



10 OF THE Best NEW ROUTES



With new flights from regional airports, weekend breaks are easier than ever

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FAST FACT
Dundee has gained its first international route, a Flybe service to Amsterdam, from May 23 to October 29

Time is of the essence on a short break, so the last thing travellers want is to waste it on the journey. Forget driving hours to another airport or the stress of a connecting flight - if they can't get there direct from their local airport, it's hardly worth the hassle.

That's why new flight routes from regional airports not only open up a host of enticing destinations to clients, but they also offer the perfect trigger for you to sell a short break there.

Here, we round up a handful of the best new flight routes from the UK regions, with top tips about what's happening in each destination this year.

1 BIRMINGHAM TO LISBON
Few European cities have the sun-kissed, ramshackle charm of Lisbon, where vintage trams clatter through cobbled streets and turquoise ceramic tiles bedeck Moorish buildings and fountains.

The affordable city benefits from pleasant temperatures throughout the year, and it's near the trendy beach suburbs of Cascais and Estoril, making it the perfect city-plus-beach break.

The best way to discover Lisbon is by wandering the tangle of narrow alleys in the Alfama district, before climbing up to the Castelo de Sao Jorge to look out across the terracotta-roofed city. Shoppers can spend an afternoon in the Baxia district checking out the boutiques and quirky

cafes serving buttery pasteis de nata, while those craving a mean mojito should visit the Bairro Alto, where reggae and traditional fado music play across bar-filled streets.

"Lisbon's must-see flea market, Faria da Ladra, is held on a Saturday morning right beside the impressive Santa Engracia church," says Osprey Holidays senior city breaks specialist Lisa Mackinnon. "It boasts a great variety of clothes and trinket stalls and is ideal if you want to grab a couple of bargain souvenirs to take home."

Other popular local destinations include Belem, with its gothic Mosteiro dos Jeronimos, and the ornate palaces of Sintra. **BOOK IT:** From June 17, Monarch flies direct to Lisbon from Birmingham, with return fares starting at £129. It will also run services to the Portuguese capital from Manchester and Gatwick, starting in May.

2 BRISTOL TO SOFIA
For clients with tighter purse strings, recommend a trip to Bulgaria's capital. It's becoming increasingly popular as a short-break city destination thanks to its cultural treasures, bustling bar and restaurant scene and affordable prices.

The architecture is a melting pot of east-meets-west, with stark neo-Stalinist buildings and Ottoman mosques alongside glistening hotels and shopping malls. Sofia's iconic landmark

is the vast Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, which is topped with peppermint and gold domes and was built in memory of the 200,000 Russian soldiers who died fighting for Bulgaria's independence in the Russo-Turkish War. Also worth a visit is the National History Museum, which holds some of the country's most significant collections of Bulgarian art. The pedestrianised Vitosha Boulevard is where the best shops lie, while the city's daily flea market is the place to find Russian-style hats, badges, flags and curiosities from the communist period, sold alongside local crafts. Night owls should head to the 'student town' in the southeast, close to the universities, for drinks in the buzzing trendy bars.

BOOK IT: Wizz Air began its year-round Bristol-to-Sofia service in January, operating three times a week, plus it launched flights from Birmingham this month. Ryanair will also begin services from Stansted on April 25, with return fares from £64.

3 EDINBURGH TO TALLINN
Cheap flights and budget-friendly hotels have made Tallinn a popular destination for boozy stag dos, while its historic Unesco-listed Old Town, enclosed behind crumbling walls, will satisfy more-discerning visitors with its cluster of Gothic spires, cafes, and medieval-cum-modern architecture.

For a taste of the city's Russian legacy, clients should visit the Kadriorg district, influenced by former Russian tsar and Estonia ruler Peter the Great. The domed Russian Orthodox Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, designed by Tsar Alexander III in 1894, is another spectacular symbol of its longstanding relationship with Russia.

A walk through the Kadriorg district will take clients through the eponymous manicured park with its baroque presidential palace, while the area's elegant restaurants and cafes are perfect pit stops for refuelling.

The city becomes impossibly photogenic over Christmas, when the labyrinth of cobbled streets and pastel-hued merchant houses are dusted with snow.

BOOK IT: Nordic Aviation will fly to Tallinn three times a week from May 28 until October 3, with return flights from £200.

