes Como and Garda, little Lake Iseo is often overlooked in favour of its more famous neighbours, but if you're looking to escape the crowds then it could be just the ticket. It's home to Europe's largest lake island, Monte Isola, a charming spot with a perimeter promenade that is best explored by bike. The Via Valeriana, once an ancient trading route, is a popular hiking trail that snakes through olive groves and vineyards, while lying to the south-east is Franciacorta, a hilly region that produces some of Italy's finest sparkling wine. It's here, overlooking the vineyards, that you'll find L'Albereta, an enchanting, ivy-clad Relais & Châteaux hotel that simply oozes Italian charm.

LAKE GARDA

Garda is the largest of Italy's lakes and for many the most beautiful. If you can tear yourself away from our recommended hotel, a secluded mountaintop retreat set in 27 acres of woods and olive groves with breathtaking views down onto the lake, then a number of attractions are well worth visiting. These include Rocca Scaligera, a 13th-century castle almost entirely surrounded by the waters of the lake, and the pretty, unspoiled town of Gargnano, where D.H. Lawrence stayed between September 1912 and the spring of 1913, gathering material for his book, *Twilight in Italy*. Fair Verona, the setting for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, is just a short drive away, as are several of the region's top vineyards, including Soave, Bardolino and Valpolicella.



Rocca Scaligera | Lake Garda

SPOTLIGHT ON... Grand Hotel Tremezzo

Dating back to 1910, Grand Hotel Tremezzo is one of the oldest luxury hotels on Lake Como. Besides the panoramic views, it offers elegant Art Nouveau interiors, 12 acres of surrounding parkland, a plethora of dining options and two outdoor pools, including one that floats on the lake itself.

Amalfi Coast

Path of the gods and playground of emperors



View from Monte Solaro | Capri

Protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its outstanding Mediterranean landscape and exceptional cultural significance, the Amalfi Coast is one of the most celebrated stretches of seafloor in Europe, offering unrivalled scenery, fabulous food and chic Italian glamour.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Palazzo Avino

Raised high in Ravello, the pink-hued Palazzo Avino strikes an impressive architectural pose. Like something out of a medieval fairytale, the hotel was once a 12th-century private villa and continues to be a residence fit for nobility, delivering elegant accommodation, Michelin-starred dining and unforgettable views.



Positano | Amalfi Coast

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Cruise the Amalfi Coast on a private yacht charter from Palazzo Avino, calling at the likes of Positano, Praiano, Conca dei Marini and Amalfi.
- Enjoy a performance at the Ravello Festival, one of Italy's most prestigious classical music festivals, held every summer in Ravello since 1953.
- Step aboard a luxury boat for an unforgettable day discovering Ischia and Procida, Capri's breathtaking neighbours in the Bay of Naples.
- Take a day trip to explore the ruins of Pompeii, the once-thriving Roman town buried under a sea of volcanic ash when Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD.
- Explore one of the region's grandest lemon groves. Taste the fruits (ubiquitous along the Amalfi Coast) and learn how they're cultivated using time-honoured traditions.

CAPRI

Capri has been a favoured summer playground since the Roman emperor Tiberius made the Villa Jovis – now an evocative clifftop ruin with breathtaking views of the Sorrento Peninsula – his ruling seat in 26 AD. Hydrofoils and ferries from Naples and Sorrento deposit visitors in the Marina Grande. From there it's mere minutes on the funicular to the Piazzetta in Capri Town, the island's most famous square, from which shopping streets fan outwards, lined with all manner of exclusive boutiques. Aside from the shopping, the views and the fabulous food, highlights include the famous Faraglioni, three shark-fin-like rocks off the south-east coast, and the Grotta Azzurra, a stunning sea cave in the north-west of the island, illuminated by an otherworldly blue light. Other popular activities include strolling through the gardens of Villa San Michele, built on the site of a ruined Roman villa, and taking the chair lift up Capri's highest peak, Monte Solaro. On a clear day, the views from the top take in the whole of the Bay of Naples, the Amalfi Coast and the neighbouring islands of Ischia and Procida.



Amalfi Cathedral | Amalfi Coast

AMALFI COAST

The Amalfi Coast is all about drama, the coastal mountains plunging into the sea in a stunning vertical landscape of precipitous crags, terraced lemon groves and picturesque towns. At one end lies Sorrento, ideally placed for day trips to Naples, Mt Vesuvius and the ruins of Pompeii. The drive down the coast from Sorrento to Amalfi is Italy's dream drive. The 'Blue Ribbon', as the road is nicknamed, wends its way past picture-postcard towns like Positano and Praiano, snaking around impossibly tight curves, over deep ravines and through tunnels gouged out of solid rock. The views are sublime, even if the drops can leave your heart in your mouth. Another option is to walk, with the *Sentiero degli Dei* (Path of the Gods), a meandering mountain trail from Positano to Praiano, a particular highlight.

Positano is perhaps the prettiest of the Amalfi Coast towns, a jumble of pastel-coloured houses that spill down a maze of narrow alleyways to a pebbly, umbrella-lined beach. Designer boutiques stock the latest in Italian summer fashions and restaurants draw an in-crowd of Italian glitterati. Amalfi itself is so small and pretty it's hard to believe it was once a maritime superpower, though more than a hint of its former prestige can be seen in its spectacular, decorated cathedral. Ravello, perched 1,100 feet above Amalfi, offers probably the best views on the coast, which given where we are is quite something. The town's beloved classical music festival takes place every summer in the spectacular gardens of the Villa Rufolo, a short stroll away from the Palazzo Avino hotel. A little further removed, set in immaculate gardens on its own rocky spur above the Bay of Salerno, is Caruso, a Belmond Hotel, whose striking infinity pool regularly tops lists of the world's best hotel pools.

Puglia

Unique trulli, majestic masserie and seas as clear as the Caribbean



Trulli | Alberobello

Puglia is the heel of Italy's boot, sculpted over millennia by the Adriatic Sea to the east and the Ionian to the west. Its coastline is dotted with magnificent beaches while its towns and villages are rich in history and wonderfully varied, from beautiful Baroque Lecce to arresting Alberobello.

DON'T MISS Essential Experiences

- Learn how to cook a range of Puglia's regional specialities from the chefs at Masseria Torre Maizza, including classic orecchiette pasta.
- Explore the Adriatic coast by yacht, calling at Otranto, Monopoli and Polignano a Mare, an ancient cliff-top town known for its stunning views and Blue Flag beach.
- Channel your inner movie star behind the wheel of a classic car, exploring the verdant vineyards and fragrant almond and olive groves of the Valle d'Itria.
- Enjoy a private walking tour of beautiful Baroque Lecce, taking in such sights as the Piazza del Duomo, the Basilica di Santa Croce and the old Roman amphitheatre.
- Make a day trip to the hilltop city of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage site famed for its cave dwellings known as sassi, in which people still lived until the 1950s.

"Not only does Puglia receive far fewer visitors than other parts of Italy but its glorious summers seem to go on forever, stretching almost to November."



Polignano a Mare



Salento coast

FASANO & VALLE D'ITRIA

Located midway between the airports of Bari and Brindisi, Fasano's historic core is an elaborate maze of lanes, small piazzas, stairways and arches. Between the town and the sea are two of our favourite hotels in Puglia: Borgo Egnazia, star of the BBC's *Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby*, and Masseria Torre Maizza, one of the best examples of the region's old masserie (fortified farmhouses) being transformed into luxury accommodation. Both hotels make a wonderful base for exploring the nearby Valle d'Itria, an area dotted with centuries-old trulli and Puglian villages overflowing with character. The cone-shaped trulli are Puglia's signature buildings and were originally made using limestone and no cement. In the 17th century, the government of the area taxed all houses, but as trulli contained no cement, residents were able to demolish them when the taxman came and rebuild them when he left. The highest concentration of trulli can be found in Alberobello, a UNESCO-listed town that wouldn't look out of place in a children's fairytale, but they pop up like mushrooms right across the region. Highlights among the surrounding towns include the stunning 'white city' of Ostuni; Baroque Martina Franca, which plays host each July to southern Italy's top performing arts festival; and laidback Locorotondo, arguably the prettiest town in Puglia.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Masseria Torre Maizza, a Rocco Forte Hotel

Masseria Torre Maizza may have started life as a 16th-century farm building but that's where the rustic comparisons end. Today, guests will find a romantic rooftop bar for enjoying the sunsets, an elegant restaurant overlooking the pool, an indulgent spa and a private beach club less than 10 minutes away.



LECCE & SALENTO

Sometimes referred to as the 'Florence of the South', Lecce is best known for its exuberant Baroque architecture. The historic area of the city is a maze of streets and alleyways filled with flamboyant buildings and is easily explored on foot from either of our recommended hotels: La Fiermontina or its sister property, Palazzo Bozzi Corso. From Lecce you're well placed to explore the rest of the Salento, the southernmost part of Italy's heel, which begins, more or less, where the hills of the Valle d'Itria end. The land gives way to endless olive groves, fields hazy in spring with colourful wildflowers, and the vineyards responsible for such full-bodied wines as Primitivo di Manduria and Salice Salentino. It's also home to some of Italy's loveliest beaches and most dramatic coastlines. Running up the west coast from the southernmost tip to Gallipoli and beyond is a vast, almost uninterrupted strip of golden sand and transparent azure water. To the east, the Adriatic coastline is more varied, offering sandy beaches, karstic grottoes, chalky white cliffs and saltwater lagoons. It's also where you'll find the whitewashed seaside town of Otranto, whose 11th-century cathedral contains an incredible multi-coloured floor mosaic that alone is worth the trip.



Ostuni

ITALY

Sicily & Sardinia

Italy's two island A-listers



Cefalù | Sicily

With seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, a vast cellar of award-winning wines and an abundance of pristine beaches, Sicily is not just the largest island in the Mediterranean but arguably the finest too. Not so, say the Sardinians, who point to their own mesmerising coastline (more than 1,000 miles of soft-sand beaches), wild rugged interior and millennia of rich history. One thing is for sure though: both provide the setting for spectacular holidays.



Taormina's Greek amphitheatre | Sicily

TAORMINA, MOUNT ETNA & EASTERN SICILY

Sicily's most dramatic venue for summertime performances is undoubtedly Taormina's ancient Greek amphitheatre, hewn into a rock face above the attractive east-coast town. The acoustics are perfect and stage columns frame perhaps the greatest scene-stealer of them all: Mount Etna standing bold against a blue Sicilian sky. Jeep tours and guided hikes of Europe's liveliest volcano can easily be arranged. Alternatively, enjoy a leisurely passeggiata along Corso Umberto, Taormina's vibrant main street; stop for a granita on the panoramic terrace of Piazza IX Aprile; or venture out to the pebble beaches of Isola Bella, one of the prettiest spots in Sicily, connected to Taormina via a thin sliver of sand. Other east coast highlights include Siracusa, which once rivalled Athens in power and splendour, and the beautiful Baroque town of Noto, itself a UNESCO World Heritage site. It's also possible to take a day trip to the Aeolian Islands, including the active volcano Stromboli, where you can hike with guides to watch the evening pyrotechnics at the crater rim.



Alghero | Sardinia



Beaches around Chia | Sardinia



Agrigento | Sicily

PALERMO, AGRIGENTO & WESTERN SICILY

Founded by the Phoenicians in 734 BC, no city in Europe has hosted such a variety of civilisations as Palermo, Sicily's lively capital. Nowhere is this better expressed than in the satellite town of Monreale, whose 12th-century cathedral is an extravagant marriage of Moorish, Byzantine and Norman styles, with multicoloured mosaics glorifying every inch of wall space. Sicily's greatest markets are also in Palermo. Ballarò and Capo are especially vibrant spectacles, with merchants singing about their wares and piles of briny octopus laid out beside mountains of fresh herbs, plump tomatoes and glistening olives. South of Palermo, on the opposite coast, is the Valley of the Temples near Agrigento, one of the best-preserved concentrations of early Greek architecture outside of Greece itself. For more history, head west from Agrigento to Selinunte, one of the most impressive archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. For picturesque ports and fresh-as-it-gets seafood, try gorgeous Cefalù or spectacular Sciacca.

