

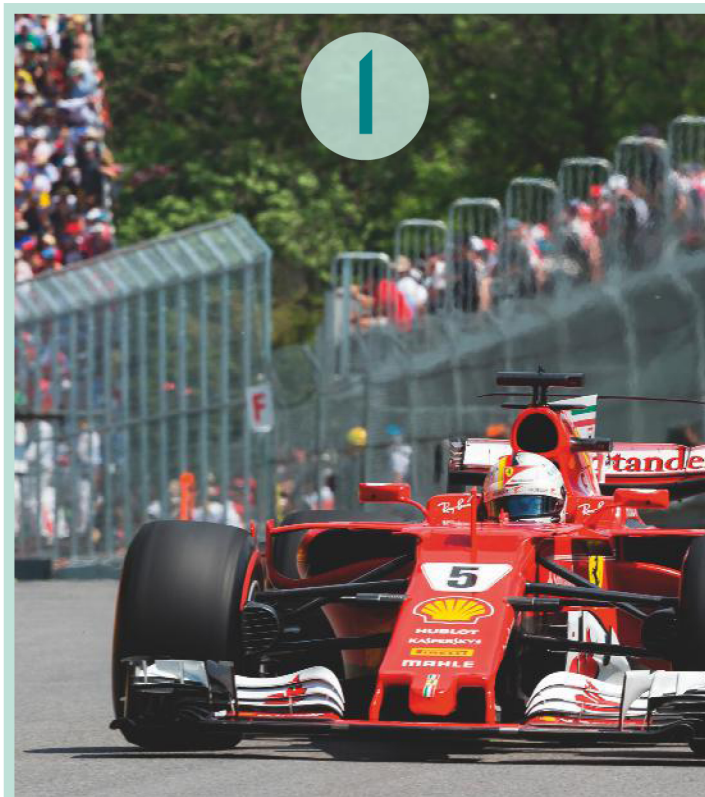
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BEST

PORTUGAL TRIPS IN 2020

Where can you still send clients this autumn or winter? **Katie McGonagle** finds out

Amid the ups and downs of the current 'corona-coaster', where every week seems to bring some fresh wave of uncertainty, it's important to look out for the little gems of good news.

The addition of Portugal to the UK government's list of travel corridors was one such bright spark which some agents, including Triangle Travel's Rob Kenton, said had driven a flurry of bookings for the remainder of 2020. While Portugal's prospects for remaining on the 'safe' list were still unclear as *Travel Weekly* went to press, we take inspiration from those keen customers with some of the country's best breaks this autumn and winter.



REV YOUR ENGINES AT THE GRAND PRIX

Get your Portugal sales off the starting grid by appealing to Formula One fans with a weekend at the Portuguese Grand Prix. The race is heading to the Algarve – specifically the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve in Portimão – on October 23-25 this year, and there's still time to pick up tickets. It's the first time the region has been chosen to host a grand prix – the last time the race was held in the country was 24 years ago in Estoril, near Lisbon – and organisers have confirmed spectators will be able to watch from the sidelines.

Book it: A B&B stay at Tivoli Marina Portimão starts at €472 per night in October for a one-bedroom apartment, with a minimum two-night stay. tivolihotels.com/en



SAIL THROUGH THE DOURO VALLEY

While ocean cruising remains in the doldrums, river lines are leading the way for the restart of cruise, and where better to tempt previous passengers back on board than the beautiful Douro Valley? Sail past sloping vineyards and verdant hillsides, and visit family-run *quintas* (estates) to learn about wine production. Riviera Travel is restarting its Douro programme this month, and says the route is one of its most popular.