4 SOUTHDEN TO LYON
France's third-largest city has a charm all of its own and lacks the tourist throngs and harsher climate of Paris. This is one for food lovers, boasting more than 2,000 restaurants, many of which are Michelin-starred. For haute cuisine, eat at legendary chef Paul Bocuse's eponymous restaurant, but family-run 'bouchons' offer a cheaper laid-back vibe, serving traditional Lyonnaise cuisine of hearty, meaty dishes.

Once bellies are full, clients

→ can enjoy Lyon's sights by jumping on the funicular to the top of Fourvière hill, where the impressive 19th-century Notre-Dame de Fourvière church stands.

The old town, Vieux-Lyon, is just as pretty, peppered with lavish cathedrals and colourful buildings. It's also worth visiting the historic 'traboules' – narrow passages used by medieval silk merchants to get to the river, and later by Resistance fighters as a means of escape during the German occupation in the Second World War.

From December 8 to 11, Lyon's streets are illuminated with lights and flickering candles during the annual Festival of Lights, making for a unique trip.

BOOK IT: EasyJet began flying from Southend and Belfast to Lyon in December, with fares from Southend starting at £43 return. Flybe has also announced a daily Manchester-Lyon service starting August 1.

5 MANCHESTER TO MILAN
In a country that boasts such city greats as Rome, Florence and Venice, industrial Milan sometimes gets a raw deal, but those seeking style, sophistication and art without the



Uffizi-sized crowds need look no further.

Milan's gothic cathedral, the Duomo, stands magnificently at the centre of town, and clients can take the lift up to the roof for spectacular city views and a chance to marvel at the pink-hued marble – used to construct the whole building – and gargoyles up close.

Those looking to shop till they drop can begin at the nearby glass-roofed Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II shopping arcade, or window-shop the boutiques on the Quadrilatero d'Oro.

Leonardo da Vinci's iconic *Last Supper* is hidden away in Basilica



Food lovers mustn't leave without trying saffron risotto, a flavour-filled nod to Milan's wealth

di Santa Maria delle Grazie, which clients must book in advance.

Food lovers mustn't leave without trying local dish 'risotto allo zafferano', or saffron risotto, a flavour-filled nod to the city's wealth.

BOOK IT: EasyJet flies to Milan from Manchester starting April 7, with fares from £60 return, in addition to a Glasgow service that started in February.



SOUTHAMPTON TO MUNICH

Yes, there's Lederhosen, sausages and ice-cold beer, but the Bavarian capital also has a highbrow side, boasting more theatres and galleries than anywhere else in Germany, while its Bavarian State Opera is considered by many to be the world's finest.

Opera enthusiasts should visit between June 19 and July 31 for the Munich Opera Festival, which draws some of the world's top performers and conductors and is held outside against the backdrop of the National Theatre in Franz-Joseph-Platz.

Then of course there's beer extravaganza Oktoberfest, which begins on September 17, and from November 25, the city twinkles with lights from the Christmas markets.

Those looking to pack in the main cultural sights can join Touriocity's four-hour Essential Highlights of Munich Tour, which incorporates everything from a stroll through the historic Old Town to shopping for schnitzel in the Viktualienmarkt (from £48). **BOOK IT:** BMI Regional starts its double-daily Southampton-to-Munich flights on April 15, from £144 return.



ABERDEEN TO REYKJAVIK

The crisp air and village vibe of the world's most northerly capital makes Reykjavik stand out as a unique and relaxed city break destination. A morning's ramble will allow clients to take in most of the city centre sights, including the iconic white-concrete Hallgrímskirkja church, which offers views of the Lego-coloured houses against a backdrop of glaciers and mountains.

Despite its size (the population is just 120,000), Reykjavik has a hipster, urban feel, with museums, restaurants and a thriving nightlife scene. There's also a festival-a-minute, commemorating everything from literature to folk music to Vikings. The capital's family-focused National Day of Iceland on



ABOVE:
Festival of Lights, Lyon

RIGHT:
Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Milan

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10
OF THE
Best



ABOVE: Reykjavik
BELOW: Jersey

➔ June 17 incorporates parades, street theatre, concerts and even a puppet show.

It's also an easy place to 'upsell' with excursions, according to Chris Hagan, head of overseas at SuperBreak. He says: "More than 90% of our short-break bookings to Iceland include additional activities, with the Search for the Northern Lights tour still the most popular."