DON'T MISS

Meet A Local Insider

Verdura Resort, a Rocco Forte Hotel, offers a weekly opportunity to meet a canuscituri, a 'connoisseur of the land'. Passionate about sharing his deep love and knowledge of Sicily, this learned insider will introduce you to local communities, new flavours and fresh ways to explore the island, helping you enhance your holiday further.

COSTA SMERALDA & NORTHERN SARDINIA

Sardinia's Costa Smeralda, a rugged stretch of powder-soft beaches and limpid blue waters on the north-east coast of the island, has been a playground for the super-rich and famous since the Aga Khan 'discovered' it in the 1960s. These days everyone from the Clooneys to Elton John are drawn to its 5-star hotels, designer boutiques, destination dining scene and ravishing natural beauty. Yet much of the north still feels light years apart from the glitzy resort towns of Porto Cervo and Porto Rotondo. Take the Maddalena Islands, for example, marooned off the northernmost point of Sardinia and lapped by some of the clearest waters in the Mediterranean. Or the walled port of Alghero, perhaps the prettiest town on the island, below which lies Neptune's Grotto, a stunning sea cave set into the towering cliffs, full of stalactites, stalagmites and eccentric rock formations.

CAGLIARI & SOUTHERN SARDINIA

Cagliari, Sardinia's historic capital, is a glorious profusion of golden-hued palazzi, Pisan fortifications and colourful facades, rising from the sea towards the old Castello quarter overlooking the port. A short drive from the centre is the fabulous Poetto beach, while lagoons on either side provide habitats for cranes, cormorants and flamingos. South of the capital and set in 116 acres of stunning gardens is Forte Village, widely regarded as among the best family resorts in Europe. Head south further still and you reach the beaches around Chia. Some of the finest on the island, they offer shallow, turquoise water, soft, fine sand and tumbling dunes cloaked in fragrant wild juniper.

"The secluded beaches of Sardinia or the historic monuments of Sicily? One of several tough decisions when weighing the many attractions of these captivating islands."



Maddalena Islands | Sardinia

Italian Cities

Three of the most beautiful and romantic cities in the world



St Peter's Basilica & Ponte Sant'Angelo | Rome

Few cities encapsulate Italy better than Rome, Florence and Venice. Their storied pasts, unparalleled art and architecture, vibrant atmospheres and exceptional hotels and restaurants make them some of the most memorable cities on Earth.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Discover ancient Rome with a private guide, from Palatine Hill and the Roman Forum to the glory of the Colosseum.
- Explore the hilltop towns and countryside around Rome, including Castel Gandolfo, home of the Pope's summer residence, and the town of Frascati, famous for its white wine.
- Join a Florentine chef for a walking tour of the city's fabled food districts, then head to the kitchen to learn classic Tuscan recipes.
- Uncover the historical and artistic heritage of Florence on a privately guided tour of the Uffizi Galleries and Accademia, home of Michelangelo's David.
- See Venice as it's meant to be seen, on a private boat tour of the Grand Canal.



Colosseum | Rome



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, A Belmond Train

As rail travel becomes increasingly about high-speed records and service that is perfunctory at best, a journey aboard the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is a chance to experience the golden age of rail travel at its glamorous, giddy peak. The white-gloved service is as faultless as ever. Sommeliers pair perfect wines with each elegant course in the 1920s restaurant cars. And glamorous cabins are transformed at night into comfortable bedrooms. Journeys depart from all three of our featured cities. One even incorporates them all in one trip, departing Venice for Paris via Rome and Florence. Ask your travel agent for details.

VENICE

Venice never loses its ability to enchant. The Grand Canal, the city's two-mile aquatic thoroughfare, is lined with hundreds of weather-worn Byzantine and Gothic palazzi and is abuzz with canal life. St Mark's Basilica, the Rialto Bridge and the Doge's Palace may well be crowded but are not to be missed on any visit to the city. For something a little quieter, head to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection to gaze at 20th-century masterpieces from Pollock, Picasso, Dalí and others. Or make for the islands of Burano and Murano, the former known for its rainbow-coloured houses, intricate lacework and waterside restaurants, the latter for its long tradition of Venetian glassmaking. Or simply embrace the hubbub by pulling up a chair at a local bacari (tavern), ordering a spritz and a plate of cicchetti (tapas) and watching life unfold as it has done for centuries.

ROME

Rome isn't just a city, it's an open-air museum, home to many of the icons of the ancient world, including the Colosseum, once able to seat 50,000 people; the Pantheon, the most complete ancient structure in the city; and the ruined Roman Forum, the centre of political and commercial life in the days of the Republic. More modern attractions – in Roman terms at least – include the Trevi Fountain, completed in 1762; the Borghese Gallery, one of the greatest repositories of art in the city; and the sweeping Spanish Steps, the top of which provide stunning sunset views over Rome's seven hills. Then of course there is the Vatican, the world's smallest independent state and the epicentre of Roman Catholicism, home to St Peter's Basilica, the Raphael Rooms and the spellbinding Sistine Chapel.

“Waking up on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express to fresh pastries hand-delivered by your steward as the Swiss Alps roll by... it really is once-in-a-lifetime stuff.”



Cathedral | Florence

FLORENCE

Arguably Italy's most beautiful city, Florence is the cradle of the Renaissance, home to more than half of Italy's most important artworks and several of its most breathtaking buildings. It's almost impossible not to gravitate towards Il Duomo, beckoned by Brunelleschi's extraordinary dome, which dominates the skyline in a way unmatched in any other Italian city. Other architectural wonders include the Basilica of Santa Croce, the final resting place of Michelangelo, Machiavelli and other famous Florentines; and the shop-lined Ponte Vecchio, the oldest bridge across the Arno, whose jewellers sell everything from museum-quality heirlooms to more affordable mementos.

Art lovers should book ahead for tours of the Uffizi Galleries, home to the largest collection of Renaissance paintings anywhere in the world, and for entry to the Accademia, built to house Michelangelo's iconic statue, David. For a break from art and architecture, we recommend retreating to the sprawling Boboli Gardens, or to the nearby town of Fiesole, whose hilltop position offers wonderful views of Florence as a whole.



Gondola | Venice



Grand Canal | Venice

12-DAY TAILOR-MADE ITINERARY

Classic Cities & The Amalfi Coast

DURATION

11 nights / 12 days

SUMMARY

3 nights Venice • 2 nights Florence
3 nights Rome • 3 nights Amalfi Coast

INCLUDES

11 nights' accommodation on a bed & breakfast basis, flights to and from the UK and private transfers throughout.

Tours, excursions and activities mentioned are examples of what we can arrange. Ask your travel agent for the full range of options and a personalised quotation.

With nods along the way to Italy's much-loved food and wine, this north-to-south journey through the heart of Italy sees you travel from Venice and its iconic canals through the art-laden streets of Florence and the monuments of Rome to the plunging cliffs and pastel-coloured towns of the arresting Amalfi Coast.

DAYS 1-3: VENICE

Touch down in Venice and transfer by private boat to Ca' di Dio, a sophisticated 5-star hotel with lagoon views and stylish, contemporary Italian interiors. This includes numerous examples of Murano glass, found in chandeliers, lampshades and other decorations. To see the source of such craftsmanship book a guided tour of Murano and Burano islands. You'll witness master craftsmen moulding and shaping glass on Murano before arriving on Burano to watch equally skilled artisans engaged in the age-old tradition of lace making.

If it's your first time to Venice then we suggest a private tour of the city's main sites, including St Mark's Cathedral and the Doge's Palace. If you're returning to the city then how about a tour of the charming Castello District? Highlights include the city's oldest urban vineyard and the Acqua Alta bookshop, which protects its titles from high water by piling them in bathtubs and decommissioned gondolas.



Florence

DAYS 4-5: FLORENCE

Head south today by private transfer to the Renaissance city of Florence. The journey will take you through Emilia-Romagna, the culinary heart of Italy, famous for Parma ham and Parmigiano Reggiano. Once in Florence, check in for two nights at Brunelleschi Hotel. Home to the two-Michelin-star Santa Elisabetta restaurant, the hotel enjoys a superb location in the heart of the city, a stone's throw from the famous Duomo and not far from the Arno River, Ponte Vecchio, Uffizi Galleries and Accademia. Spend time exploring the city or take a guided journey into the Tuscan winelands, calling at the hilltop town of Montalcino, famous for its full-bodied Brunello wines, and Montepulciano, whose lofty position affords breathtaking views of the Tuscan countryside.

DAYS 6-8: ROME

Continue your journey south by private transfer to Rome, stopping en route to hunt for truffles in the Umbrian countryside, accompanied by an expert truffle hunter and his dog. Upon reaching the capital, check in for three nights at the effortlessly cool Hotel de la Ville, a Rocco Forte Hotel, conveniently located at the top of the Spanish Steps.



Hotel de la Ville | Rome



Palazzo Avino | Amalfi Coast



Ravello | Amalfi Coast

Spend the next few days exploring the sights of the Eternal City. An especially fun way to do so is on the back of a Vespa, visiting classic locations from the 1953 film *Roman Holiday*, which helped cement Rome as the embodiment of the Dolce Vita lifestyle. Created exclusively for Rocco Forte guests, the tour traces the steps of the film's two main characters, calling at, among other sites, the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Roman Forum and Colosseum.

DAYS 9-12: AMALFI COAST

Stop to ruminate among the ruins of ancient Pompeii on your transfer south to Ravello on the Amalfi Coast. Palazzo Avino, a 12th-century villa turned luxury hotel, makes a wonderful base for exploring the region. Walk the *Sentiero degli Dei* (Path of the Gods), shop for Italian fashions in picture-postcard Positano, charter a yacht and sail to Capri, or time your visit to coincide with the Ravello Festival, one of Italy's most beloved outdoor classical music festivals. Transfer to Naples on day 12 in time to catch your flight home.

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES - OUR SUGGESTIONS



VIP Tour of the Vatican Museums

Enjoy a private VIP visit after regular opening hours to the Vatican Museums in Rome. A treasure trove of antiques, the museums span 54 galleries, all gloriously lined with masterpieces of the ancient and Renaissance worlds. Highlights include paintings by Caravaggio and da Vinci, the Raphael Rooms and, of course, Michelangelo's revered Sistine Chapel.



Flavours of Italy

Food is an integral part of Italian culture. We can arrange all manner of culinary experiences, from sampling *cicchetti* (single-portion treats similar to tapas) in Venice's *bacari* (taverns) to street food tours led by passionate local guides in exciting, dynamic neighbourhoods like the Oltrarno in Florence and Trastevere and Campo de' Fiori in Rome.



In Vino Veritas

It's staggering to think that about a quarter of the world's wine is Italian, and after 4,000 years of winemaking practice, they've gotten rather good at it. Florence is a great base from which to tour the celebrated vineyards of Chianti, Montalcino and Montepulciano, while Venice is the gateway to Valdobbiadene, home of Italy's most celebrated sparkling wine – Prosecco.

FRANCE & MONACO

France can confidently claim to offer it all, from chic city living and haute couture to the glamorous beaches of the Côte d'Azur and the celebrated vineyards of beautiful Burgundy.

A hundred different authors have piled praise on Paris, where the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe are merely hors d'oeuvres in a moveable feast. Just 90 minutes by train from the capital and you'll find yourself in Burgundy, where wine connoisseurs can link vineyards and villages along the 50-mile Route des Grands Crus.

In the south, the lavender fields of Provence burst into bloom from late June to early August, yet the region holds an irresistible appeal at almost any time of year. Romantic villages perch precariously on hilltops. Historic cities like Arles, Avignon and Aix-en-Provence provide windows to the past. And landscapes range from the snow-covered peaks of the southern Alps to the lagoons of the Camargue and the vast Verdon Gorge, Europe's answer to the Grand Canyon.

