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Travel

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Follow in the footsteps of Bill Bryson and hike along the Appalachian Trail

Aaron Millar on one of America's greatest walks

Murat Reis Ayvalik hotel, Turkey (2). Below: Aria Hotel Budapest (4)



The 20 best autumn escapes

From cycling in Spain to foodie breaks in Italy, **Annabelle Thorpe** has the pick of the trips in Europe

1 Cycling in Andalusia

The frying pan of Spain is still pleasantly warm in autumn, but not so hot that cycling becomes a curse rather than a pleasure. Headwater's new tour starts in the home of flamenco, Jerez, before taking in Cadiz and Arcos de la Frontera, with the route snaking through unspoilt *pueblos blancos*, rolling hills and the wind-whipped coastline. Bags are transported between hotels, which include a 17th-century former convent in Vejer de la Frontera, and a 19th-century palacio in Jerez.

Details A week costs from £1,229pp, including flights via Madrid to Jerez, all equipment, B&B, maps and transfers (01606 828421, headwater.com)

2 Late summer sun in Turkey

Surrounded by olive trees and on a lovely beach on Turkey's Aegean coast, the new Murat Reis Ayvalik, with 91 sleek modern rooms, is a great place to soak up the last of the summer sun. Laze by the pool or go mountain biking or windsurfing. Ayvalik has a Harvest Food Festival from October 31 to November 2, with some of the country's best-known food writers, cooks and olive oil producers. There are tastings in the oil market as well as a fish feast — with three tons of fish cooked in the best oil.

Details B&B doubles cost from £106 (00 90 266 312 0101, muratreisayvalik.com). Fly to Izmir with EasyJet

3 See Sweden's autumn aurora

Winter isn't necessarily the best time to spot the northern lights; autumn means warmer temperatures and gorgeous colours by day. Sunvil has a three-night break to Swedish Lapland, including a day trip to Narvik in the Norwegian fjords and a visit to the Aurora Sky Station in Abisko National Park, where the microclimate and lack of light pollution optimise the chance of aurora sightings. Stay in the Bjorkliden Mountain Resort, a sleek — if isolated — outpost.

Details Three-night breaks cost from

£1,105pp half-board, including flights, transfers and excursions (020 8758 4722, sunvil.co.uk)

4 Budapest Fest

The streets of Budapest positively buzz with festivals throughout October. The Café Budapest Contemporary Arts Festival runs from October 2 to 18, with music, dance and theatre; the city's Oktoberfest takes place from October 1 to 4, while sausage-lovers should aim to coincide with the Palinka and Sausage Festival at Buda Castle (October 3 to 5). Make the most of autumn-hued skies by ▶





11
Six Senses Douro
Valley, Portugal

staying at the newly-opened Aria Hotel Budapest, with its stunning roof terrace. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £176 (00 361 445 4055, ariahotelbudapest.com)

5 Gourmet trip to Dubrovnik

This four-night break at the Sun Gardens hotel in Dubrovnik proves that Croatia has much to offer in the culinary stakes. Experiences include a private boat trip to the Peljesac wine region for a vineyard tour, a tasting at one of the country's best vineyards and a feast of oysters in the pretty town of Mali Ston. There's even a basket of cheeses, olives and wine in your room on arrival.

Details Four nights cost from £1,007pp, in a sea-view suite, including all excursions, breakfast, tasting menu and boat trip (00 385 20 361 500, dubrovniksungardens.com). EasyJet has flights to Dubrovnik

6 Wine festival in Italy

The Emilia-Romagna region in northern Italy is a top destination for foodies, who come in autumn for its various culinary celebrations. The Grape and Lambrusco Grasparossa Wine Festival takes place in Castelvetro di Modena from Monday to September 27, with a parade of Bacchus-themed floats, tastings and live music. Truffle-lovers should head to the pretty town of Sant'Agata Feltria in October, which holds the National White Truffle Fair every Sunday. Stay at Cerro di Montepetra, a charming agriturismo, with its renowned restaurant.

Details B&B doubles cost from £38 (00 39 334 848 3550, cerrodimontepetra.it). Fly to Bologna from Stansted with Ryanair

7 Amsterdam for art (and beer) lovers

The shimmering canals and tree-lined walks of the Vondelpark are at their

most beautiful when dusted with autumn leaves, and this year you have the chance to see a unique collection of sculptures by Joan Miró in the gardens of the Rijksmuseum (rijksmuseum.nl, until October 11). If you're after a more, er, fluid weekend, PINT Bokbierfestival — Amsterdam's answer to Oktoberfest — takes place from October 23 to 25. The much-anticipated W Amsterdam opens its doors next month, bringing its kitsch-glam to the Dutch capital.

