

# Escape

THE EUROPEAN SKI  
RESORTS EMBRACING  
SUMMER MONTHS

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Picture: COURTESY OF SECRET BAY

Perfect oasis: Secret Bay, on the Caribbean island of Dominica, is low-key but swish

## LUXURY... FOR LESS!

*From Caribbean island paradises to private yachts, you CAN afford to holiday like the super-rich – just follow these expert tips and tricks*

**W**HEN it comes to travel, luxury doesn't always have to mean expensive. Sometimes, with insider acumen and creative know-how, a luxe holiday – ranging from the five-star glamorous to hyped bucket-list experiences – can be more accessible than you think. Timing can be important: swap a summer trip for an off-season or

*by* NICOLE TRILIVAS

shoulder-season jaunt. Avoid tourist hotspots: choose under-the-radar alternatives instead.

Select countries where the pound is strong against the local currency. Take your time when planning and hunt around online for good deals (you never

know what's lurking out there). So, here's our guide to making the most of your travels, while avoiding sky-high prices.

### SAIL ON PRIVATE YACHTS

ROUTINELY running into the six figures for a week's charter, a private yacht is

out of reach for most people. But there's a way to get a taste of this kind of trip without spending insulting amounts of money on a mega-yacht.

Live out your Below Deck fantasies on a more modest boat.

Offering private sailing, power, or yacht charters, with or without crew on some of the newest vessels in the industry, The Moorings makes the private boat

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experience more attainable. Skipped charters typically start around £7,500 per week (or £11,100 for fully crewed experiences, including a chef), with boats accommodating three to six cabins.

This puts the per-person rate on a par with a luxury hotel and makes it a good deal in premium destinations like the British Virgin Islands; charters with The Moorings here have increased by 13 per cent year over year.

Once onboard, the experience is personalised with customised itineraries, flexible dining options, and plenty of freedom to explore private coves and hidden beaches inaccessible to larger cruises.

One especially fun option is The Moorings' new La Paz destination in Mexico's Sea of Cortez, called 'The World's Aquarium' by Jacques Cousteau, with a dizzying amount of marine life, including whale sharks, dolphins and whales.

BOOK IT: moorings.com

CRUISE DIFFERENTLY

LATELY, there has been a trend in ultra-luxury hotel brands such as Ritz-Carlton, Orient Express and Four Seasons to roll out their own 'yachts', which are actually more like small cruise ships.

But they're eye-wateringly pricey. Instead, Unforgettable Travel

Company has more accessible, yacht-style cruises in Croatia, with a maximum of 36 guests on board.

Its fleet of sleek ships comes with sunbathing spots, swimming platforms, on-deck hot-tubs and water sports equipment.

Because of the nifty size of the vessels, guests can be easily dropped off in ports for relaxed, unstructured excursions – and passengers can then come back and forth as they please, without worrying about tenders and timings.

A week's cruise starts from the enticing price of £1,842, which includes breakfast, two dinners, airport transfers in Croatia and all excursions, but no international flights.

BOOK IT: unforgettablecroatia.com

ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS

THESE days, luxury isn't always about white gloves, gold taps and silver service. Sometimes, it's all about rare and special experiences.

That's where a trip to the Arctic comes in. Despite being hard to reach and typically expensive, it's not thought of as a traditionally luxurious destination but does deliver non-stop 'luxury' in the form of a one-of-a-kind adventure.

Ice-cave expeditions, dog sledding, snowmobiling and chasing the Northern Lights – it's all here.

Open all year round in Longyearbyen, one of the world's northernmost



Stylish: Charter a yacht in the British Virgin Islands. Inset left, a tasty dish at Palace Beach Resort, Egypt

CARIBBEAN

Pictures: GETTY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Escape: Cover story



Majestic: Baronial comfort (left), tranquil shrines on the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage and flamingos in Kenya (inset, below)

castle, including suites with four-poster beds, a billiards room with an open fireplace, croquet and badminton grounds, and direct access to the River Averon, which is teeming with salmon and trout for anglers among the party.

Rates start at £2,101 per week, so from £30pp per night, which is a downright steal to be the laird or lady of the manor for a week.

BOOK IT: oliverstravels.com

ITALIAN SUPERCARS

LUXURY driving trips – either group or self-guided ones in swish supercars – have grown in popularity lately, but their price tag can hardly be called reasonable. One way to get this high-octane excitement on a budget is with Your Custom Journey, an Italy-based bespoke travel company.

Rather than joining an expensive trip or hiring a supercar for an entire day, travellers can experience driving one in Maranello, in the region of Emilia-Romagna, known as the home of Ferrari, for less than £100.