Like a piece of French tailoring, it all ends with a flourish on the shimmering Côte d'Azur. From St Tropez to Monaco, the French Riviera remains the place for the jet-set to see and be seen, its hotels and beach clubs a rival to any on the Mediterranean.



Côte d'Azur | France

WHEN TO VISIT

Overall, France enjoys a pleasant year-round climate. For beachfront bronzing, summer in the south is by far your best bet, which ties in nicely with Bastille Day celebrations on 14 July. Le Vendange (grape harvest) takes place across wine-producing regions in the autumn and can be a great time to visit a vineyard or two. Winters can be cold, though the capital's Christmas markets are worth wrapping up for. For more of a party vibe, head to the spectacular Nice Carnival, held annually in February or early March on the French Riviera.

IDEAL FOR

Adventure, Beach, Culture, Gastronomy, Hiking, History, Lakes & Mountains, Nature, Romance, Shopping, Spa & Wellness, Wine

France & Monaco

From hilltop retreats in the Côte d'Azur to the chicest of Parisian boutique accommodation, we'll be sure to offer you the best hotels in France and Monaco. In fact, our portfolio is growing all the time. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code opposite.

FRANCE

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BURGUNDY

COMO Le Montrachet

CÔTE D'AZUR

Hôtel Martinez
La Réserve Ramatuelle
Lily of the Valley

PARIS

La Fantaisie

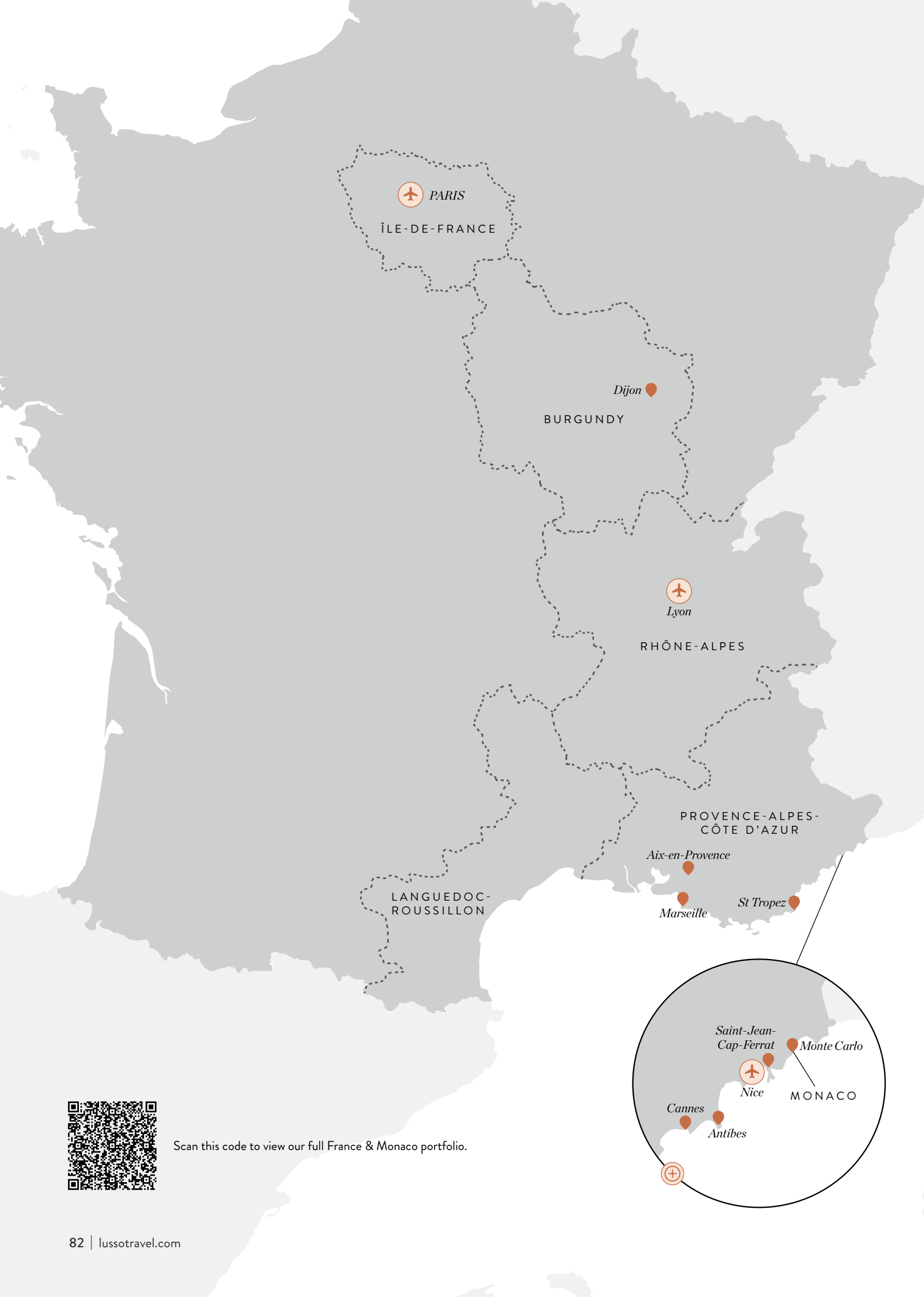
PROVENCE

Coquillade Provence
Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort

MONACO

PAGE 87

Hôtel Métropole Monte-Carlo



Scan this code to view our full France & Monaco portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of France and Monaco's finest hotels



SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Hôtel Métropole Monte-Carlo | Monaco
2. La Réserve Ramatuelle | Côte d'Azur
3. La Fantaisie | Paris
4. Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort | Provence
5. Coquillade Provence | Provence
6. Lily of the Valley | Côte d'Azur
7. COMO Le Montrachet | Burgundy
8. Hôtel Martinez | Côte d'Azur



France & Monaco

Glamour, lavender and heavenly hilltop villages



Sénanque Abbey | Provence

Who can resist the charms of the south of France – glamorous resorts, a coast framed on all sides by piercing blue skies and deep-blue seas, ancient hilltop villages, fields of fresh lavender, abundant food markets, wineries, restaurants, unspoiled islands and dramatic calanques. No wonder it's the most visited region in France after Paris.

CÔTE D'AZUR

Extending from St Tropez to the French-Italian border, the Côte d'Azur is one of the world's most glamorous and recognisable seaside destinations. Also known as the French Riviera, this stretch of glittering coast is bursting with beautiful beaches, luxury hotels, grand villas and splendid marinas. Away from the glitz and glam, you'll find hilltop villages, vineyards, flower farms and winding coastal trails, plus wonderful offshore islands like the gorgeous Îles d'Hyères. Explore the old-world opulence of Nice, take in the serene sophistication of Saint-Tropez, or wander the old town of Antibes, known for its covered market selling crafts, cut flowers and Provençal goodies. Tour the rocky, secluded coves of the Cap-Ferrat coastline, visit the many art galleries of St-Paul-de-Vence, a medieval village made famous by the likes of Picasso and Matisse, tour the perfumeries of Grasse, or swim and sail in the legendary calanques, pristine fjord-like inlets that cut deep into the cliffs between Cassis and Marseille.

“From Coquillade, visit the antiques capital of Provence, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, a lovely town to walk around, especially on a Sunday when the morning market fills the streets with life and colour.”

MONACO

Bordered by France on three sides, the tiny principality of Monaco has been a playground for Europe's elite for more than a century. They come for its designer boutiques, exclusive restaurants, superb sandy beaches and hilltop Mediterranean panoramas. Events like the Monaco Grand Prix, held annually in late May or early June, along with Monaco's tax-free status and the world-famous Casino de Monte-Carlo help to sweeten the deal. The Belle Époque casino, opened in 1865, remains one of the most exclusive gambling establishments in the world. It's just a five-minute walk along the Place du Casino from the Hôtel Métropole Monte-Carlo, our favourite place to stay in the jet-set capital.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort

Sprawling across 750 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds, Terre Blanche may look like just another picturesque Provençal village, but this standout hotel is anything but rustic, offering stylish suites and magnificent villas, an excellent spa, two championship golf courses and a scene-stealing infinity pool.



PROVENCE

A patchwork of hilltop villages, vineyards and lavender fields, Provence is easily one of France's most captivating regions. Several of the country's 'Plus Beaux Villages' (Most Beautiful Villages) can be found in the Luberon, including Ménerbes, the setting for Peter Mayle's much-loved novel, *A Year in Provence*, and gorgeous Gordes, the scenic queen of the Luberon's hilltop villages. Just outside Gordes and a half-hour drive from Coquillade Provence is the incredibly picturesque Sénanque Abbey, whose famed lavender fields are among the most photographed in France. Away to the east is another of Provence's most picturesque regions, the Pays de Fayence, home to hotel Terre Blanche and a number of captivating hilltop villages, including Bagnols-en-Forêt, Callian, Fayence and Montauroux. Lying between the two hotels is the spectacular Verdon Gorge, where you can kayak, raft or fly by helicopter up Europe's largest canyon.



Gordes | Provence



La Réserve Ramatuelle | Côte d'Azur

THE JEWEL OF
THE ADRIATIC

A fjord-like idyll on Montenegro's Adriatic Sea, *One&Only Portonovi* is the jewel of Europe's most fashionable new riviera, all year round. A rare nautical playground offering fresh air adventures through sapphire waters, dramatic forest, and medieval towns. Perfectly balanced with chic, water-front relaxation, world-class dining, and pioneering wellness by Chenot. Discover the newest additions to One&Only's collection of exceptional resorts, *One&Only Aesthesis*, Athens & *One&Only Kéa Island*, Greece.

Speak to your travel agent about booking a Lusso holiday to One&Only's exceptional European resorts.

One&Only
PORTONОВI
Montenegro

CROATIA & MONTENEGRO



Often touted as the ‘new this’ or the ‘new that’, Croatia is in fact a dream destination in its own right. Just take a look at its coastline: 1,778 kilometres of crystalline waters, remote islands, hidden coves, glitzy beaches and traditional villages.

At its southern end you'll find Dubrovnik, one of the finest walled cities in the world, whose UNESCO-listed old town is punctuated with marble streets and Baroque churches. Add the rolling vineyards and olive groves of Istria, the waterfront bars of heavenly Hvar, the historical delights of Diocletian's Palace in Split and the secluded coves of islands like Korcula and you'll soon understand why Croatia has emerged as the Balkans' star attraction.

Hot on its heels is neighbouring Montenegro. Barely 100 kilometres from tip to toe, this Balkan gem is still largely unknown to European travellers; a staggering omission when you consider what it offers: mountains as dramatic as the Alps, undisturbed beaches and stone-walled cities as old as ancient Greece. Some of the finest attractions are along the Adriatic, like gorgeous Kotor, dramatically wedged between brooding mountains and a flooded river canyon.



WHEN TO VISIT

July and August offer the warmest weather – great for sailing and swimming – but bring crowds and higher prices, especially in popular places like Dubrovnik. May, June, September and October are therefore ideal months to visit, when crowds are thinner and cooler temperatures allow for hiking and other outdoor pursuits. In Istria, Croatia, September sees the start of the grape harvest while October is truffle month, with truffle-trumpeting events held every weekend across the region.

IDEAL FOR

Culture, Families, Gastronomy, Hiking, History, Touring, Watersports, Wine

Croatia & Montenegro

Some of Europe's most exciting new hotels have opened in this region in recent years and we are always on the lookout for exceptional new properties to add to our portfolio. For our latest recommendations, please visit our website or scan the codes below.

