

8 of the BEST

NEW CITY BREAKS

Tap in to new flight routes to sell trips in the shoulder seasons, says **Emma Blackmore**

With summer holiday bookings well underway, it's time to start thinking about what comes next. Autumn brings fewer crowds, milder temperatures and better-value prices, making it one of the most appealing seasons for a city break.

Even for clients who have visited Europe's major capitals, there are plenty of novel experiences to be found in smaller cities, many of which are gaining new flight routes this year – bringing them within reach of UK regional airports.

From Sicilian markets and Andalusian palaces to Scandinavian design hubs and Baltic capitals, here's our pick of European city breaks making the most of increased connectivity this year.



1 PALERMO, SICILY

The Sicilian capital is an intoxicating mix of sunlit piazzas, freshly made arancini in lively markets and tangled streets shaped by Arab, Norman and baroque influences. With a new Jet2.com flight from Manchester running until November, Palermo is more accessible than ever. A visit to the Mediterranean's largest island isn't complete without marvelling at the 12th-century Palermo Cathedral (pictured) and glittering Byzantine gold mosaics inside the Palatine Chapel. Mondello Beach, just a 15-minute drive from Palermo's centre, pairs fine sand and turquoise seas with an art nouveau bathhouse atop the water, which is now home to an atmospheric restaurant.

Book it: Jet2CityBreaks sells a three-night stay with breakfast at Casena Dei Colli Sure Hotel Collection by Best Western from £779 per person, based on two adults sharing a double room. The price includes 22kg luggage allowance and flights from Manchester on September 15. jet2holidays.com

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Sakko3p, iStock00, Gella, Roxana Bashyryova



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TIVAT, MONTENEGRO

Overlooking the Bay of Kotor at the point where the jagged Dinaric Alps meet the Adriatic Sea, Tivat is the perfect hub for coastal and mountain adventures – and British Airways has launched a route from Heathrow this month. The pine-lined promenade of nearby Porto Montenegro is a succession of superyachts, boutiques and konobas (traditional tavernas) serving hearty meat and fish dishes, while in historic Kotor, shaded streets reveal fortified summer residences once frequented by the Venetian elite. Boat trips from Perast take clients to tiny Saint George Island, home to a Benedictine monastery, as well as nearby Our Lady of the Rocks, where a marble church and lighthouse rise dramatically from the water.

Book it: Cyphon Holidays offers seven nights' B&B at the Regent Porto Montenegro Hotel from £2,395 per person, based on two adults sharing a King Studio Suite with Balcony. The price includes 23kg luggage allowance and British Airways flights from Heathrow on September 17. cyphon.co.uk

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BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

Tui's new packages from Edinburgh, Manchester and Stansted use Ryanair flights to Bratislava, one of Europe's most charming under-the-radar cities. Straddling the Danube with a backdrop of forested hills and vineyards, the Slovak capital's narrow lanes boast a rich blend of Gothic, baroque and communist-era influences. Clients can explore the hilltop Bratislava Castle, tour the grand Slovak National Theatre (pictured), sample local wines or enjoy one of the city's famously affordable pints. The UFO Observation Deck is a saucer-shaped viewpoint over the Danube, offering panoramic views and fine dining.

Book it: Tui sells a five-night stay at Mamaison Residence Šulekova Bratislava from £378 per person, based on two adults sharing a one-bedroom studio.

The holiday includes Ryanair flights, with hand luggage, from Edinburgh, departing September 14.

tui.co.uk



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STUTTGART, GERMANY

If you have car enthusiasts among your clients, Stuttgart is worth getting up to speed on – and it's now easier to access thanks to Eurowings' new direct route from Gatwick, which operates until October 23. The German city is the manufacturing hub for Mercedes-Benz and Porsche, both of which have dedicated museums offering a front-seat view of their early history. Visitors can also admire works by Picasso and Kandinsky at the Staatsgalerie, before exploring leafy beer gardens, the neoclassical Rosenstein Palace and a market hall known for Swabian sausages and regional wines.

