

NO-FLY HOLIDAYS

With demand growing for holidays without flights, Laura French suggests some alternatives

ways

With travel corridors opening up the summer season and many airlines having now resumed services, flying is officially back on the cards.

But for those less confident about taking to the skies just yet, there are plenty of alternatives – and we're not just talking about a booze cruise to Calais.

From coach tours to Croatia to rail breaks to Greece, ferry holidays to Spain and train tours to Venice, there's plenty of product out there for clients wanting to get a little more adventurous and explore parts of the continent they might barely have thought of before, all without requiring a runway.



St Owen's Bay, Jersey

IRELAND

From the Cliffs of Moher plunging into the ocean to the Ring of Kerry and its silvery mountain landscapes, the Emerald Isle sells itself. There's plenty to see in Dublin but it's not only the city that lures, with the 1,600-mile Wild Atlantic Way welcoming drivers seeking a scenic coastal route and heritage-filled villages in which to stay. For one of the most quintessential, Irish Ferries recommends Dunmore East, a fishing village in County Waterford just over an hour's drive from Rosslare, where ferries dock.

Book it: P&O Ferries has an eight-hour service from Liverpool to Dublin. Irish Ferries runs from Holyhead to Dublin and Pembroke to Rosslare in around three hours. A week at the four-star Sea Cliff Holiday Homes in Dunmore East costs from £930 per family in August. irishferries.com

BRITTANY

There's plenty to draw travellers across the Channel, and it's not only Calais that's reachable by ferry, with links from Poole and Portsmouth to Brittany (with Condor Ferries and Brittany Ferries). Gold-sand shores, rugged coastal walks and quaint fishing harbours come together in this diverse region and at its heart is Saint-Malo, where medieval ramparts frame a postcard-pretty old town and port. Beyond the city there are islands, forests and quieter spots to explore, including Dol de Bretagne, famous for its 13th-century cathedral and its medieval houses.

Book it: Brittany Ferries offers a week at the quaint three-bedroom La Fresnais gite in Dol de Bretagne (close to Saint-Malo) from £721 for up to five travelling, including ferry travel. brittany-ferries.co.uk

JERSEY

There's no time like the present to sell Britain's islands, and at just over four hours by ferry from Poole, oft-underrated Jersey deserves a spot on the list. Rugged coastlines, soft-sand beaches, a laid-back atmosphere and an abundance of historical sights make the island an excellent bet for families as well as older travellers, while the annual Tennerfest draws foodies each October. Attractions include the Jersey War Tunnels, Maritime Museum, Mont Orgueil Castle and Jersey Zoo, while water-based activities range from kayaking to surfing.

Book it: Premier Holidays offers three nights' B&B at the Radisson Blu Waterfront in capital Saint Helier from £259, including return ferry travel between August 1 and October 31. premierholidays.co.uk



Emma Batchelor,
director, Discover Ferries

"Our research, conducted a couple of weeks ago, suggests 73% of people want to get away this summer, with over half saying they'll be looking to travel within the British Isles and 27% to Europe. Last year, destinations such as France, Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands were all popular with holidaymakers, and we saw growth in the number of people travelling to the Isle of Wight, Isle of Man, the Isles of Scilly and the Channel Islands. Ferry travel is an excellent way of reaching places that are a little off the beaten track, and it lends itself well to social distancing, with wide public areas, open deck space and private cabins on certain routes. Our members have introduced Covid-safe protocols including staggered boarding, reduced passenger capacity, additional cleaning and social distancing signage to ensure passengers and crew are able to travel as safely as possible."

top tip

For clients keen to go farther afield, Brittany Ferries sails overnight from Portsmouth to Bilbao and Santander, offering access to the less-visited north of Spain

Rail



Anna Davies, sales and marketing manager for the UK, Railbookers

- Consider targeting your cruise database with rail holidays – these offer a ‘cruise by land’ option combining multiple destinations seamlessly.
- Emphasise that travelling by train isn’t just about getting from A to B, but is an effortless and scenic way for customers to enjoy an ever-changing view.
- Stay on top of the trends. We are seeing a lot of interest in our Scottish holidays for those wanting to stay close to home, and equally strong interest in Italy, France, Spain and Switzerland.
- Wise up on new Covid protocols, such as new seating configurations, the removal of food and drink services, requirements for passengers to wear face coverings, deep-cleaning between journeys and contactless ticket control.

