



Be prepared for a boost in winter-sun bookings with these good-value short-haul spots, writes **Katie McGonagle**

**A**fter a few weeks of good weather, the prospect of a British summer might seem more appealing than at first thought. As lockdown measures are lifted, we can enjoy walks in the sunshine, have picnics in the park and appreciate all the little things we haven't been able to do recently.

In fact, we might not even feel the full effect of missing out on our annual overseas summer holiday – that is, until we get to November, when drizzly days and dark evenings set in and we realise just how much of a boost that dose of summer sun would have been.

It's that possibility that is sustaining the winter-sun market, amid hopes that some customers will

replace their summer beach breaks with trips to sunnier climes later in the year or early next year, when they feel more confident both about booking and travelling.

Whether you're looking for places to rebook clients right now or scoping out options to sell later in the year, there are plenty of short-haul spots that guarantee a winning combination of sunshine, short flights and serious value for money.

It could be the Canary Islands or Cape Verde, the breezy shores of Cyprus or Malta where great deals can be found in winter months, or the exotic sights and sounds of North Africa. There's plenty of choice out there, so here are just a few options to offer clients in search of short-haul sunshine this winter.



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## MOROCCO

Marrakech is the first stop for most Morocco visitors, but turn your eyes toward this country's coastline and there are some good-value beach towns to consider too. The coastal resorts of Agadir and Essaouira (*pictured*) mix Arabian architecture with long sweeping seafronts, busy souks with laid-back surf schools, and traditional hammams at a fraction of the price elsewhere.

## EGYPT

Sharm el-Sheikh, once the darling of the value-driven winter-sun market, has been out of bounds for British travellers since 2015, when a terrorist attack on a Russian plane triggered a flight ban from the UK, until February this year, when Tui resumed direct services. Things were looking up, with hoteliers keen to revive their fortunes and UK travellers seemingly eager to return, until the current crisis halted its budding recovery.

With more still to do in rebuilding confidence in the Red Sea resort, prices are likely to remain competitive this winter, and its enduring attractions – including some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world – remain as compelling as ever.

Mark Hall, director of product and destination experience at Tui UK & Ireland, says: "Sharm el-Sheikh was always a hugely popular destination and I am delighted that we have reintroduced the Egypt favourite to our future programmes."

**BOOK IT:** Tui offers a week's all-inclusive at the 5T-rated Tui Sensatori Resort Sharm El Sheikh (*pictured*) from £781 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing, including flights from Gatwick on November 25 and transfers. [tui.co.uk](http://tui.co.uk)

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## ISRAEL

Combining ancient religious sites in Jerusalem with a youthful foodie vibe in Tel Aviv, Israel springs to mind for hipster city breaks and history tours, yet it's a great spot for a culture-packed winter-sun escape too. Base clients in Tel Aviv (*pictured*) for the best of both worlds – Bauhaus buildings, markets and miles of glorious beachfront, with historic Jaffa and Jerusalem in easy reach.

## THE GAMBIA

It's exotic enough to impress the neighbours, yet The Gambia is surprisingly accessible, just a six-hour flight from the UK and in the same time zone. The beaches are a big draw, but this West African country also offers local culture and abundant wildlife – expect to see brightly coloured birds, vervet monkeys or monitor lizards on the way to breakfast, or book a birding tour to explore in more depth – adding to the sun-and-sand experience.

Katie Durham, product manager at The Gambia Experience, says: "The Gambia is a great winter-sun destination for many reasons. Aside from its uncrowded sandy beaches, diverse wildlife, vibrant culture and welcoming people, the climate is hard to beat, with year-round sunshine and 32C temperatures.

"It also offers visitors a safe and soft introduction to unspoilt Africa. From beach breaks and wildlife encounters to exploring local villages and life along its river, plus the great variety of accommodation choices, it's a hard holiday destination to beat."

**BOOK IT:** The Gambia Experience offers seven nights' B&B at Kombo Beach Hotel from £599 for selected departures in November and December, including flights and transfers. [gambia.co.uk](http://gambia.co.uk)

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## TENERIFE

We tend to think of Tenerife as primarily a beach destination – those golden stretches along the Costa Adeje or black volcanic sands of Puerto de la Cruz are justifiably well known – yet it offers so much more. Try hiking the lunar-like terrain of Teide National Park (*pictured*), taking a whale or dolphin-spotting cruise, or exploring the Unesco-listed Old Town of La Laguna.

## GRAN CANARIA

Like its Canary Islands neighbour, Gran Canaria can be unfairly reduced to a fly-and-flop favourite, but there's more here to do than sunbathe. Just moments from south coast resort towns such as Playa del Ingles lie the Maspalomas Dunes (*pictured*), a protected nature reserve full of undulating desert dunes more reminiscent of the Sahara than mainland Spain.

Head inland and the volcano-forged landscapes present hikers and mountain bikers with a vast array of trails to explore, with road-accessible viewpoints for those touring by car.

Capital Las Palmas is worth a day trip too, and perhaps even a twin-centre stay for those who want to soak up the atmosphere in historic hotels such as the refurbished Santa Catalina, which reopened late last year and is part of Barceló's Royal Hideaway portfolio. Stroll around old town La Vegueta for cobbled streets and colonial-style facades, or refuel with cured meats and Canarian cheese at the Mercado del Puerto.

**BOOK IT:** Olympic Holidays offers a week at Gloria Palace San Agustin Hotel from £500 based on two sharing on a half-board basis, flying from Stansted on January 25, 2021. [olympicholidays.com](http://olympicholidays.com)

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