Book it: Fred Holidays offers four nights' B&B at the Park Inn by Radisson Stuttgart from £849 per person, based on two adults sharing a standard room. The package includes entrance to the Mercedes-Benz Museum and Porsche Museum, 23kg luggage and Eurowings flights from Gatwick departing October 5. fredholidays.co.uk



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FARO, PORTUGAL

For clients who can't decide between city and sea, the Algarve's capital Faro offers coastal charm framed by whitewashed buildings and terracotta rooftops, and is now connected to Luton via a new Wizz Air flight. Cobble lanes in the old town lead clients beneath the Napoleonic-era Arco da Vila and towards Faro Cathedral, an elegant blend of Gothic and baroque styles. Climb the bell tower for sweeping views across the lagoons of the flamingo-rich Ria Formosa Natural Park. Beyond the old town, boat trips reveal quiet islands and secluded golden beaches.

Book it: Sunvil sells seven nights' B&B at Occidental Faro Hotel from £1,308 per person, based on two sharing a Standard Room. The price includes transfers, 20kg luggage allowance and Wizz Air flights from Luton on September 8.
sunvil.co.uk

6

OLBIA, SARDINIA

Olbia's historic centre unfolds around the granite Basilica di San Simplicio – a Romanesque masterpiece dating from the 11th century – while the lively Corso Umberto I boulevard is dotted with gelaterias. Fans of Italian cuisine will want to sample local mussels marinara and finish with deep-fried seadas pastries, filled with pecorino cheese and honey. The city is also a gateway to fine-sand beaches such as Spiaggia Pittulongu, just minutes from the centre. BA CityFlyer's new route from Stansted operates until September 27.

Book it: Citalia offers seven nights' half-board at Marinedda Thalasso & Spa from £1,599 per person, based on two adults sharing a Classic Double Room. The price includes transfers, 23kg luggage allowance and BA CityFlyer flights from Stansted on September 19.
citalia.com

DESTINATIONS

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SEVILLE, SPAIN

Moorish-inspired architecture and Gothic grandeur sit side by side in Seville, from the latticework of La Giralda tower to the dramatic rib vaulting of Seville Cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. Suggest clients wander the orange-tree-lined plazas of Santa Cruz neighbourhood, cross the Triana Bridge to watch fiery flamenco performances, explore the undulating roof of the 'Mushrooms of Seville' sculpture and sample tapas in shaded backstreets. Cruising along the Guadalquivir River is another must. EasyJet's new twice-weekly flight from Bristol makes the Andalusian capital even more accessible.

Book it: Kirker Holidays offers three nights' B&B at Casa 1800 from £1,198 per person, based on two adults sharing. The price includes transfers, 23kg luggage allowance and easyJet flights from Bristol departing September 26. kirkerholidays.com

ASK THE operator



Jerome Downer, product manager, Cyphon Holidays

"The best time to experience Europe isn't always the height of summer – it's often in the quieter months, when the crowds fade, the pace slows and destinations feel far more authentic."



Natasha Marson, head of trade distribution, easyJet holidays

"Our shoulder-season packages give agents the opportunity to sell more-tailored travel options with a range of hand-picked hotels and fewer crowds – all with the same rich culture."



Rosanna Melaragni, Portugal product manager, Sunvil

"Travelling in the autumn unlocks lower temperatures and better prices. In the Algarve, flowers are still in full bloom in September, and beaches and restaurants are less crowded. October offers cooler evenings for a better night's sleep."

8

MALMÖ, SWEDEN

Malmö is a striking Scandi city. The historic heart combines the red-brick fortress of Malmö Castle – one of Scandinavia's oldest – with a rainbow of centuries-old merchant houses. Towering above it all is the Turning Torso skyscraper, symbolising the city's future. Clients can admire modern art at the Moderna Museet Malmö, taste unusual flavours at the Disgusting Food Museum or unwind at the seaside Ribersborg bathhouse. EasyJet holidays is offering new packages to the city, via flights to Copenhagen, with Malmö a 40-minute train journey across the Oresund Bridge.

Book it: EasyJet holidays sells a three-night room-only break at the Scandic Kramer from £294 per person, based on two adults sharing a double room. The price includes flights from Bristol to Copenhagen on September 10, with hand luggage. easyjet.com/holidays



PICTURES: Shutterstock/Roman Slavik.com, Diego Grandi