

# Ten great getaways to book now

## UK

### Hiking Northumberland's highlights

The great thing about hiking in Northumberland is that its landscapes are so deeply soaked in history that it doesn't really matter what the weather's up to. If dark clouds scud over Hadrian's Wall that just deepens the wild, edge-of-empire atmosphere. And Bamburgh's seaside castle looks even more embattled in a shower of rain. On this guided Walk Northumberland tour you'll explore five of the county's most dramatic settings, sallying forth each day from your base in Alnwick. And don't worry too much about the rain. Northumberland actually has one of Britain's driest coasts. Five nights' B&B from September 7 starts from £1,249pp — a saving of £150 ([explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk)).

### Stay at the revamped Belfry, Warwickshire

Four-time host of the Ryder Cup, the Belfry Hotel & Resort near Sutton Coldfield has had an £80 million growth spurt, adding a new fitness and leisure club alongside 149 extra bedrooms. And to build the buzz around its September 1 launch, it's offering three-night stays for the price of two. Golfers should bear in mind that tee times on the celebrated Ryder Cup Brabazon course are booked up weeks in advance. If you can't get a round there, two more 18-hole courses beckon, with fees starting from £45pp. Meanwhile, three nights' B&B starts from £378, including access to the new club's gym and swimming pools

([thebelfry.com](http://thebelfry.com)).

## EUROPE

### An upmarket escape in Greece

The weather may be freshening up at home but the sun still blazes in Crete. Here the five-star Phaea Cretan Malia shelters in densely planted gardens right by the sea. A member of the Design Hotels collection, its earth-toned interiors are enriched with hand-woven fabrics, Cretan ceramics and murals painted by acclaimed local artists. But as temperatures will be in the high 20s, you'll probably spend most of your time outdoors, on the private beach or by one of its three pools. A 20 per cent cut in September and October room rates deepens the allure. Seven nights' B&B starts from £1,405pp, including flights ([thetimes.com/holidays](http://thetimes.com/holidays)).

### A swanky Florence city break

If you see a good-looking city break deal on [luxuryescapes.com](http://luxuryescapes.com), don't hang about.

More than seven million people have registered with the site and the tastiest offers are gobbled up quickly. At the time of writing, its two-night October 12-14 discount on a Premium room at the Hotel Number Nine in Florence looked a treat. The five-star property is a place of parquet floors, high windows and cabaret nights — and even though the hotel's website was already discounting the room, Luxury Escape's deal was £215 cheaper. You can add flights too, bringing the total cost to £337pp, B&B. ([luxuryescapes.com](http://luxuryescapes.com)).

### **A villa on the Greek island of Ithaca**

The villa specialist Ionian Island Holidays reports shifting demand for its properties in western Greece. Apparently, September is the new August, as customers avoid the sizzling temperatures of high summer. Even so, there are still big last-minute price cuts available on unsold breaks. Take Villa Ino, for example. Simple enough inside, this hilltop villa on Ithaca is made lovely by its deeply shaded veranda, where you could easily spend the whole day soaking up the sea view, in between swims in the pool. From September 6, seven nights' self-catering for two costs £1,359pp, including flights and hire car. That's a saving of £660pp (ionianislandholidays.com).

### **Book ahead for French skiing**

August may seem too early to think about skiing but that's precisely why Ski France has a flash sale on until August 31. It's even knocking 10 per cent off the week of February half-term, and 30 per cent off Christmas in its ski-in, ski-out Hotel Le Mottaret above Méribel. But for properly cheap digs, check out the Résidence les Epinettes apartments. Just 100m from the lifts in little Vaujany, they're handy for the local nursery slopes and the big multifaceted ski area in neighbouring Alpe d'Huez. Seven nights' self-catering for four costs only £523 (ie £131pp), a saving of £224 (skifrance.co.uk). Grenoble is the nearest airport.

### **Budapest to Berlin tour**

This ever-changing Graffiti Walls and Market Halls tour is aimed squarely at 18 to 30-year-olds as it weaves its way from Budapest to Berlin by train. En route you'll also see Prague and Krakow, bunking down in city-centre hostels and devoting as much time to nightlife as sightseeing. But it's not just the chance to sample Krakow's medieval streets, Prague's beer-hall scene or Berlin's multicoloured mound of street art at the Teufelsberg ("the Devil's Mountain") that's the draw — it's the price too. Six nights' room-only from September 24 costs £811pp, not including flights — a saving of £348 (gadventures.com).

## **MID AND LONG HAUL**

### **Escape to Cancun, Mexico**

Here's a tempting proposition if you fancy escaping Britain's early-winter gloom. Virgin is launching thrice-weekly direct flights to Cancun from Heathrow as well as featuring the resort in its September sale. The offers include a 64 per cent discount on accommodation in the boutiquey Beachfront by the Fives Hotels, which sits with both feet in the sand at Xcalacoco Beach, and shares facilities with a larger sister property next door. Go on December 5 — in the sweet spot between the end of the hurricane season and Christmas — and seven nights' all-inclusive costs £1,615pp including flights and transfers (virginatlantic.com).

### **Exploring southwest Japan on a cruise**

Here's another reason to get your skates on. Princess Cruises is running a flash sale on connecting flights in 2026-27 and it ends on September 1. Prices are being cut by up to £250pp. Included on the menu is its ten-day Japan Explorer itinerary, in and out of Tokyo on its ship Diamond Princess, which takes in Beppu (famous for its hot springs), subtropical Miyazaki and the fishing town of Toba, as well as the city of Busan in South Korea. Nine nights' full-board from February 24 starts from £1,134pp, including flights (princess.com/en-uk).

### **A Jordanian tour in style**

This nine-day Kingdoms of Jordan tour takes in many of the country's most resonant sights. In the company of an expert guide you'll visit Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea, Roman Jerash and the Greek Orthodox Church of St John the Baptist, as well as the rose-red city of Petra. And at every stage of the journey bar one you'll stay in a five-star hotel. In September that's going to feel particularly luxurious, when daytime temperatures hover around 30C. Even better, the price of the September 13 departure has just been cut by £520, so eight nights' B&B starts from £2,079pp, including some meals but not flights (exodus.co.uk).

**Sean Newsom**