CROATIA

PAGE 96

DUBROVNIK

- Hotel Bellevue Dubrovnik
- Hotel Dubrovnik Palace
- Hotel Excelsior Dubrovnik
- Sun Gardens Dubrovnik

HVAR

- Maslina Resort

ISTRIA

- Grand Park Hotel Rovinj
- Hotel Monte Mulini
- Meneghetti Wine Hotel & Winery

MONTENEGRO

PAGE 97

- One&Only Portonovi
- Regent Porto Montenegro
- The Chedi Lustica Bay



Scan these codes to view our full Croatia & Montenegro portfolios.



Croatia



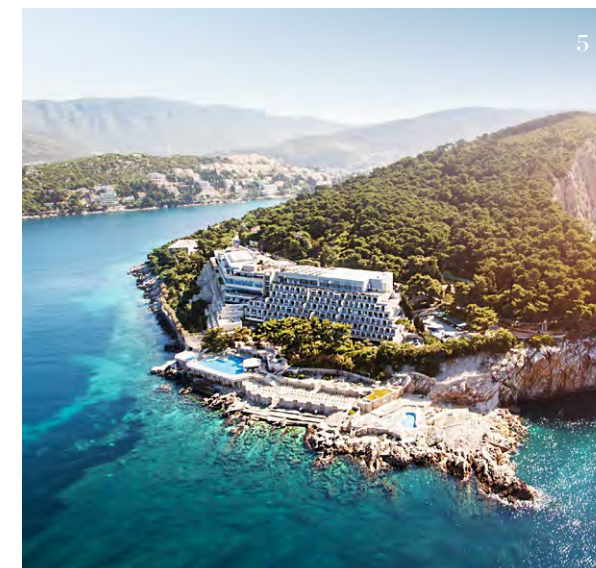
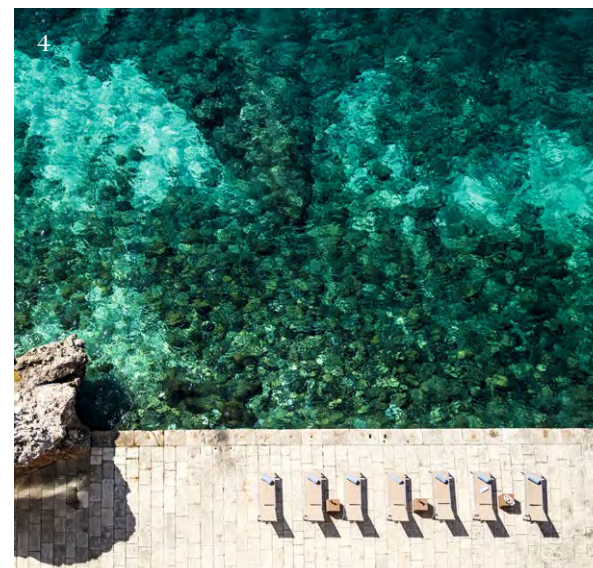
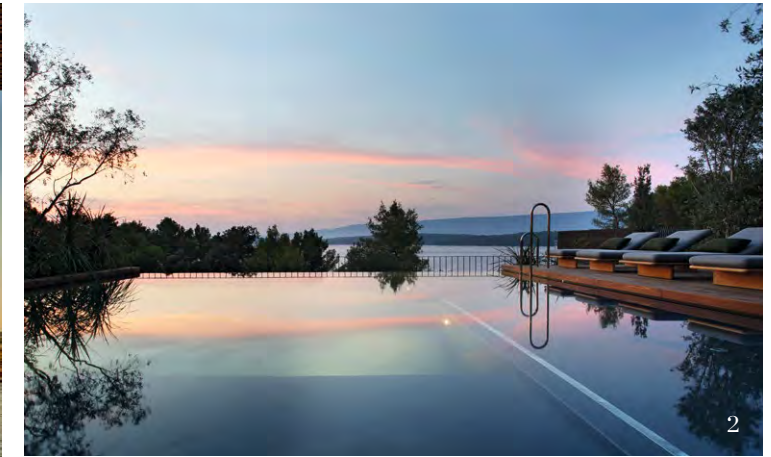
Montenegro

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Croatia and Montenegro's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Grand Park Hotel Rovinj | Istria
2. Maslina Resort | Hvar
3. Sun Gardens Dubrovnik | Dubrovnik
4. Hotel Excelsior Dubrovnik | Dubrovnik
5. Hotel Dubrovnik Palace | Dubrovnik
6. Meneghetti Wine Hotel & Winery | Istria
7. Hotel Monte Mulini | Istria
8. One&Only Portonovi | Montenegro
9. The Chedi Lustica Bay | Montenegro
10. Regent Porto Montenegro | Montenegro



Croatia & Montenegro

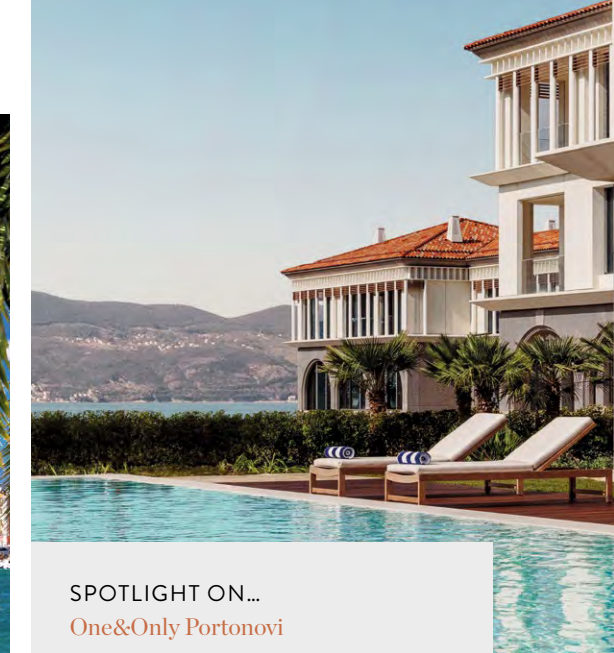
The western Balkans at their breathtaking best



Hvar | Croatia



Rovinj | Croatia



SPOTLIGHT ON... One&Only Portonovi

Montenegro is no stranger to luxury hotels but One&Only's original resort in Europe is perhaps the finest yet. Resplendent at the entrance to the Bay of Kotor, it offers chic waterfront villas, world-class dining, a pioneering Chenot spa and spectacular views from almost every angle.

ISTRIA, CROATIA

Resembling Tuscany in both looks and spirit, the heart-shaped peninsula of Istria juts into the Adriatic just south of Trieste in Italy. The Romans colonised Istria in the 2nd century BC and the amphitheatre at Pula is one of the largest and best preserved in Europe, and is still used today for concerts and film festivals. Further north, on the coast, the medieval town of Rovinj is a tangle of steep, narrow streets and centuries-old stone houses, crowned by the 18th-century Church of St Euphemia. Older still is the magnificent 6th-century St Euphrasius Basilica in Poreč, whose intricate mosaics are exquisite examples of Byzantine art. Be sure also to head into the interior, known for its hilltop towns and acclaimed gastronomy, starring truffles, wild asparagus, excellent olive oil and award-winning wines.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is one of Europe's newest luxury destinations, complete with glamorous hotels and marinas filled with torpedo-shaped superyachts. Of its natural attractions, the Bay of Kotor takes best in show, its limestone cliffs plunging almost vertically into the Adriatic. At the head of the bay and backed by steep mountains is Kotor itself, one of the best-preserved medieval ports in Europe. Other highlights include Budva, a mini Dubrovnik with marbled streets and Venetian walls rising from the sea; the small town of Perast, whose magnificent villas were built by wealthy sea captains in the 17th and 18th centuries; Herceg Novi, with its ancient walls, sunny squares and lively atmosphere; and Europe's largest vineyard, which sits next to Lake Skadar, 30 kilometres from the Adriatic Sea.



Perast | Montenegro

Ancient walled cities, a rugged shoreline and picturesque islands adrift in the warm waters of the Adriatic Sea make the stretch of coast from Istria in Croatia to the Montenegrin Riviera one of Europe's most spectacular seaside playgrounds.

DON'T MISS Essential Experiences

- Discover Dubrovnik on a private walking tour of the city's UNESCO-listed old town.
- Cruise by private motorboat around the coves, bays and beaches of the Elaphiti Islands, sunbathing and swimming in crystal-clear water.
- Depart Dubrovnik on a gourmet tour of the Peljesac Peninsula, including wine tasting at a family-run winery and oyster tasting at an oyster farm in Ston.
- Enjoy a full-day gourmet tour of Istria that includes a truffle hunt, a delicious lunch and a tour of a family-owned winery and distillery.
- Embark on a spellbinding tour of the Bay of Kotor, visiting both Kotor and Perast before being welcomed by a local family into their 18th-century palace by the sea.

HVAR, CROATIA

Croatia may claim over 1,000 islands but none have the fame and status of Hvar, the sunniest place in the country and the summertime haunt of celebrities and yachties, who come to sip cocktails at its waterfront bars. There's more to Hvar, though, than its glamorous veneer. The capital, Hvar Town, is one of the best-preserved historic towns in the Adriatic. The verdant interior is scented by lavender fields and aromatic herbs. And the coast is awash with hidden coves and pretty beaches. Of particular note are the Pakleni Islands, a gorgeous chain of wooded islets in front of Hvar Town, surrounded by sapphire waters and littered with lovely restaurants.



Dubrovnik | Croatia

DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

When it comes to the 'Pearl of the Adriatic', as Byron called Dubrovnik, it's hard to imagine anyone becoming inured to the city's smooth marble streets and mix of cafes, museums, churches and Baroque buildings. Or failing to be inspired by a walk along the ancient city walls, which for five centuries protected a sophisticated, independent republic – a rival even to Venice as a maritime power in the Mediterranean. Be sure to ride the Dubrovnik cable car to the top of Srd Hill for breathtaking views of the old town, and to visit the laidback Elaphiti Islands, whose turquoise waters offer excellent swimming and snorkelling. Also worth a daytrip is lush Lokrum Island. Legend has it that Richard the Lionheart was washed ashore on Lokrum after his ship was wrecked coming home from the Crusades. Today it's better known for its role in *Game of Thrones*, which was partly filmed on the island.



Dubrovnik | Croatia

11-DAY TAILOR-MADE ITINERARY

Essence of the Adriatic

DURATION

10 nights / 11 days

SUMMARY

3 nights Hvar • 3 nights Dubrovnik
4 nights Bay of Kotor

INCLUDES

10 nights' accommodation on a bed & breakfast basis, flights to and from the UK and private boat and car transfers throughout.

Tours, excursions and activities mentioned are examples of what we can arrange. Ask your travel agent for the full range of options and a personalised quotation.

Idyllic beaches, medieval cities and islands strung like jewels across sapphire seas are just some of the highlights of this luxury tour down the coast of the Adriatic.

DAYS 1-3: HVAR

Upon arrival in Split you'll be met by your driver and, if time allows, given a tour of the city's star attraction, Diocletian's Palace, before sailing to Hvar. Once on the island you'll transfer to Maslina Resort, a Relais & Châteaux property in its own sheltered bay on the island's west coast. To help get your bearings, we recommend a private tour of the island on day two. Begin in Hvar Town, famed for its Venetian architecture, chic waterfront bars and as the home of Europe's oldest public theatre. Continue to the picturesque town of Jelsa and enjoy a private tasting at a local winery before ending in Stari Grad, the island's first settlement, built by the Greeks over 2,000 years ago.

There's no shortage of options for what to do on day three. Perhaps sail to the pristine Pakleni Islands (see right), hike or cycle between sleepy villages through olive groves, vineyards and lavender fields, or enjoy a four-course lunch tailored to your tastes in a private seafront setting.

DAYS 4-6: DUBROVNIK

Cruise by private boat to Orebic on the Peljesac Peninsula, perhaps stopping en route to swim off the beautiful beaches of Korcula. From Orebic, a private car will transfer you to Ston for a tour and tasting at one of the area's famous oyster farms. From Ston it's just a short hop to Dubrovnik, where you'll stay for three nights at Hotel Bellevue Dubrovnik, a slick, modern hotel built into a cliff above a sheltered bay.

