

More bargain summer breaks in France

Camp on Lake Annecy

This splash of glacial turquoise water in the mountainous Haute-Savoie is the site of Yelloh! Village's latest campsite, Les Fontaines. It opens in May with kids' clubs, play areas, evening discos, lots of restaurants and a range of family cabins sleeping up to six — along with pitches for tents and caravans. One heated pool is fitted with slides and another serves as an entire aquatic playground, though your family may be drawn to the beaches at Lake Annecy, a quick cycle away along an isolated path. Speaking of which, it pays to bring or hire a bike, to enjoy the miles of isolated path around the lake to Annecy city.

Details Seven nights' self-catering from £200 (yellohvillage.co.uk). Fly to Geneva

Summer in the Alps

The mountains of the Alps aren't any less beautiful or bracing after the spring thaw. What they are is cheaper. Book a mountainside cabin in the French Alps between June and September and you might do a double take at the cost. Lifts and gondolas scale the Grand Massif every day in summer, for mountain biking and hiking in the area around Flaine. Ditto Morzine, where you can go white-water rafting or horse riding, or hiking in the invigorating cool air. Check out peakretreats.co.uk, ingham.co.uk or skifrance.co.uk, which has the delightful Résidence Les Fermes de Saint Sorlin chalet, in Saint Sorlin D'Arves, for packages.

Details Seven nights' self-

catering for four from £209 (skifrance.co.uk). Fly to Grenoble, Turin or Lyons

A seaside spa hotel in Brittany

Falmouth is just over the Channel but the darling Breton town of Le Conquet is far more reliable weather-wise — and more affordable too. The newish, modern Hôtel Sainte Barbe — so close to the sea that a staircase from the breakfast terrace leads right into it — is cheaper than it has any right to be, considering the round-the-clock amenities such as saunas, plunge pools, a sundowner bar and a seafood restaurant. With sun terraces at every turn — outside every room and on the rooftop — the place seems legitimately obsessed with getting you your vitamin D fix. Sit here and watch the boats bob on

the water, or get in one yourself. The ferry dock for ships to outlying islands is just outside.

Details Room-only doubles from £143 (all.accor.com). Take the ferry to Roscoff

Cycle along the Seine

The Seine cycle path continues almost uninterrupted — and regularly marked — from central Paris to the Channel. A few outfits organise self-guided tours but you can easily attack it yourself, hiring bicycles in town and rolling out westward with your backpack, noshing at waterside *guinguettes* and sleeping at inns directly on the route. The Seine à Vélo site separates the route in several

easily achievable stages, with detailed maps for each marking out hotels and sights (laseineavelo.com). Accommodation costs as little as £70 a night, and there are worthy diversions such as Monet's gardens at Giverny and the cathedral at Rouen. Plenty of historic villages and towns pop up along the way, each with a train station that'll

whisk you back to Paris if you run out of steam.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,599pp, including bike hire (headwater.com). Take the train to Paris

The Dordogne by rail

Allergic to crowds? A week discovering the market towns and châteaux of Nouvelle-Aquitaine will transform your view of summer in France. With a guide from Great Rail Journeys at the helm, you'll cruise the Dordogne on a flat-bottomed boat, hemmed in by towering cliffs where villages are literally built into the rock face. Then you'll trawl the medieval town of Sarlat to sniff out pastries, truffles and £3 glasses of bordeaux. Your base is the sunny riverfront town of Les Eyzies, where surreal prehistoric cliffs cantilever over the water, in a three-star hotel with a pool. The package takes care of everything, apart from lunch and two dinners, though wine is included with the provided meals. And there's a rest day halfway through.

Details Six nights' B&B from £999pp, including Eurostar, rail and coach travel, excursions and some extra meals (greatrail.com)

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