

THE TIMES

WEEKEND

11 of the best last-minute deals from £230

This week's offers range from Devon to the Maldives, plus getaways to Romania and a safari in South Africa

Richard Mellor

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Spring is the perfect time to get a last-minute bargain. We've found deals that give you the chance to spot bears in Transylvania, wander among Roman ruins in Paphos and whisk the kids away to France during half term — they'll love the Puy du Fou theme park and might even learn something outside of school hours (just don't tell them that).

UK

1. Thatched Devon cottages

In addition to its namesake Georgian manor, south Devon's vast National Trust estate of Killerton includes several thatched cottages discounted by 15 per cent until the end of May (but sold out for half-term). Among the options, Longmeadow, Mattress Cottage and Broad Ley Cottage have latticed windows and beamed ceilings, while the dog-friendly Forest Cottage is tucked away inside a forest. Six miles north of Exeter, Killerton combines orchards, formal gardens and agricultural land. Three nights' self-catering for five now costs from £543 (nationaltrust.org.uk).

2. Pars and pedicures in East Sussex

In need of some pampering? With a spa-and-pool complex, afternoon teas, and an 18-hole golf course, the Ashdown Park Hotel in East Sussex offers classic country house luxury. Its main restaurant and a less formal brasserie overlook adjacent Ashdown Forest, where Winnie the Pooh trails are great for strolls. Close, too, are Wakehurst's botanical gardens and the quaint Bluebell Railway. A three-for-two offer available between Sundays and Fridays until May 26 means that three nights' B&B costs from £230pp (ashdownpark.com).

Europe

3. Transylvania tour

Medieval towns with multicoloured houses, a brown bear sanctuary, pointy-towered castles that might have inspired

Dracula

, horse and cart rides: welcome to Transylvania. This small-group tour around this deeply rural Romanian region has a host of attractions, not least the £135pp savings available on departures on May 27 and June 10. That leaves seven nights' B&B costing from £764pp, including transport, entry fees, and traditional guesthouses and boutique hotels (untravelpaths.com). Fly to Bucharest.

4. Danube discovery

Step aboard this upmarket, 92-suite cruise ship where the heated pool transforms into an evening cinema and the journey takes you from Budapest to Munich via the vineyard-strewn Wachau Valley. En route, you might alight for lunch with a Bavarian family or ride around the Ringstrasse's historicist buildings in Vienna. Departures on May 15 or 21 cost from £2,395pp, saving £800pp; if you can wait until October 30, prices start at £1,299pp. All include seven nights' full board, various guided tours and airport transfers

(emeraldcruses.co.uk). Fly to Budapest.

5. Fun fly-and-flop on Kos, Greece

The cheerful, family-run Emmanouel Studios offer a best-of-both-worlds balance on the Greek island of Kos. Near to Lambi Beach's pebbly sand, they're far enough from lively Kos Town for you to self-cater in serenity. You could stay put and enjoy the pool but a five-minute taxi ride will bring you to hilltop villages, temple ruins and lively restaurants. Departing on May 18, seven nights' self-catering for two costs from £798, including flights from Birmingham, a 22kg baggage allowance and transfers (

jet2holidays.com

).

6. Wine, bike and spa in luxury in Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul's Six Senses Kocatas Mansions overlooks the Bosphorus Strait from a prestigious northeastern suburb and features pools, old-world terracotta tiles and a huge spa. Activities range from wine-tasting to forest bike-riding. With the upcoming bank holidays in mind, three nights' B&B during May is discounted by 15 per cent and now costs from £1,599pp, including flights and transfers (inspiringtravel.co.uk).

7. Half-term France

Some half-term availability remains at the family-friendly Les Mas de Saint Hilaire cottages in Vendée. Just south of Brittany in western France, the region is home to beaches, restaurants serving great mussels and, in the history-focused Puy du Fou, one of the world's best theme parks. Three hours' drive from St Malo's ferry port, each cottage features a terrace, and they all share a pool and separate kids' pool. Beginning on May 27 and now costing 25 per cent less, seven nights' self-catering for five costs from £270 (summerfrance.co.uk). Take a ferry to St Malo

8. Andalusia city break

Granada is a compelling mixture of Moorish architecture — from fragrant teahouses to the wondrous Alhambra palace and gardens — with a bit of a cool scene, as seen in its spectacular street art. Terrific tapas bars come as standard too. Close to the key sights, the 19th-century Palacio de los Patos hotel is a similarly striking marriage of old and new, with 42 contemporary rooms and a plunge pool. Courtesy of a free final night, four nights' B&B now costs from £1,260pp, including flights and transfers (kirkerholidays.com).

9. Introduction to Puglia

Classic Puglian holidays usually involve staying in a converted, charismatic farmhouse somewhere close to white-walled Ostuni and Alberobello's iconic trulli — 19th-century dry-stone huts with conical roofs. The upmarket Grand Hotel Masseria Santa Lucia ticks those boxes and there are tennis courts, an impressive outdoor pool and a pebbly Adriatic beach nearby for good measure. Departing on June 6, when the mercury should be frequently topping 20C, seven nights' B&B, with flights and transfers, is reduced by £552 to £1,118pp (citalia.com).

Long haul

10. Remote Maldives resort

South Palm Resort lies on the little-developed Addu Atoll, at the southernmost extremity of the Maldives. When not slumbering on the beautiful white sands or diving into a crystal-clear lagoon, you can head to the watersports centre and — with lake-floating, boat-accessed treatment rooms — a memorable spa. There's a choice between Asian, international and Maldivian food. Reductions of 31 per cent leave seven nights' all-inclusive in May costing from £1,649pp; including flights, all transfers, a snorkelling excursion and an upgrade to an Oceanfront Beach Villa with a private deck (

bluebaytravel.co.uk

).

11. Bucket-list South Africa

A two-week South Africa self-drive tour kicks off in Cape Town and takes in the fabled Winelands — with a Wine Tram jaunt — the beautiful Garden Route coastline and a big-five safari. It's fancy, too, with stays in a series of high-end hotels culminating in a private chalet at the Pumba Water Lodge. Thanks to 25 per cent

savings available until the end of Sunday, April 30, 14 nights' B&B costs from £3,899pp, including car hire and safari activities (luxtripper.co.uk). Fly to Cape Town.

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The cottage all have terraces and share a pool



Bed down in the 19th-century Palacio de los Patos hotel in Granada



The upmarket Grand Hotel Masseria Santa Lucia faces the sea



Slumber on the beautiful white sands



Combine safari with vineyards in South Africa

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