A private walking tour of the old town will make it clear why Dubrovnik is called the 'Pearl of the Adriatic'. Highlights include Europe's oldest pharmacy, which has been operating inside a Franciscan monastery since 1391; the Gothic Rector's Palace, which houses an impressive museum; and the Baroque Church of St Blaise, dedicated to the city's patron saint. Perhaps best of all are the spectacular views of the shimmering Adriatic from atop the city's walls. Further options include trips to the enchanting Elaphiti Islands or to nearby Lokrum Island, a UNESCO-protected nature reserve with lush botanical gardens and a Benedictine monastery.



Maslina Resort | Hvar



Regent Porto Montenegro



Kotor | Montenegro

DAYS 7-11: BAY OF KOTOR

Transfer across the border and check in for four nights at Regent Porto Montenegro, an elegant waterfront hotel in the Bay of Kotor, a dramatic, meandering fjord-like inlet enclosed by rugged mountains. The hotel is designed to reflect the region's centuries-old ties with Venice and overlooks a superyacht marina rimmed by cafes, boutiques and smart yachting outlets.

We highly recommend a boat tour of the Bay of Kotor, taking in the picturesque town of Perast, the myth-shrouded island Our Lady of the Rocks, and Kotor itself, another stone-walled town dramatically wedged between rearing mountains and a waterfront lined with Venetian mansions. Also well worth visiting are Mt Lovcen, the looming black mountain that gave Montenegro its name, and UNESCO-listed Cetinje, the country's one-time capital. Transfer to Tivat on day 11 in time to catch your flight home.



Hvar | Croatia

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES - OUR SUGGESTIONS



Pakleni Islands

Cast off from Hvar to explore the picturesque coves, hidden beaches and lush pine forests of the Pakleni Islands with your own private speedboat and skipper. As well as being perfect for swimming and sunbathing, the chain of 11 islands beyond the port of Hvar Town offer excellent dining, some of the world's best honey and one of Croatia's most famous wineries.



Dive the Elaphiti Islands

The gorgeous Elaphiti Islands, a chain of six islands north-west of Dubrovnik, provide a perfect escape from the city's summer crowds, though much of their beauty lies below the water's surface. Descend into the deep blue waters of the Adriatic with your private dive instructor and discover a world of shipwrecks, caves, reefs and red corals.



Our Lady of the Rocks

Set out after normal visiting hours on a cruise to the island and church of Our Lady of the Rocks. One of the most iconic landmarks in the Bay of Kotor, the island was created – according to legend – from over 200 years of sailors dropping rocks in the sea following the discovery of an icon of the Virgin Mary on a rocky outcrop near the island's location in 1452.

MALTA

Just a three-hour flight from the UK, the island of Malta sees little but sunshine from April to October and offers gin-clear water, fabulous seafood, luxurious hotels and a fascinating history that belies its meagre size.

Malta has been forced to endure many injustices in its 7,000-year history: a five-month siege by Ottoman Turks, irreparable looting by Napoleon's garrisons and 154 days of Luftwaffe bombing to name but a few. Yet in its own way, the latest affront causes equal indignation. We're talking, of course, of its undeserved reputation as just a bucket-and-spade, package-holiday destination.

The truth is that there is much more to Malta than meets the eye. Its capital, Valletta – described by UNESCO as 'one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world' – is a hub of buzzing bars and design hotels. Its megalithic temples are among the oldest free-standing structures in the world, built more than 1,000 years before Giza's Great Pyramid. Its array of restaurants (six with Michelin stars) champion seasonal produce and the fisherman's catch. While its snorkelling and dive sites include caves, reefs, wartime wrecks and world-renowned spots like the Blue Lagoon, a sheltered cove on neighbouring Comino with a white-sand seabed and implausibly clear water.



Valletta | Malta

WHEN TO VISIT

Clocking up over 300 days of sunshine each year, Malta is ideal for those in search of a warm-weather escape. Spring (April to June) and autumn (September and October) are ideal times to visit. A series of *festas* (feast days) runs almost without stopping from June to September. To catch one out of season, coincide your trip with the Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck in Valletta on 10 February. Also worth a trip is *Notte Bianca* in October, a spectacular nocturnal celebration in the streets of the capital.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Diving & Snorkelling, Gastronomy, Hiking, History, Relaxation, Romance, Watersports, Winter Sun

Malta

Historic Valletta makes an ideal base for any stay on Malta, with almost everywhere on the island accessible as a day trip. Our recommended hotels range from the country's longest established 5-star hotel, The Phoenicia Malta, to one of its newest, Iniala Harbour House, spread across four beautifully restored townhouses overlooking the Grand Harbour. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code below.

MALTA

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VALLETTA

Iniala Harbour House
Rosselli AX Privilege
The Phoenicia Malta



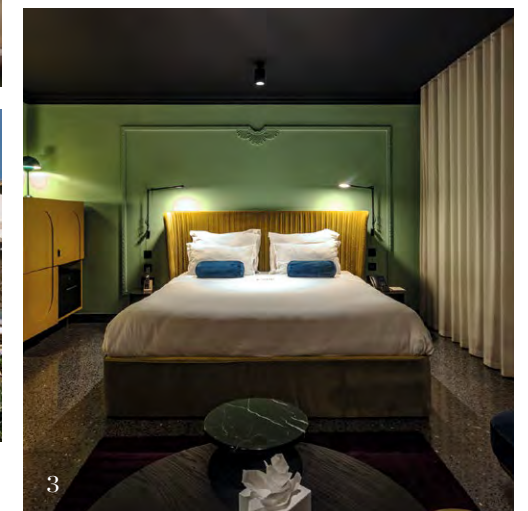
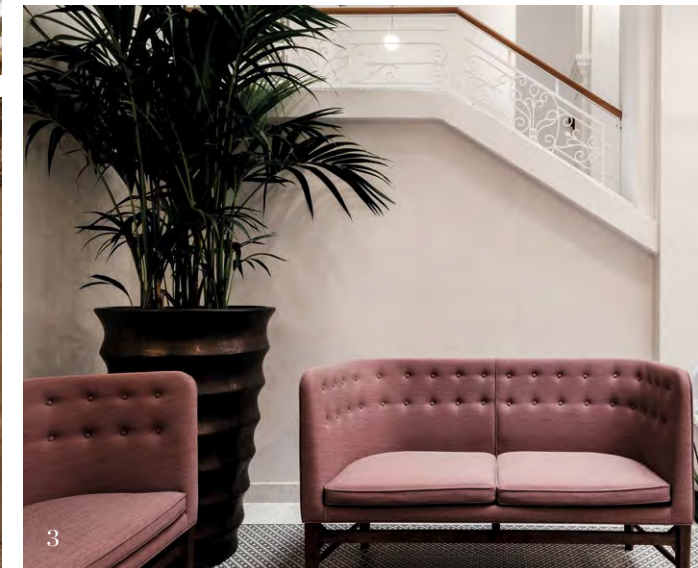
Scan this code to view our full Malta portfolio.

HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Malta's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Iniala Harbour House | Valletta
2. The Phoenicia Malta | Valletta
3. Rosselli AX Privilege | Valletta



Malta

Proof that good things come in small packages



Blue Grotto | Malta

Malta is perfect for anyone with a penchant for history, culture, stand-and-stare architecture, crystal-clear water and the flavours of the Med. And if you want that all wrapped in a fabulous climate then you'll find that too – April to October sees little but sunshine, usually tempered by a cooling sea breeze.

GOZO & COMINO

Greener and slower paced than Malta to the south, the island of Gozo offers many of the same attractions as its big brother, just squeezed into about a third of the space: great cycling and hiking, a stunning coastline and a history that runs from megalithic temples to medieval castles. Wedged between Malta and Gozo is Comino, a nature reserve and bird sanctuary just 2.5 by 1.5 kilometres in size. Both islands are noted for their spectacular diving and snorkelling, with fin-toting tourists drawn to world-renowned sites like the Blue Hole on Gozo, a vertical chimney in the limestone about 25 metres deep, and Comino's Blue Lagoon, an immensely photogenic cove that stars on countless Maltese postcards.

DON'T MISS

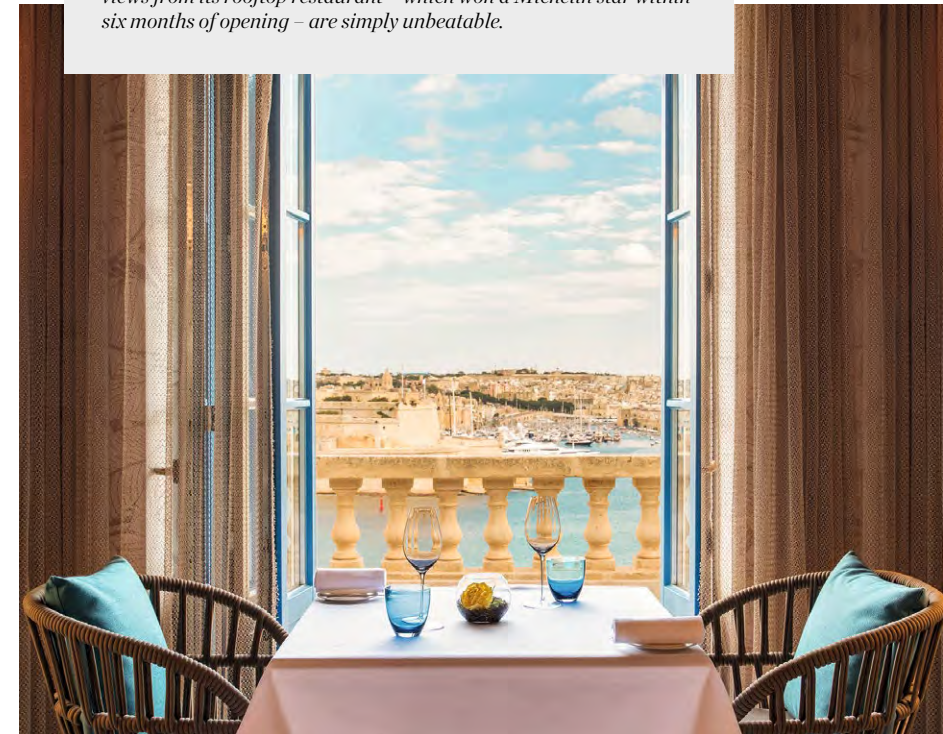
Taste of Malta Cruise

Perfect for couples or groups of up to six people, this one-of-a-kind cruise reveals the history of Malta through its local cuisine. Maltese food is heavily influenced by the many foreign cultures that have ruled the country in its long history, creating a melting pot of flavours that you'll get to enjoy as you explore the island's coastline on your own private motor yacht.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Iniala Harbour House

Bringing an unprecedented level of luxury to the Maltese islands, the 23-suite Iniala Harbour House has been cleverly engineered from four 19th-century townhouses overlooking the Grand Harbour. The views from its rooftop restaurant – which won a Michelin star within six months of opening – are simply unbeatable.



Blue Lagoon | Comino



Valletta | Malta



VALLETTA & THE THREE CITIES

In addition to being Europe's sunniest capital, Valletta is also its smallest, measuring just 600 by 1,000 metres. Yet it packs a lot into its Lilliputian stature. You may wish to start at the Upper Barakka Gardens, which offer wonderful views of Valletta's Grand Harbour, often described as the most beautiful in the Mediterranean. From there you could wander to the elaborate St John's Co-Cathedral, home to two of Caravaggio's original masterpieces, before moving on to the Grand Master's Palace, once the residence of the Grand Master of the Knights of St John (who built Valletta in the 16th and 17th centuries) and today the seat of the Maltese parliament. Come evening, take your pick from the capital's three Michelin-star restaurants, or putter across the harbour to the Three Cities, a trio of historic, fortified towns so beautifully preserved they feel like stepping into a 17th-century time capsule.