The Jacobite steam train, Scotland

THE NETHERLANDS

With Eurostar whisking passengers to both Amsterdam and Rotterdam in less than four hours, the Netherlands is an obvious choice for a quick getaway that blends laid-back vibes with cycle-friendly countryside and colourful coastal resorts. The beaches of The Hague can be reached in less than 30 minutes by train from Rotterdam, while cultural attractions aplenty can be found in Utrecht, a 20-minute ride from the capital – so you needn’t only limit it to the ‘dam.’ **Book it:** If clients are interested in combining the Netherlands with neighbouring countries, suggest Insight Vacations’ 11-day Country

Roads of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands tour, which can be accessed by Eurostar. Prices start at £2,695 (excluding Eurostar, with departures from September). insightvacations.com

THE SWISS ALPS

With its snowy peaks, pine-forested slopes and timber-chalet villages, Switzerland seems to have been made for slow, serene rail trips. Great Rail Journeys has an eight-day itinerary from London, with highlights including three nights in Chur, Switzerland’s first settlement; a ride on the 100-year-old Bernina Express through the Engadine Valley; and a trip on the Glacier

Express, where rolling vineyards, dramatic peaks and traditional mountain villages flash past the window pane. **Book it:** Great Rail Journeys’ Traditional Glacier Express trip costs from £1,496 including accommodation, some meals and all transport, departing October 3. greatrail.com

GREECE

If you thought a trip to Greece required flights both there and back, think again. Sunvil has introduced independent rail itineraries to Corfu, Paxos, Lefkas, Parga and Sivota. Clients opting for one of the itineraries will travel from London St

Pancras through France, the Alps, Milan and Bari, where they’ll catch a ferry to Igoumenitsa or Corfu (both around eight hours) for a week-long dose of cerulean sea and deserted beaches. “The journey is a mini adventure in itself, with an opportunity to explore multiple places en route,” says Dudley der Parthog, Sunvil director for Greece. **Book it:** A nine-night Corfu by train itinerary costs from £1,500, including one night’s B&B at the De La Ville Hotel, Milan, and seven nights’ self-catering at the Kalami Bay apartments, Corfu, plus Eurostar, rail journeys, overnight ferry and a flight for the return. sunvil.co.uk

CROATIA

It’s hard to beat a coach tour for lack-of-hassle factor, and operators have been getting ever-more adventurous in terms of destinations. Just Go Holidays and Leger Holidays both offer trips from the UK to Croatia, providing a flight-free way to sell an already-enticing mix of culture-filled cities and Adriatic islands. Suggest Leger’s Dubrovnik and Jewels of the Dalmatian Coast for a comprehensive tour of the highlights, including the capital and its stone-walled Old Town, plus Split, Sibenik, Krka National Park and Plitvice Lakes, where vivid turquoise lagoons glow amid the foliage. **Book it:** Leger Holidays’ 14-night trip costs from £1,599, including accommodation, some meals, overnight ferry crossing and coach travel. leger.co.uk

THE AUSTRIAN TYROL

There’s something pretty special about the Tyrol, with its mirror-like lakes and flowering meadows, soaring peaks and icy slopes, and it’s even more enchanting in the autumn months when the trees turn copper-coloured and the air turns crisp. Grand UK Holidays has an eight-day autumn tour taking in the best of the region with visits to

Kitzbühel, Rattenberg, the Ziller Valley, Grossglockner Glacier and beyond from a base in Hohe Tauern National Park, where mountains and waterfalls abound at every turn. **Book it:** The Tyrolean All-Inclusive trip costs from £769 including accommodation, coach travel, ferry crossings, all meals and house drinks, with various pick-up points in the UK, departing September 26. grandukholidays.com

THE ITALIAN RIVIERA

Exceptional food, picturesque villages and charming seaside towns come together in the Italian Riviera, typified by glamorous Portofino, where swanky yachts bob beside pastel-hued houses, and in Cervo, where coffee shops and galleries line cobbled streets. Just Go Holidays combines both with explorations in Monaco, Monte Carlo, Nice and beyond on a 10-day coach trip from the UK that takes in both sides of the Italian-French border from a base in Diano Marina, capturing all the glitz and glamour you’d expect of this legendary coastline. **Book it:** From £699 including accommodation with breakfast and dinner, local drinks, coach travel, ferry crossings and excursions, for departures June to September 2021. justgoholidays.com **TW**

EPIC TRIPS

Target younger clients wanting to tick off all the key sights in one with an epic Europe-wide trip. **Topdeck** has a 16-day European Emperor extravaganza leaving from London that takes in Paris, Bordeaux, Barcelona, the French Riviera, the Swiss Alps, Venice, Florence and Rome, from £2,299 including accommodation, some meals and outbound Channel crossing (May to September 2021). Sister brand **Contiki** has a 12-day European Discovery tour starting and ending in London with stops in Amsterdam, the Rhine Valley, Munich, Innsbruck, the Austrian Tyrol, Venice, Rome, Lucerne and beyond, from £1,657, with departures from April 2021.

Coach



Dubrovnik, Croatia