Clients visiting from October to March can tag on a northern lights tour to their trip, but summer has its merits too, with longer days and whale-watching excursions from the harbour.

BOOK IT: Icelandair started flying from Aberdeen to Reykjavik on March 9, priced from £172 return. Wow Air also began flights from Edinburgh in February.

8 LUTON TO JERSEY
For those looking for a break closer to home, suggest Jersey, which clients can now reach from Luton in less than an hour. Despite being the largest of the Channel Islands, at nine miles by five miles Jersey is still tiny, making it easy to explore even over a weekend.

Hints of France are evident in the cuisine and the warm weather – Jersey claims more sunshine hours than anywhere else in Britain – while English currency and language make it a practical option. The island's beautiful beaches and rugged cliffs are ideal for walkers and cyclists, and water babies can visit St Ouen's Bay on the West Coast for some of the world's best surfing and wakeboarding. ➔





Vienna

Jet2holidays offers three nights' room-only at the five-star The Levante Parliament, flying from Edinburgh on June 10, from £389, including baggage allowance.

jet2holidays.co.uk

Milan

Citalia has a three-night B&B break at the three-star-plus Hotel City from £279, with easyJet flights departing August 9.

cialita.co.uk

Reykjavik

Taber Holidays combines three nights in Reykjavik with a Golden Circle excursion to visit geysers, Gullfoss waterfall and Thingvellir National Park from £795, valid May 1 to September 30.

taberhols.co.uk

Jersey

Premier Holidays offers four nights' B&B at the four-star Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel from £359, including Luton flights in May.

premier holidays.co.uk

➔ Clients keener for R&R can relax in one of the island's many boutique hotels, or dine at one of two Michelin-starred restaurants. On June 12, Jersey hosts the Folklore Music Festival, featuring performances from the likes of The Levellers and The Charlatans.

BOOK IT: EasyJet flights from Luton to Jersey started this week, priced from £59 return.

9 CARDIFF TO VERONA

Verona might be smaller than Rome but it's still big on Roman history. Most impressive is the crumbling amphitheatre, built in the 1st century to house 30,000 spectators, and which still serves as one of the world's most spectacular opera venues.

Romantic types can flock to the Casa di Giulietta, or Juliet's House, where scribbled love notes line the courtyard. Though a fictional setting, it acts as a symbol for Shakespeare's famed *Romeo and Juliet*, set in Verona.

Other highlights include the sculpted Renaissance gardens of Giardino Giusti, the main square Piazza delle Erbe, and



No trip to Vienna is complete without a visit to the State Opera House, where standing tickets cost as little as €3

the gothic Chiesa di Sant'Anastasia, with its elaborately decorated ceiling.

To make the most of sightseeing time, book a central hotel such as Il Sogno di Giulietta or Palazzo Victoria, both featured by Kuoni, and within walking distance of the Verona Arena and main sights. The former also has exclusive evening access to the courtyard of Juliet's House and balcony, which get very busy during the day.

BOOK IT: Ryanair has started summer flights from Stansted and Birmingham to Verona, and Flybe will begin a service out of Cardiff from April 23 to October 29, with return fares starting at £38.

10 EDINBURGH TO VIENNA

Vienna's cultural riches know no bounds, and the city's musical heritage is pretty impressive too. Once home to Mozart, Strauss, Brahms and Beethoven, the sound of classical music fills the streets as musicians play in the busy squares. For classical music fans, no trip to Vienna is complete without a visit to the State Opera House, where standing tickets cost as little as €3.

It's on the Ringstrasse, the grand boulevard that's home to many of the city's parks, imperial monuments and mansions including the Imperial Palace, National Theatre, Parliament and Stock Exchange. Visitors can walk it, bike the cycle path or take the Vienna Ring Tram. Art lovers can while away hours in Kunsthistorisches Museum hunting out the Caravaggios and Brueghels, while Klimt's legendary *The Kiss* is on display at the Upper Belvedere palace.

BOOK IT: EasyJet launched Luton to Vienna flights last year, with Edinburgh services starting in February. Jet2.com also commences an Edinburgh-Vienna route on April 29, from £86 return. **TV**



LEFT: Romeo and Juliet opera, Verona Arena

BELOW: Ringstrasse, Vienna



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