MDINA & MEGALITHIC MALTA

Few old cities remain as gloriously unspoiled as Mdina, the medieval walled capital of Malta. Perched loftily on a crag, its picturesque streets are lined with bougainvillea and beautifully preserved palazzi. Some, like Palazzo Falson, have been opened as museums, offering a rare glimpse behind aristocratic walls. Not far from Mdina is Ta' Betta, an excellent and exclusive winery where tastings can sometimes be arranged for discerning visitors. If Valletta and Mdina give a sense of Malta's last 500 years of history, the temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra in the south-east of the island transport you far further back. Astonishingly, these megalithic structures are among the oldest on Earth, built over 5,000 years ago, long before the Egyptians had even thought about the pyramids.



Mdina | Malta

TURKEY



Bridging the gap between Europe and Asia, Turkey's vast landmass contains a striking variety of historical treasures, incredible landscapes, beguiling cultures and mouth-watering cuisines.

On the shores of the Bosphorus and straddling two continents, Istanbul is a city of spices and spires, its Ottoman mosques, Byzantine churches and covered bazaars providing endless fascination. By the Mediterranean, luxurious resorts vie for the best spots on the Bodrum Peninsula and along the Turquoise Coast, so named by early visitors left dumbstruck by the vibrant colour of the water.

Away from the resorts, history in Turkey is carried in the dust, from the ancient sites of Troy and Pergamon to the battlefields of Gallipoli and the ruins of Ephesus, perhaps the best-preserved classical city in the eastern Mediterranean. Equally astonishing are Turkey's otherworldly landscapes, not least the dazzling white terraces and calcium-rich pools of Pamukkale, and the lunar-like landscapes of ethereal Cappadocia, where conical rocks known as 'fairy chimneys' erupt from the desert floor, some soaring as high as five-storey buildings.



Turkish ceramics | Istanbul

WHEN TO VISIT

April, May, September and October are perhaps the best months to visit Turkey, since the climate will be perfect in Istanbul and on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. July and August can be very hot but are perfect for swimming and other watersports. Certain hotels on the coast close during the colder winter months. Hidrellez Festival on 06 May is enormous fun to attend, with the arrival of spring celebrated through folk singing, dancing and fire leaping.

IDEAL FOR

Beach, Culture, Diving & Snorkelling, Families, Gastronomy, History, Nightlife, Shopping, Spa & Wellness, Watersports

Turkey

From converted mansions on the banks of the Bosphorus in Istanbul to the finest resorts on the Bodrum Peninsula and along the Turquoise Coast, we know exactly where to find the best hotels in Turkey. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code below.

TURKEY

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BODRUM PENINSULA

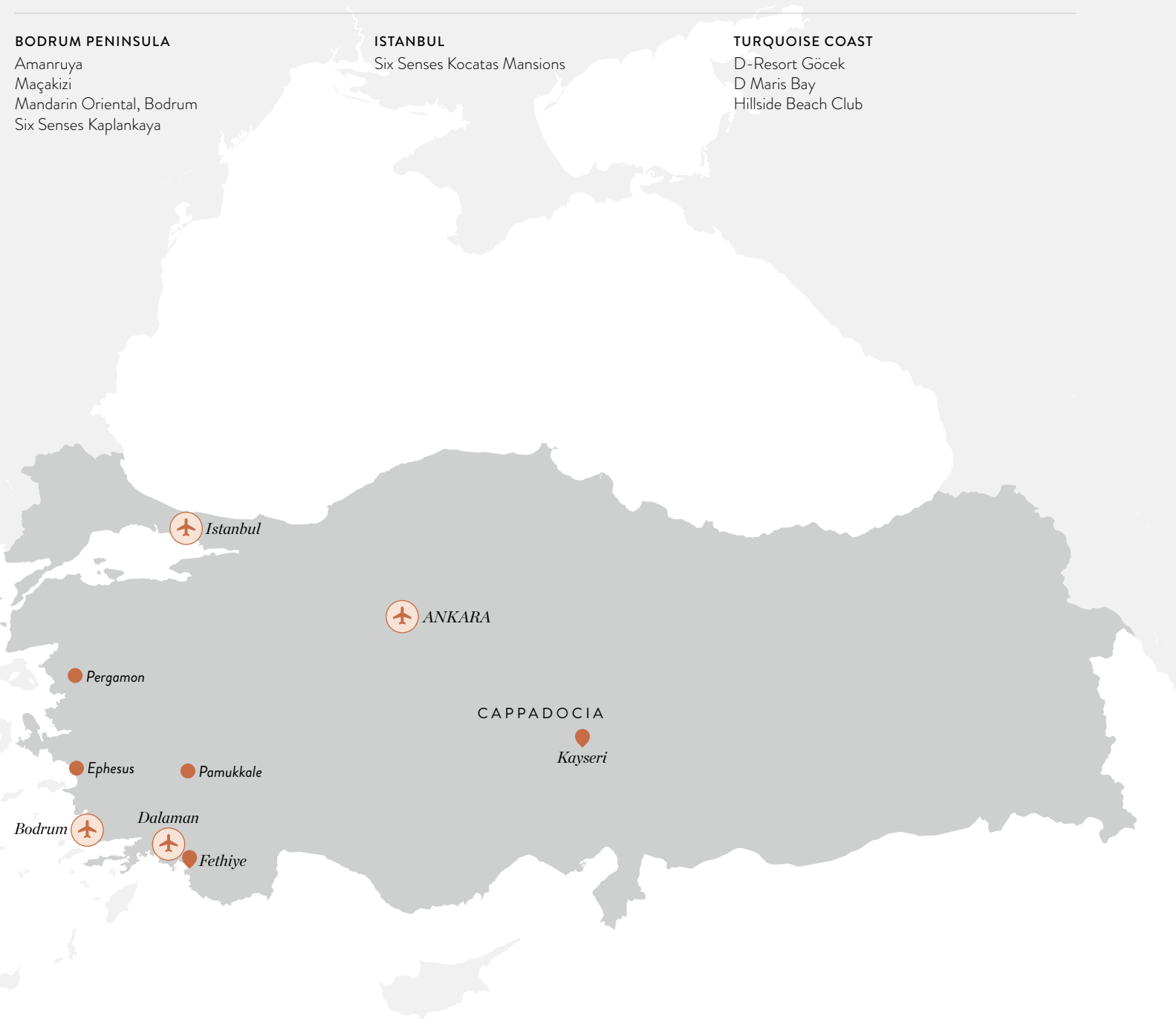
Amanruya
Maçakizi
Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum
Six Senses Kaplankaya

ISTANBUL

Six Senses Kocatas Mansions

TURQUOISE COAST

D-Resort Göcek
D Maris Bay
Hillside Beach Club

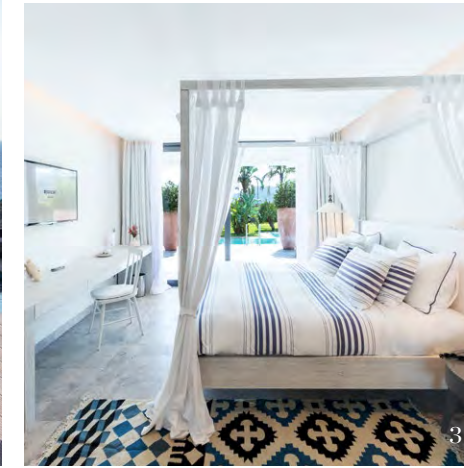


Scan this code to view our full Turkey portfolio.



HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Turkey's finest hotels



SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Six Senses Kocatas Mansions | Istanbul
2. Six Senses Kaplankaya | Bodrum
3. D-Resort Göcek | Turquoise Coast
4. Amanruya | Bodrum
5. Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum | Bodrum
6. D Maris Bay | Turquoise Coast
7. Hillside Beach Club | Turquoise Coast
8. Maçakizi | Bodrum



Turkey

From the Turkish Riviera to a bridge between continents



Spend any amount of time gazing out to sea along Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines and you'll soon understand why early visitors named the region the Turquoise Coast. Its quiet beaches, coves and bays make a wonderful contrast to the energetic streets of old Istanbul, on which the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires have all left their mark.

BODRUM PENINSULA

Jutting out into the Aegean, just a few miles from Kos in Greece's Dodecanese, is the fashionable Bodrum Peninsula, home to an increasing number of exclusive beach clubs and 5-star hotels. Often Hellenic in feel, with ruined churches, windmills and old stone houses, the peninsula exudes its own unique charm. Its greener north side sees pine forests tumbling towards crystal-blue seas. Studded with tall crags, the south is more arid with a sandier coast, though enchanting bays and Blue Flag beaches can be found on both shorelines. With its low-rise whitewashed houses and subtropical gardens, Bodrum is the most attractive of Turkey's major Aegean resorts. Its harbour is dominated by the striking St Peter's Castle. Inside, the unusual Museum of Underwater Archaeology is a showcase of historic wrecks and treasures found off the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts.

"For a taste of the jet-set life, visit Yalikavak Marina on the Bodrum Peninsula, where superyachts are moored beside exclusive restaurants and designer boutiques."



DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Explore the Turquoise Coast aboard a luxury yacht or traditional Turkish gulet. Or set sail from Bodrum to the nearby Greek islands of Kos, Patmos or Kalimnos.
- Make a day trip from Bodrum to see the ruins of ancient Ephesus, one of the wealthiest ports in the Greco-Roman world.
- Enjoy a guided tour around Istanbul's Old City, including a cruise on the Bosphorus and visits to the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Basilica Cistern and Grand Bazaar.
- Shop for figs, spices, coffee, apricots, Turkish delight and a host of other treats at Istanbul's 17th-century Spice Market.

TURQUOISE COAST

Stretching east from Bodrum along the shores of the Mediterranean is Turkey's fabled Turquoise Coast, whose waters take on a luminous blue found nowhere else in Europe. Delightful D Maris Bay sits at the gateway to the long and mountainous Datça Peninsula, home to sleepy fishing villages, isolated mountain hamlets and hundreds of secluded coves. Further east is Göcek village with its yacht-filled marinas and quaysides lined with smart international restaurants and traditional Turkish eateries. Between D-Resort Göcek and Hillside Beach Club is Fethiye, a port city known for its natural harbour and numerous rock tombs, including the Tomb of Amyntas, an Ionic temple facade carved into the sheer rock wall behind the town in the 4th century BC. Fethiye's offshore islands are wonderful to explore by boat. In fact, the whole region is a seafarer's dream, offering countless opportunities to swim in sapphire waters beneath cloudless blue skies.

ISTANBUL

"If the earth were a single state, Istanbul would be its capital," proclaimed Napoleon Bonaparte. Straddling Europe and Asia, this pulsating metropolis has been capturing the imaginations of visitors for centuries. Highlights include Emperor Justinian's great church, the Hagia Sophia, the greatest church in Christendom until the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453; the minareted Blue Mosque, built to rival the Hagia Sophia in the 17th century; Topkapi Palace, home to the Ottoman Sultans for around 400 years; the extraordinary underground Basilica Cistern; and the ultimate bargain-seeker's paradise, the Grand Bazaar, one of the oldest covered markets in the world. The city also boasts a thriving cafe culture and a great restaurant scene.