Details Room-only doubles cost from £331 a night (00 31 20 811 2500, starwoodhotels.com)

8 Movies and more in Vienna

The Austrian capital will be easier to reach this autumn, with new British Airways flights from Gatwick (starting on Thursday) and easyJet from Luton (from October 23), Manchester (from November 5) and Bristol (from November 6). Take a stroll through the gardens of the Schönbrunn Palace, which glow with autumn colours at this time of year, or check out some of the films at the Viennale (viennale.at/en), the city's international film festival, which runs from October 22 to November 5. The chic-but-affordable Ruby Sofie hotel opened last year.

Details B&B doubles cost from £87 (00 43 1 361 96 60 60, ruby-hotels.com)

9 Bright nights in Berlin

See Berlin in a whole new light from October 9 to 18, when dozens of the city's most iconic buildings are lit up at night for the annual Lichterfest (festival-of-lights.de). There are guided walking tours, daily at 7pm and 9pm, as well as tours by boat, bus or bike, all taking in the highlights including the Reichstag, Berlin Cathedral, Unter den Linden and Potsdamer Platz. Stay at the well-located



5
Sun Gardens
hotel, Dubrovnik

and newly-opened budget boutique Grimm's Potsdamer Platz, gently themed around Grimm's fairytales.

Details Room-only doubles cost from £70 (00 49 30 25 800 80, grimms-hotel.de)

10 Truffle hunting in Tuscany

Autumn weekends don't come more indulgent than at the gorgeous Villa Lena, a Tuscan retreat surrounded by 500 hectares of rolling hills.

From October 9 until the end of November, guests can indulge in a White Truffle weekend, which includes foraging with the agriculture team and cooking truffles with the chef. Villa Lena has a programme of artists in residence, and there will be musical performances and talks over the weekend.

Details A two-night break costs from £533pp, including all meals and activities (00 39 0587 083 112, villa-lena.it). Fly to Florence from Gatwick with easyJet

11 Make your own wine in the Douro Valley

The sleepy Douro valley comes alive in September and October, when the fields are full of workers harvesting the vines. Guests to the new Six Senses Douro Valley have the chance to join in with the festivities. As well as treading the grapes, there are wine-tasting tours (by helicopter as well as road), the chance to become a winemaker for a day, and wine-and-dine cruises that show off the tranquil beauty of the region. Six Senses Douro Valley, which opened in July, is set in a beautiful 19th-century manor house, with lovely views across the valley.

Details B&B doubles cost from £174 (00 351 254 660 600, sixsenses.com). Fly to Porto from Stansted with Ryanair



7
W Amsterdam

13

Akershus Fortress, Oslo



12 Painting in Gozo

Authentic Adventures has just added a new painting week in October to its holidays on the Maltese island of Gozo. Here, the spectacular coastline, dotted with brightly coloured fishing boats, the hilltop capital of Victoria and the unique Ggantija Temple, offers a diverse range of scenes to paint. The course includes five days of painting tuition, along with visits to It-Tokk market, Hondoq beach and the tranquil Lunzjata valley.

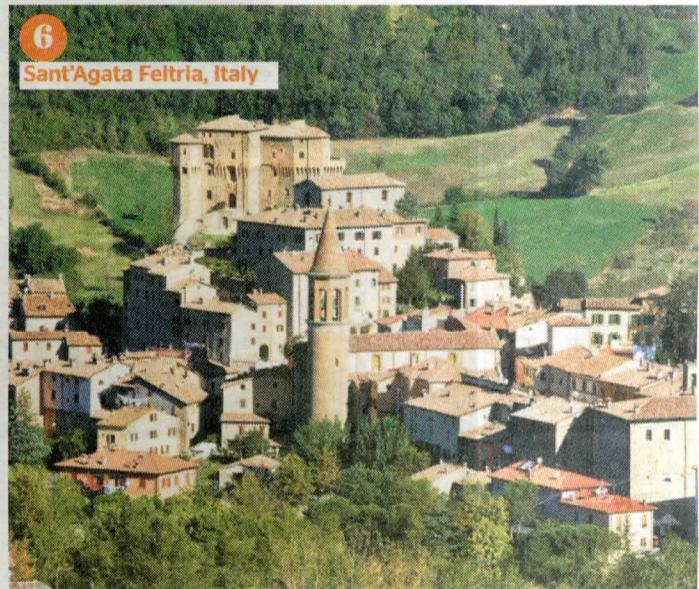
Details A week departing on October 3 costs from £1,299pp, with no supplement for singles, B&B, including most meals, wine with dinner, tuition, transfers and excursions, but not flights (01453 823328, authenticadventures.co.uk)

13 Autumn colour in Oslo

It might not be the most obvious choice for a weekend of flame-hued autumn walks, but Oslo is crammed with parks



