



EUROPE COOLCATIONS

Switch-sell sizzling Med hotspots for cooler climes, so clients can still get their fix of France, Spain or Italy, writes **Rhodri Andrews**

Traditional summer destinations have witnessed soaring temperatures over the past few years, with popular Mediterranean hotspots such as Cyprus, Crete and Sicily regularly seeing the thermometer pass 40C during the peak summer months of July and August.

Some travellers have been feeling the heat, choosing to shift their visit to the shoulder seasons of autumn and spring instead. But for those who still like to get away during the summer, switching to a destination with a milder climate – known as a ‘coolcation’ – might be the answer.

While many assume this means swapping a sunny Mediterranean spot for somewhere in northern Europe and having to go back to the drawing board to find a destination that appeals, you might not need to look quite as far afield. There are often plenty of alternatives within the same country – think tapas in northern Spain, historic towns in the Italian Lakes and wonderful walks in the French Alps – that come with the added benefit of fewer tourists and lower prices, even during peak season. Here are a few coolcations to offer clients searching for an alternative to the most popular summer spots. ➤



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FRENCH RIVIERA

Drenched in sun-soaked glamour, the French Riviera, aka the Côte d’Azur, has been a playground for the rich and famous for more than 200 years. Names such as Cannes, St Tropez and Monaco roll off the tongue, while the proliferation of Belle Époque architecture makes it feel just as pretty as the pictures – plus, this region is a fantastic spot for strolls along the seafront and countryside hikes.

FRENCH ALPS

We say: Chamonix is traditionally seen as one of the French Alps’ most prominent winter ski hubs, but summer offers clients the chance to see the Alps anew, with walking trails weaving through wildflower-speckled meadows. In fact, research by Inghams Walking discovered the nearby Alpine commune of Les Contamines-Montjoie has had the second-largest rise in Google searches this year among emerging ‘coolcation’ destinations.

They say: Laura Mason, Inghams’ head of destinations, says: “This is the second consecutive year the team at Inghams Walking has researched the coolcations with the biggest rise in traveller interest, and once again, we’ve seen growth across the board. As temperatures continue to rise, travellers are seeking respite from their typical go-to summer holiday destinations. Instead, more people are opting for places that offer more-comfortable conditions for connecting with nature, personal wellbeing and outdoor exploration.”

Book it: Inghams offers seven nights’ half-board at the Hotel Pointe Isabelle in Chamonix from £1,298 per person, based on an August 8 departure. The price includes flights from Bristol, transfers and two guided walks.

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MALAGA

Frequently hailed as one of Europe’s sunniest cities, with more than 300 days of sunshine each year, Malaga offers an irresistible blend of culture and coast. It has a vibrant mix of museums, historic architecture and art galleries – not surprising for Pablo Picasso’s birthplace – as well as delicious seafood. This diversity also extends to its coast, where clients can find everything from secluded coves to urban beaches.

GALICIA

We say: Galicia’s verdant nature and deep-rooted traditions – capital Santiago de Compostela (pictured) is the end point of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route – are a stark key change from Spain’s sun-baked south. Clients will still find tasty tapas and an incredible array of fish and seafood, though, thanks to the cool Atlantic currents that keep its waters particularly well stocked. The appetite is there for travellers too, with 108,000 British visitors to Galicia in 2025 – a 47% rise on 2024 – as part of a wider increase in travel to northern Spain.

They say: Marcelle Hoff, managing director at Expressions Holidays, says: “The switch from hot to ‘cool’ has been a growing trend over the last few years and one we’ve been championing for a long time. As a result, we have a substantial programme in northern Spain, the Swiss Alps, Italian mountains and Norway. These places are less busy but offer a splendid sense of freedom with open space, fresh air and authentic charm.”

Book it: Expressions Holidays offers a 10-night Follow the Way of St James fly-drive tour. Prices start at £2,220 per person, based on two sharing, including accommodation with breakfast, flights and car hire.

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SICILY

Mount Etna dominates the Sicilian skyline, with its steep slopes and snow-capped cone visible from many places on the island – including Taormina, an upscale beach resort featured in the second series of *The White Lotus*. However, the mountains and seaside aren’t the only things that attract clients; Sicily’s array of historic landmarks, from Norman cathedrals to ancient Greek temples, come in abundance.

LAKE COMO

We say: Lake Como (pictured), the jewel in the Italian Lakes’ crown, won’t be unfamiliar to clients – but the peaks that frame it will remind them of the dramatic scenery in the south of Italy. Como’s neoclassical villas and charming lakeside towns offer James Bond-esque vibes, setting clients up perfectly for a twin-centre trip alongside glamorous Milan, about an hour’s drive south. Suggest clients explore the lake’s namesake city, harbouring a Gothic cathedral, medieval old town and silk-making heritage.

They say: Heather Green, head of product at Citalia, says: “Northern Italy is a fantastic option for those seeking the same cultural charm and energy of southern Italy. The lakes region offers not only a cooler climate, but a more languid pace of life. Many have been inspired by this year’s Winter Olympic and Paralympics – as a result, we’ve seen some interest sparked for northern Italy, including Lake Como and Milan.”

Book it: Citalia’s seven-night Lake Como and Milan tour starts at £1,595 per person, based on a July 3 departure. The price includes five nights’ accommodation in Lake Como, two nights’ accommodation in Milan (both with breakfast), flights from Gatwick and private transfers.

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