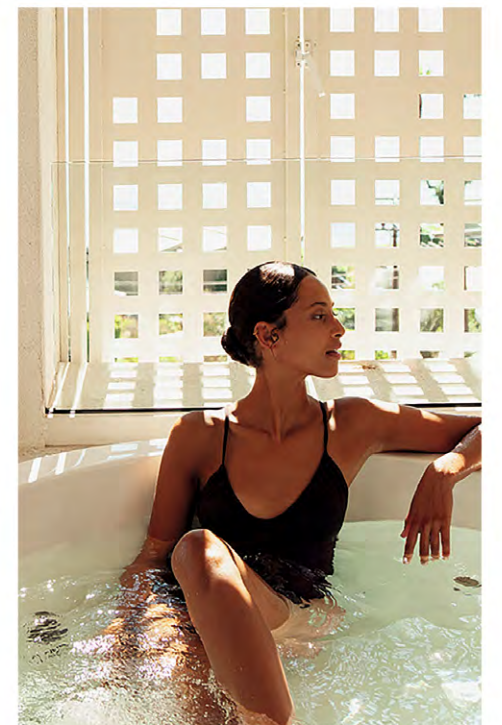
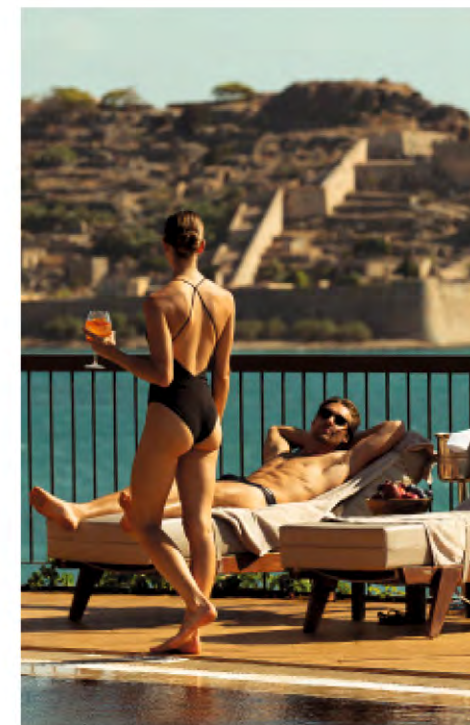




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www.domesresorts.com



MOROCCO



Not too long ago, Morocco for British tourists meant Marrakech and little else. Today there's a veritable feast for travellers to explore, from beautiful beaches and empty desert dunes to snow-capped mountains and crowded city souks, and all under a four-hour flight from the UK.

That's the beauty of Morocco; it offers a taste of the exotic without the need for longhaul travel, be it the heady perfume of orange blossom, the cool refreshing taste of mint tea, the pungent smell of the tanner's yard, the wailing of the muezzin or the cascade of colour at a local spice market.

Haggle for souvenirs in the souks of Marrakech. Follow your nose through Fez's ancient medina to the city's famous tanneries. Marvel at the size and intricate detail of the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca. Watch fishermen bring in their daily catch beneath the 18th-century ramparts of delightful Essaouira. Soak up the solitude of the Agafay Desert. Surf world-class waves on the Atlantic coast. Or set out on foot on a guided trek through the mighty High Atlas, where Berber villages cling like limpets to the steep and terraced hillsides.



Atlas Mountains

WHEN TO VISIT

If you're looking to move around, the best times to visit are April, May, September and October, with warm temperatures right across the country. July and August can be very hot in Marrakech and in the southern desert areas but perfectly pleasant on the coast and in the Atlas Mountains, which can be cold in the winter months, with snow on the peaks. Ramadan is an interesting time to visit, with the pace of life slower in the daytime but evenings livelier than ever in the streets of Marrakech as the breaking of the fast is celebrated.

IDEAL FOR

Adventure, Culture, Families, Hiking, History, Shopping, Winter Sun

Morocco

From exclusive mountain hideaways and Relais & Châteaux riads to palaces owned by the King of Morocco, the hotels here are among the best in the world. Given the stiff competition, we're always reviewing which best suit our clients. For the most up-to-date list, please visit our website or scan the code below.

MOROCCO

PAGE 122

AGAFAY DESERT

Inara Camp

ATLANTIC COAST

La Fiermontina Ocean

La Sultana Oualidia

Mazagan Beach & Golf Resort

ATLAS MOUNTAINS

Kasbah Tamadot

MARRAKECH

Amanjena

Fairmont Royal Palm Marrakech

La Sultana Marrakech

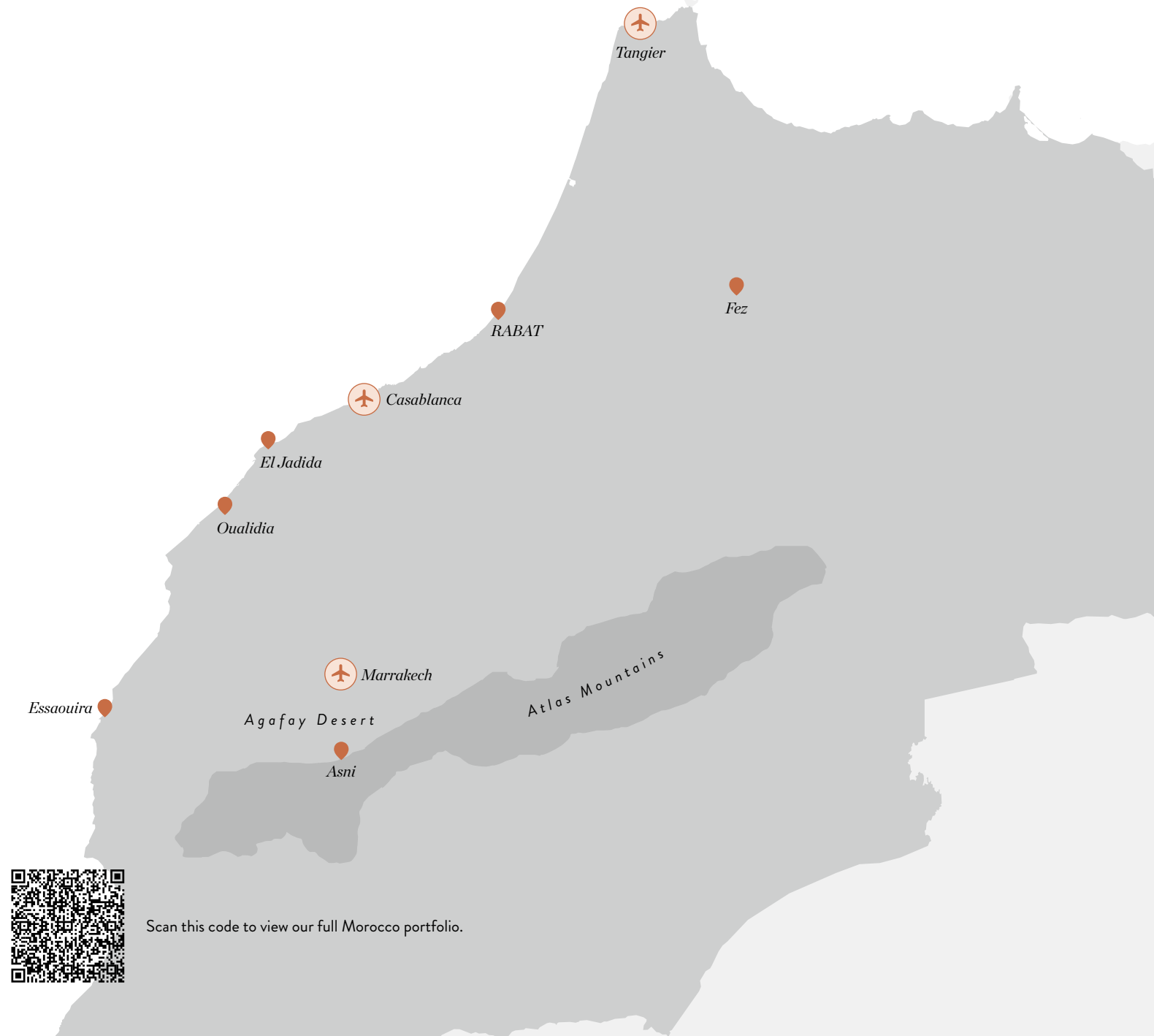
Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech

Royal Mansour Marrakech

Selman Marrakech

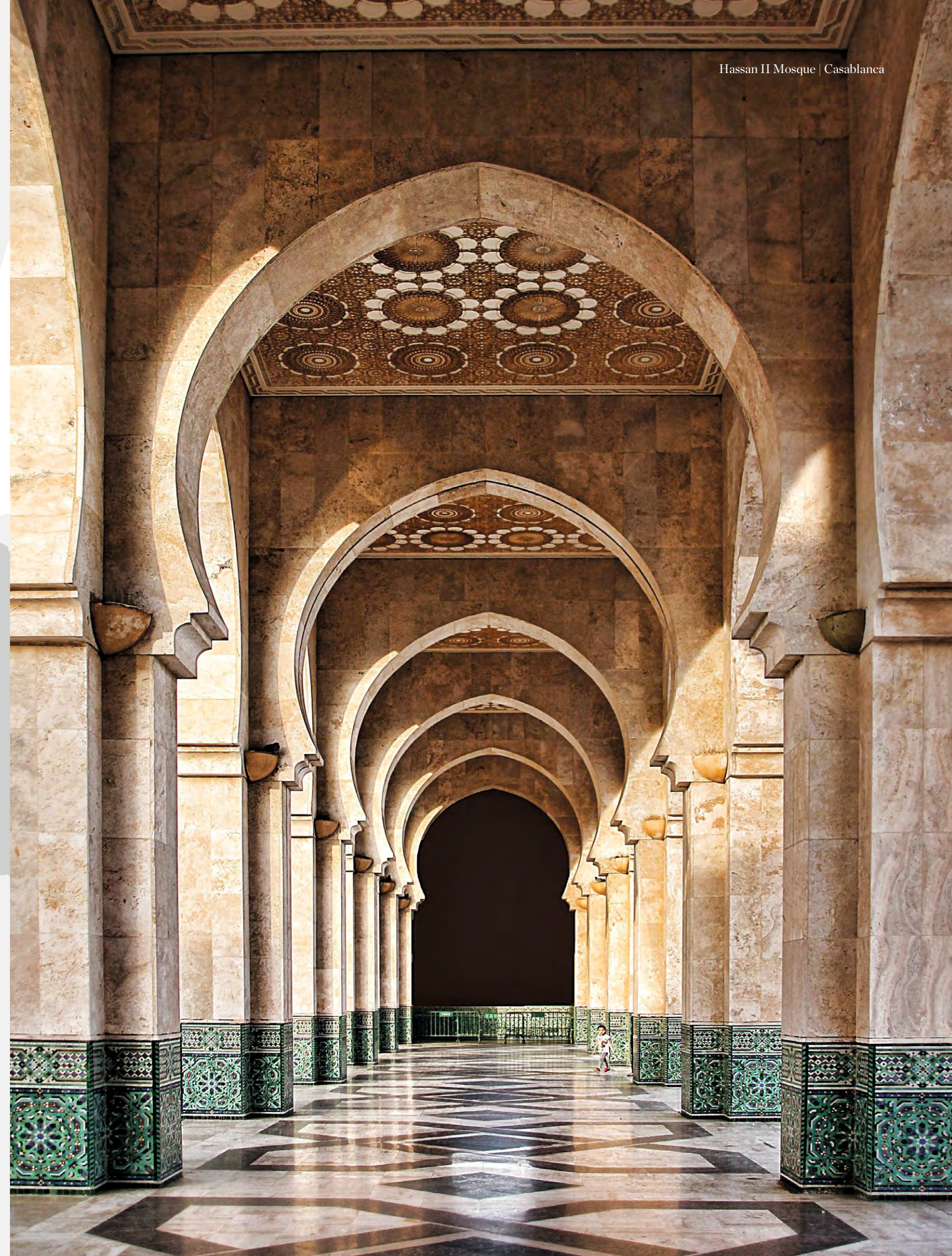
The Oberoi, Marrakech

Villa des Orangers



Scan this code to view our full Morocco portfolio.

