

Tuesday 16 August 2011

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Great Days Out

Chasing the sun

ROMANEIRA, DOURO VALLEY, PORTUGAL

No televisions, no telephones and no set protocol make this former wine estate in Portugal's premier port producing region a genuine escape from the outside world. There are 20 bedrooms in this riverside property, all individually styled with wonderful antique finds. Meals here are an experience and can be taken in various locations, each styled with their own tableware and glasses: dine in a South America-themed gallery surrounded by dream catchers, or a dimly-lit Alice in Wonderland-like chocolate factory. Many items at the dining table, including the delicious wine, have been made – or grown – on site. A spa, outdoor pool and private hotel boat complete the idyllic picture.

SARAH MARSHALL

■ Rooms from €490 per night with breakfast. All inclusive doubles (with meals, drinks, wine tasting, spa treatment and boat ride) from €1,100. Visit maisondesreves.com

BLUE PALACE RESORT & SPA, ELOUNDA, CRETE

If you're keen to combine a relaxing spa break with an opportunity to top up your tan, this hospitable Greek island resort could become a favourite destination. Surrounded by chic well-manicured gardens and the inviting Aegean Sea, the resort features bungalow-style suites with their own infinity pool. The beach-level Elounda Spa, reached by a glass cable car, features thalassotherapy pools and an impressive range of treatments. Hire a private boat from the reception to tour the nearby island of Spinalonga and round off the day with a cocktail while watching the Cretan sun sink below the horizon.

DENISE BAILEY

■ A Superior Bungalow with sea view starts from £327 (£371) per night with breakfast. Visit luxurycollection.com/bluepalace or call 00800 325 45454

HOTEL MONTE MULINI, ROVINJ, CROATIA

Sipping sundowners on your private balcony is the perfect way to enjoy this little piece of heaven on the island-specked Istrian coast.

Avoid the crowds and raging heat by taking a mini-break in September, says **Sarah Marshall**

With panoramic views across the bay, Monte Mulini is an ultra-modern luxury hideaway even James Bond would rave about. The pretty walled town of Rovinj is just a short stroll past the marina but if you want to explore Zlatni rt Forest Park (a haven of sandy, pine tree-lined coves) the hotel has bikes available. The Wine Vault restaurant stocks 600 fine vintages, while the opulent gold and Swarovski-decked Art Wellness Spa is ideal for a spot of pampering.

KATE WHITING

■ Junior suites start from £363 per night with breakfast. Visit montemulinihotel.com

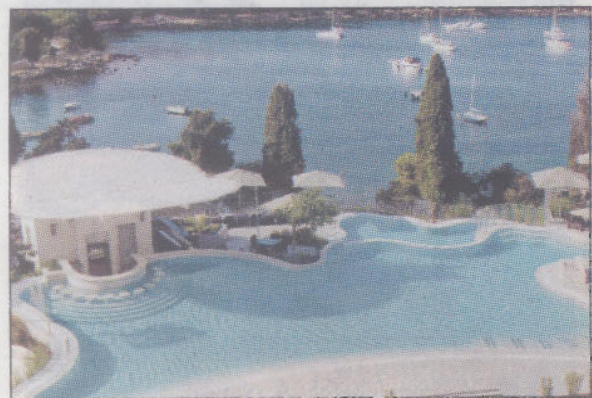
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Denmark is famous for its long summer days and even in September the sun doesn't set until late. Subsequently, there's ample opportunity to sample all the city has to offer in a compact weekend break and even avoid booking a hotel by staying up all night. If you do fancy chasing the midnight sun, start with a visit to Tivoli Gardens, one of the oldest amusement parks in the world, before stopping for a late-night snack at NIMB Bar 'N' Grill. Next, flag down a rickshaw and head in the direction of Ruby Bar, where you can try out the city's signature Copenhagen cocktail, a sticky red concoction made with Bols Geneva and cherry liqueur. After the bars close (at 3am), take a stroll along the canals as the sun rises, ending your adventure at one of the city's many bakeries.

SARAH MARSHALL

■ Return fares from London to Copenhagen with SAS start from £107 incl. taxes and charges. Visit flysas.co.uk or call 0871 226 7760. For details on the city, go to visitcopenhagen.com

Continued on Page 8



Luxury unlimited: if it's an ultra-modern hideaway you seek, then stop over at Hotel Monte Mulini



Under the Cretan sun: get tanned and spoiled senseless at the Blue Palace Resort & Spa

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Stylish and fun: the W hotel in Barcelona sets the mood for a party holiday

W BARCELONA, SPAIN

Shaped like a billowing sail, the 26-storey W stands proudly above Barcelona's port and beachfront. The hotel's focus is on style and fun, which is clear from the moment you walk into the sparkling lobby, with pumping music to put you in the mood for the city's celebrated nightlife. Rooms offer floor-to-ceiling views and marshmallow soft beds that hint at naughty weekends away. The rain shower and Bliss Spa products are a delight, but the bathroom's frosted glass doors might raise some eyebrows. The hotel's stunning outdoor pool is popular with Barcelona's beautiful party

crowd, as is The Eclipse bar on the hotel's top floor.