It's just a 10km drive, but it gets you behind the wheel of a Ferrari California or Ferrari 458 Italia, and the drive can also be woven into a stay in Bologna or Modena with a trip to the Ferrari Museum.

BOOK IT: yourcustomjourney.com



settlements in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, the throwback 16-room Basecamp Hotel puts all of this right on your doorstep, with rates starting at the surprisingly affordable £220pp B&B. This doesn't include the excursions listed above, but with a more affordable HQ, your funds can be directed to the adventures themselves.

BOOK IT: basecampexplorer.com

FESTIVE BEACH BREAK

TRAVELLING over the festive period is almost always expensive, especially if you're looking for winter sun, but there are deals to be had if you get creative and flexible with the destination.

Look beyond Dubai with its current frisson of uncertainty and the almost-guaranteed high prices of the Maldives and consider instead Egypt's Mediterranean north coast.

The beachfront Marassi resort complex (you fly into Cairo for this) has a few options: Address Beach Resort caters more towards families, while the new Palace Beach Resort is much more tailored towards couples.

Rates over the Christmas and New Year period start around £130 B&B for Palace Beach Resort and £120 B&B for Address Beach Resort compared with peak spring prices, which start from £876 at both resorts.

Return fares with British Airways to Cairo start from £417pp throughout December, and there is a new easyJet flight route from Manchester to Cairo-Sphinx Airport launching in November.

Flights in December start around £185.

BOOK IT: marassi.eg

PILGRIMAGE IN JAPAN

JAPAN might just be the world's most 'trendy' tourism destination at the moment – helped,

in part, by the historically weak Japanese yen – and a self-guided walking tour makes the most of the country's zeitgeist and affordability.

Spend seven days walking the sacred Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage, one of the world's only two UNESCO-awarded pilgrimage routes (the other being Spain's Camino de Santiago).

This pilgrimage winds through forested trails, peaceful countryside and tranquil shrines. It's truly an only-in-Japan experience, where you'll stay in onsen (thermal hot springs) hotels and small family-run inns that seem unchanged by time.

The trip is arranged by Walk Japan, which has been in operation since the 1990s, but because it's a self-guided trip, it's economical, starting from £1,165pp for six nights with all accommodation and most meals included, but not international flights.

BOOK IT: walkjapan.com

BIJOU SAFARI

A SAFARI is considered by most to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience – the stuff of honeymoons or first big retiree trips, but it's hard to find a luxury safari that doesn't break the bank. Most tour operators quote around £5,000pp as a luxury starting point, but one way to get around this is to join a small, scheduled group safari.

It will not be quite as luxurious in the traditional sense, but you're still

getting the luxury of the safari experience. With a maximum of around eight people on the trip, Timbuktu Travel has a small group safari for six nights through Kenya's safari hotspot.

It covers the capital, Nairobi, as well as Lake Nakuru, in Kenya's Great Rift Valley, famous for its flocks of flamingos, and the Masai Mara, one of the most acclaimed safari destinations and site of the wildebeest Great Migration.

The hotels on this trip are three or four-star and perfectly comfortable and stylish (nothing ultra-premium, though).

Guests travel via road transfer, which is cheaper than flying, as those safari plane transfers can add to the cost quickly. Rates start from £2,165pp, excluding international flights.

BOOK IT: timbuktutavel.com

AFRICA'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

THERE'S also the option of going on a 'green-season' safari, sometimes thought of as Africa's best-kept secret.

This is in the off-season, in Africa's warm, rainy months (roughly November to June, depending on the region).

It's a lot less busy than during the dry season, which can provide better sightings as animals congregate around watering holes. However, green season has charms of its own, with vibrant

CARIBBEAN CORKER

BECAUSE many islands have to import so many resources, the Caribbean can be expensive (we're looking at you, St Barts, and Turks and Caicos).

However, some islands boast more bang for your buck, especially when you forgo the big-hitting social media darlings for something a bit less buzzy and busy. Enter the Caribbean's so-called 'Nature Island' of Dominica, which is refreshingly low-key, largely remaining free of major development.

The place to stay is Green Globe-certified and extremely luxurious Secret Bay, which is made up of 27 high-design residences hewn from sustainably sourced hardwoods and outfitted with private plunge pools and misty jungle views.

Secret Bay's Summer By Nature offer (valid until October 31) rewards visitors with 30 per cent off villa stays when you travel outside of peak season and also includes a good selection of guided island experiences and tours.

For example, a two-person villa starts at £666 per night, including round-trip airport transfers, daily breakfast, welcome dinner, night snorkelling, and waterfall and river excursions. This is for a minimum four-night stay, but excludes international flights.

BOOK IT: secretbay.dm

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