Hassan II Mosque | Casablanca

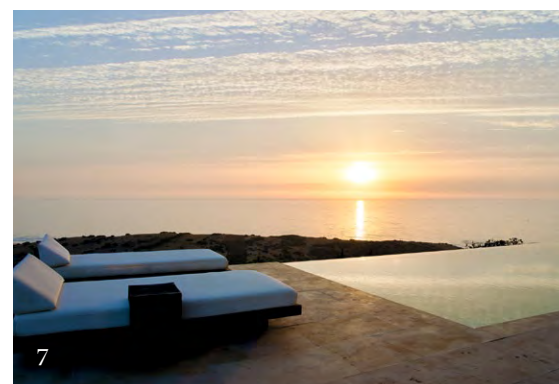


HOTELS IN FOCUS

A snapshot of Morocco's finest hotels

SPOTLIGHT ON

1. Mazagan Beach & Golf Resort | Atlantic Coast
2. Royal Mansour Marrakech | Marrakech
3. La Sultana Oualidia | Atlantic Coast
4. Kasbah Tamadot | Atlas Mountains
5. The Oberoi, Marrakech | Marrakech
6. Amanjena | Marrakech
7. La Fiermontina Ocean | Atlantic Coast
8. Inara Camp | Agafay Desert
9. Villa des Orangers | Marrakech
10. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech | Marrakech



Morocco

Souks, kasbahs, beaches and Berber villages

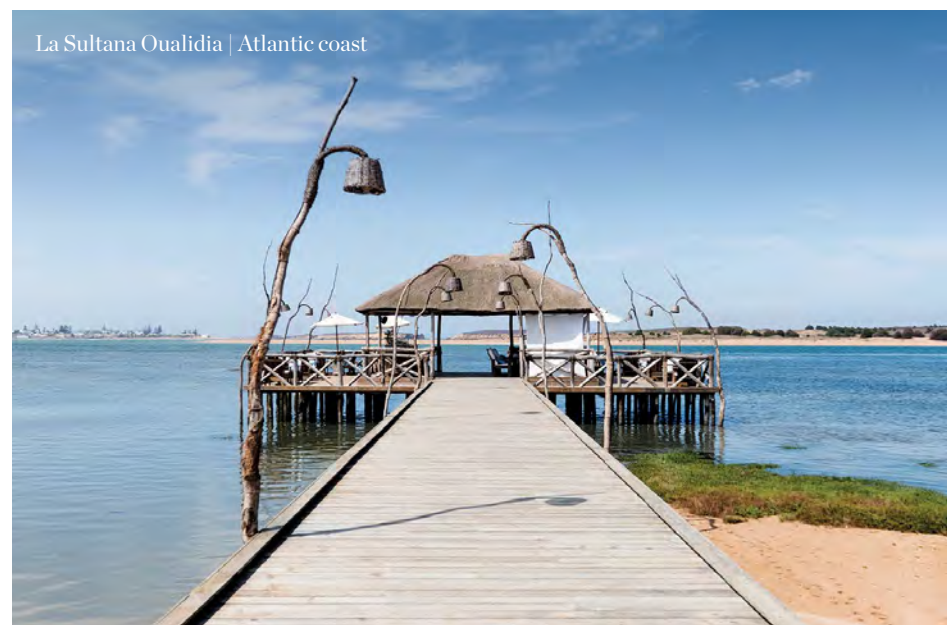


Koutoubia Minaret | Marrakech

Founded nearly 1,000 years ago, Marrakech should be on every traveller's wishlist, its bustling souks a wonderful contrast to the peace and quiet of the nearby Atlas Mountains or arresting Agafay Desert. To the west, miles of glorious sands weave along Morocco's Atlantic coast, peppered by traditional fishing villages, fortified towns and historic ports.

MARRAKECH

There is nowhere quite like the 'Red City' of Marrakech. At its heart is the Djemaa el-Fna, a huge medieval square that comes alive at night with an ever-changing cast of soothsayers, snake charmers, hawkers and food vendors. North of the square are the city's maze-like souks, a sprawling lattice of narrow alleyways that resound with the hum of industry and the smells of exotic spices. To the south is the city's most venerated monument, the 70-metre-tall Koutoubia Minaret, which has watched over the city since the Almohads erected it in the 12th century. Marrakech is undoubtedly an assault on the senses, but its numerous gardens provide wonderful pockets of peace and tranquility. Some of the best are the Majorelle Gardens, bought by Yves Saint Laurent in the 1980s. His ashes were scattered here when he died in 2008 and there's a museum on site devoted to his work.



La Sultana Oualidia | Atlantic coast



Atlas Mountains



Amanjena | Marrakech

ATLAS MOUNTAINS & AGAFAY DESERT

The snow-capped peaks of the Atlas Mountains are so often visible from Marrakech that it's hard to resist their sirens' call. We recommend at least two nights near Asni at Kasbah Tamadot, Sir Richard Branson's High Atlas hideout, to allow for some varied day walks and to visit the Berber villages that seem to melt into the hillsides. Between Asni and Marrakech is the Agafay Desert, a rough, dry, moon-like expanse of semi-arid plains, stark valleys, occasional oases and scattered Berber villages. A night here beneath star-laden skies at Inara Camp makes a wonderful contrast to the pace of Marrakech.

ATLANTIC COAST

Morocco's Atlantic coast stretches from Tangier in the north past Rabat, Casablanca, Essaouira and Agadir to the contested border with Western Sahara, a distance well over 2,000 kilometres. Yet the holiday potential of this vast stretch of shoreline has only recently begun to be explored, at least at a luxury level. For year-round sunshine and wide, empty beaches, this is the place to come. Consider La Fiermontina Ocean, an eco-retreat in north-western Morocco, whose delightful suites and villas and traditional stone houses are set back from the beach among olive groves and orchards. Or make for Mazagan Beach & Golf Resort, set on a seven-kilometre beach an hour south of Casablanca near the former Portuguese colony of El Jadida, where old churches and synagogues rub shoulders with mosques and a UNESCO-listed fortress. Or soak up the sun at La Sultana Oualidia. A little south of El Jadida, La Sultana commands a gorgeous position overlooking a lagoon and sandy surf beaches. Colourful fishing boats chug by all day, flamingoes and stilts congregate up the estuary, and low tide reveals the oysters for which the region is rightly famous.

DON'T MISS

Essential Experiences

- Indulge in a cleansing ritual at a traditional Moroccan hammam (bathhouse). Several of our hotels have excellent hammams on site.
- Follow centuries-old shepherds' paths between remote Berber villages on a guided hike through the mighty High Atlas.
- Head out onto Oualidia's lagoon by boat and kayak on a guided bird-watching safari for the chance to spot flamingos, herons, cormorants, storks and other rare species.
- Learn the secrets of Moroccan cuisine during a cooking workshop at Royal Mansour Marrakech, the legendary hotel owned by Morocco's King Mohammed VI.
- Explore Marrakech from the former French district to the streets of the medina in a vintage motorbike and sidecar – a truly unique way to discover the 'Red City'.

"For a bird's-eye view of Marrakech, try some of its rooftop bars and restaurants. Favourites include Terrasse des Epices, DarDar and Kabana."



Selman Marrakech

11-DAY TAILOR-MADE ITINERARY

The Magic of Morocco

DURATION

10 nights / 11 days

SUMMARY

3 nights Marrakech • 2 nights Atlas Mountains • 1 night Agafay Desert
4 nights Oualidia

INCLUDES

10 nights' accommodation on a bed & breakfast basis, flights to and from the UK and private transfers throughout.

Tours, excursions and activities mentioned are examples of what we can arrange. Ask your travel agent for the full range of options and a personalised quotation.

Linking some of the country's most distinctive hotels, this exciting tour explores the contrasting beauty of Morocco's varied landscapes, from the souks of Marrakech through the snow-covered peaks of the Atlas Mountains to the rocky expanses of the Agafay Desert and the broad sandy beaches of the wild Atlantic coast.

DAYS 1-3: MARRAKECH

Arrive in the Red City and transfer to Selman Marrakech, a lavish family-owned hotel on the outskirts of town with an enormous outdoor pool and gorgeous views of the Atlas Mountains. Marrakech is a city of two halves: the historic walled medina, founded by a sultan in 1062, and the colonial Ville Nouvelle, built by the French in the mid-20th century. Each has its own delights – the medina with its ancient palaces, labyrinthine souks and traditional way of life, and the Ville Nouvelle with its pavement cafes, trendy boutiques, gardens and boulevards.

A great way to get your bearings is to book a hot-air balloon flight above the city at sunrise (see right), or a tour at street level in a vintage motorbike and sidecar. Other don't-miss experiences include shopping in the souks with a private guide and escaping the hubbub in one of the city's many gardens. We especially recommend Cactus Thiernann, the largest cactus plantation in Africa, and the Marjorelle Garden with its cooling water features, palm trees, bougainvillea and museum dedicated to Berber arts and traditions.



Djemma el-Fna | Marrakech

DAYS 4-5: ATLAS MOUNTAINS

Transfer by road to Kasbah Tamadot, an hour's drive from Marrakech in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. This luxurious kasbah is the ultimate mountain retreat, offering a magical mix of palatial suites and fabulous Berber tents with private hot tubs for nighttime stargazing. The hotel prides itself on being a base for adventure, offering trekking, quad biking, paragliding and more. That said, it's equally tempting to just relax at the spa, soak up the sun around the mountain-view pool or wander the gorgeous, landscaped gardens.

DAY 6: AGAFAY DESERT

Descend from the mountains to Inara Camp in the Agafay Desert. This luxury camp provides a taste of desert life without the long days of driving that the Sahara requires. Accommodation is in private safari-style tents built around an oasis-like pool, with either king or twin beds, a comfortable lounge area and a separate bathroom with hot running water. Choose from a raft of exciting activities, including trekking, quad biking and 4x4 adventures, then treat yourself at night to a romantic dinner in a private tent beneath a canopy of stars.



La Sultana Oualidia



Inara Camp | Agafay Desert

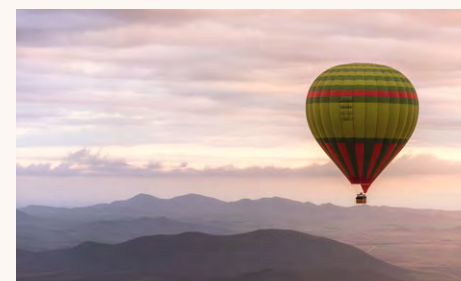
DAYS 7-11: OUALIDIA

End your adventure with a four-night stay at La Sultana Oualidia on Morocco's Atlantic coast. Overlooking a still lagoon and surrounded by beaches, oyster beds, salt marshes and gardens, this gem of a hotel is the perfect place to switch off and recharge. Rooms are works of art, with guests given mobile phones with which to contact their butler should they want to book a spa treatment, order drinks to their private terrace or arrange any number of activities and excursions. These range in scope from surfing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding to riding fat-bikes on the beach, guided bird-watching safaris and day trips to Safi, famous for its medina and traditional pottery workshops. Transfer back to Marrakech on day 11 in time to catch your flight home.



Kasbah Tamadot | Atlas Mountains

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES - OUR SUGGESTIONS



Breakfast by Balloon

Witness sunrise over the ochre-hued walls of ancient Marrakech as you take to the skies in your own private hot-air balloon. Soar over palm groves watching dawn's first rays hit the frosted peaks of the Atlas Mountains, then enjoy a delicious breakfast served inside the balloon's basket before landing safely and returning to your hotel.



Desert Safari

Explore the rolling rocky landscape and moon-like expanse of the Agafay Desert on a private 4x4 tour from Inara Camp. Note the contrast between the arid desert plains and the tree-lined slopes of the Atlas foothills as you climb towards an elevated spot for a delicious outdoor picnic, surrounded on all sides by the beauty of the wilderness.



Shop Local in Oualidia

Oualidia's weekly market gives an authentic glimpse of rural life in Morocco, with villagers travelling from miles around to stock up on fruits, vegetables, spices, olives, pottery, furniture and all manner of life's necessities. Experience the colour and chaos of this traditional Moroccan market in the company of a local village guide.

Booking Information

Scan the codes below or refer to our website: www.lussotravel.com

ESSENTIAL BOOKING INFORMATION



TERMS AND CONDITIONS



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