SUSAN GRIFFIN

■ Doubles start from €318 per night. Visit starwoodhotels.com/whotels

CHÂTEAU SAINT-MARTIN & SPA, VENCE, FRANCE

Just 15km from Nice, this peaceful five-star French retreat enjoys a prime clifftop position overlooking the Riviera's famous coastline. Architect Luc Svetchine has done a fantastic job, framing views of the countryside with vast glass windows set in stone arches, and creating a space that exudes rustic charm. Surrounded by 35 acres of pristine grounds, the property belongs to the Oetker family, who also run the better-known Hôtel du Cap-Eden Roc in Antibes. Levels of service here are just as high, but the real draw of Saint-Martin is the food, with an adventurous menu prepared by two-star Michelin chef Yannick Franques.

SAPPHO LAUDER

■ Rooms start from €460 per night; suites from €550 (from September 1). Visit chateau-st-martin.com

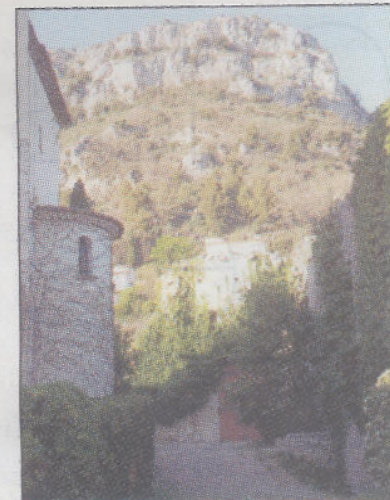
DUBROVNIK SUN GARDENS, CROATIA

Set on Croatia's Adriatic coastline, this luxurious five-star resort is great for a relaxing family holiday. A world-class spa, 13 restaurants and bars and a promenade of shops can all be found in the vast grounds. The private pebble beach is a secluded place to relax and there are also plenty of child-friendly pools. A good range of activities is available for children of all ages, while adults can wind down with yoga and Pilates classes. A destination itself, it's easy to forget the resort is just a 20-minute drive from Unesco World Heritage site, Dubrovnik. But guests are invited to explore at their own pace.

FIONA WOOTTON

■ A two-bedroom residence (sleeps five) with garden view starts from €298 per night. Visit dubrovniksungardens.hr

The private pebble beach is a secluded place to relax and there are also plenty of child-friendly pools



Idyllic: Chateau Saint-Martin is set on a clifftop overlooking the coastline; (inset below) the Dubrovnik Sun Gardens is perfect for a relaxing break

KEMPINSKI HOTEL BAHIA, MARBELLA, SPAIN

By September, the footballers, soap stars and The Only Way is Essex crew have packed up their suitcases, making Puerto Banus a much more serene Spanish getaway.

You still get the blazing sunshine, swish designer shops and restaurants – but without the crazy buzz and paparazzi flashbulbs. A 15-minute drive from the marina, the five-star Hotel Bahia is ideally located for people (and yacht) watching. Lush subtropical gardens overlooking the Mediterranean Sea are perfect for lounging, while there's also a sandy beach close by. And with three outdoor swimming pools, four varied restaurants and a luxury spa on site, there's plenty to keep guests occupied outside of the airy sea-view rooms.

LISA HAYNES

■ Prestige Holidays offers a week's stay from £1,069 per person based on two people sharing. Visit prestigeholidays.co.uk or call 01425 480 400



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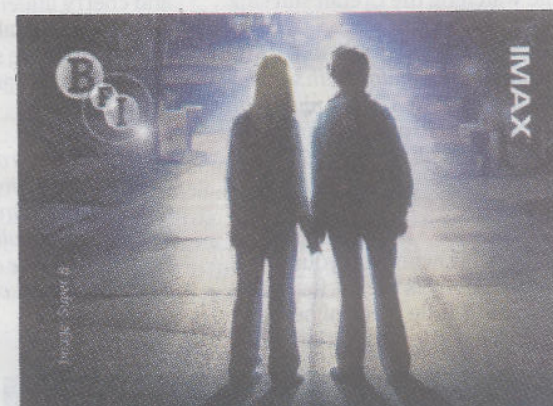
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