Book it: Riviera offers a Douro, Porto & Salamanca River Cruise with sailings from September 2020 to November 2021 from £1,449 for eight days including flights. An alternative will be offered instead of the Salamanca excursion if Spain remains off-limits to UK travellers. rivieratravel.co.uk

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LIVE IT UP IN LISBON

City breaks are a hard sell at the moment, but with fewer crowds and a pleasant climate come autumn, the Portuguese capital is a good bet for a last-minute weekend away. Eager sightseers can do the rounds of the Belém Tower, Jerónimos Monastery and more, but the real beauty of Lisbon lies in getting lost amid the labyrinthine streets of the medieval Alfama district, admiring the grand buildings and monuments of Baixa, or ambling through the artsy area of Chiado. And if clients can stretch to an extra day or two, encourage them to get out and explore the city's surroundings, from steep hiking trails through Arrábida Natural Park to golden-sand beaches less than half-an-hour away.

Book it: Osprey Holidays offers three nights' B&B at the four-star Lisboa Plaza Hotel from £298 per person, including flights from Gatwick on November 5. ospreyholidays.com



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FEEL FESTIVE IN MADEIRA

This week sees the start of a month of celebrations on the Portuguese island of Madeira, which is combining its wine and flower festivals into one giant party from September 3-27. The streets of capital Funchal will be bedecked with exotic blooms including purple-blossomed jacaranda trees, birds of paradise and orchids. Wine-loving locals will also be seen treading the grapes, playing folk music and parading through the streets. Local authorities have pledged to run the festivals in a Covid-safe manner, with face masks in public spaces, social distancing during parades and a requirement for visitors to show a negative test within 72 hours of their departure or to take a test on arrival, funded by the government.

Book it: Sovereign offers seven nights' B&B at the five-star Pestana Carlton Madeira from £599 per person, based on two sharing a Classic Land View room, including easyJet flights from Gatwick on September 15 and transfers. sovereign.com



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EXPLORE THE ALENTEJO

This south-central region feels a world away from the holiday hotspots. Here you can explore mile after mile of farmland and forest – it's famed for its cork trees – interspersed with tiny villages and historic pousadas, all without bumping into another Brit. Plus, its coastline is every bit as beautiful as Portugal's better-known beaches; explore long stretches of sand at Comporta or Troia, lunch on fresh fish and chilled white wine at one of the many harbour-front restaurants of Setúbal (you might even spot the resident pod of dolphins swimming past) or hear stories of the country's seafaring past in port town Sines, birthplace of explorer Vasco de Gama.

Book it: Sunvil offers a 10-night Alentejo Family Holiday from £1,118 based on four sharing, including a seven-night villa stay at Herdade de Montalvo, three nights on a liveaboard boat, flights from Gatwick to Lisbon and car hire. sunvil.co.uk

TOP TOURS IN 2020

✿ **Intrepid Travel's** new range of Intrepid Retreats includes a trip to Porto & the Douro Valley, staying in one location in central Porto, with a port tasting and fado music performance. Departures start from October 2 and run throughout the rest of the year, from £790 land-only.

✿ **Travelsphere's** Best of Portugal journeys from Porto to Lisbon via the beautiful Douro Valley, historic Guimarães and medieval university city Coimbra. A November 23 departure starts at £949 including flights from Gatwick.

✿ **Newmarket Holidays** has a Hidden Portugal tour that promises to explore an often-overlooked side of the country. Starting from Porto, the tour travels through the Douro Valley, visiting port town Póvoa, seeing the cathedral and baroque architecture of Braga, and stopping off at the Vinho Verde vineyards of Minho. Prices start at £385 tour-only, with departures running throughout September and October.

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SPEND HALF-TERM IN THE SUN

With so many families having seen their summer holiday go up in smoke, it's welcome news that they still have time to squeeze in a half-term break before the winter gloom sets in. The Algarve is classic bucket-and-spade territory, with warm weather well into late autumn. Jet2holidays recommends Club Alvorferias in Alvor, which has a kids' club, entertainment programme, two pools and a shuttle bus to the beach one mile away. There are two on-site restaurants, or families looking to keep costs down can use the cooking facilities in the property's two and three-bedroom apartments.

Book it: Jet2holidays offers seven nights' self-catering at the three-star Club Alvorferias from £419 per person based on two adults and a child sharing, departing from Manchester on October 25. jet2holidays.com



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