MAIN: ALAMY BELOW: MASSIMO BORCHI / CORBIS



and grounds full of deciduous trees that gleam butter-yellow and rich auburn in the autumn months. The Vigeland Park is the world's largest sculpture park made by a single artist, while the medieval Akershus Fortress has beautiful, tree-lined grounds. Or head outside the city to the nearby Osloomarka forest, which has some of the most vibrant autumn foliage in the country. Stay at the chic-but-cosy Saga Hotel & Apartments Oslo by the Royal Palace. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £139 (00 47 22 55 44 90, sagahoteloslo.no)

14 See the best of medieval Sicily

The atmospheric medieval town of Cefalu — right on the sea on Sicily's sun-drenched northern coast — has seen its profile rise since its spectacular Norman cathedral was designated a Unesco World Heritage site in July. Still warm — even until late autumn — it's a great base for walkers, with the Madonie mountains rearing up behind the town, crisscrossed with walking trails. The average daily high temperature is 20C in October and 18C in November. Base yourself at the central La Plumeria Hotel and Restaurant, and get a flavour of Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (some of which was filmed in the town) with an early evening *passaggiata* and *gelato*. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £104 (00 39 0921 925897, www.laplumeriahotel.it)

15 Sound of Music in Salzburg

Salzburg takes a breath in autumn, between the heady days of the summer

crowds and the crisp months of the ski season in Austria. It's the perfect time to soak up celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the city's A-list movie moment, *The Sound of Music*. The musical-theatre version returns to the city from September 26 to December 6, and there are many ways to take a themed city tour: by bike, foot, coach — or as a singalong. For more diverse musical choices, the Salzburger Kulturtag runs throughout autumn — a series of concerts and recitals at various cultural sites throughout the city (salzburg.info). The chic Hotel & Villa Auersperg is just two minutes' walk from the Old Town. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £112 (00 43 662 889 440, www.auersperg.at)

16 Sailing and boarding in Bodrum

Simply staying on your feet on a paddleboard might seem challenge enough, but the Kempinski in Bodrum has seriously upped the ante with brand new SUP yoga classes. Each class consists of a 30-minute warm-up followed by a 60-minute SUP masterclass. For sailing and yoga, head to Bodrum in October, when the Bodrum Cup yacht festival, one of the biggest marine events in the country, takes place from October 19 to 24. The luscious Kempinski Barbaros Bay is perched above its own private bay with a gorgeous, soft-sand beach. Plus, during early autumn in October, the water is still warm enough to swim in without a wetsuit. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £170 B&B (kempinski.com)

17 Whales, dolphins and birds in Spain

The Straits of Gibraltar are a fantastic place to catch spectacular autumn bird migrations, but they also offer the chance to see fin and sperm whales and common and bottlenose dolphins heading south to warmer waters. Naturetrek has a four-night break, departing on Thursday or September 21, which combines gentle walks to see raptors and shearwaters with boat trips into the Straits. It includes four nights at the rural hotel Huerta Grande, just outside the town of Tarifa. **Details** A four-night break departing on Thursday or September 21 is from £995pp including flights, all meals, accommodation and a naturalist tour guide (01962 733051, naturetrek.co.uk)

18 Calvados in Normandy

Few areas of France are more synonymous with autumn than Normandy, when the apple orchards give up their crop and the cider presses are in full swing. Alastair Sawday has created two new itineraries, one four-day and one seven-day, mixing calvados and cider tastings with stays at some of its favourite places in the region, including Château de Canisy, the oldest B&B in France, and the gorgeous, 16th-century Manoir de la Fieffe, with four acres of botanical gardens. **Details** Three-nights' B&B costs from £250pp, including tastings and ferry crossing (0117 204 7810, sawdays.co.uk)



19 Painting and pampering in Venice

Immerse yourself in art at the Venice Biennale (labiennale.org/en), which runs throughout the city until November 22. With the summer hordes gone, there is more space to admire the works by 136 different artists at the Biennale's biggest show, *All the World's Futures*, and the individual country's stands at the Central Pavilion. Pair the culture with some chillout time at the city's newest, state-of-the-art spa hotel, the JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, tucked away on its own private island with spectacular views across to San Marco from the pool. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £216 (00 39 041 296 8111, marriott.co.uk)

20 Food and music in Switzerland

Switzerland's lowest-lying town of Ascona — just 196m above sea level — is still pleasantly warm in autumn, when the streets throng with foodie events, including the Chestnut Festival (October 3) and the Autumn Festival (October 10), when food stalls open up in the town centre and there is an afternoon of live music. The Settimani Musicali di Ascona — a classical music festival — runs until October 16, with symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles playing venues and churches around the town. Stay at the Art Hotel Riposo, on the shores of Lake Maggiore. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £114 (00 41 91 791 31 64 hotelriposo.ch)