

THE SUNDAY TIMES

travel

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magazine

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50 best beaches

From Cornwall to the Caribbean, simple to superstar — relax, we've found them for you!

Insider's San Francisco

Live it like a local: we've got the key

Western Australia

The airline shortcut that makes Oz do-able in just two weeks

Getting hotter...

Six Euro spring flings to enjoy right now

Formentera

Ibiza's quieter neighbour is the perfect petite retreat

China

The majesty, the mystery, the *lowdown* — all in our 24-page Total Guide

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EARLY SPRING
BREAKS

Six of the best

Wave goodbye to winter and slink off for some sunshine. Our European escapes are simple to sort, effortless to follow, and best of all, perfect *right now*



1 Palma, Mallorca Chilling out and chic shops

Why spring wins: While it's still too early for the beach-or-bust brigade, Mallorca's neatly short-break-sized capital, Palma, is ripe for seafront strolls, alfresco lunches and chic shopping along cobbled streets and tree-lined boulevards. Do visit the vast Gothic cathedral, with its over-altar canopy by Gaudí, and eerie Chapel of the Holy Sacrament (catedraldemallorca.org; £6.20). And get in some art. Find Picasso and Modigliani in a modern space within a 16th-century fortress (esbaluard.org; £5.30), and Miró at his former studios and gardens (miromallorca.com; £6.60). But you'll want plenty of time, too, for idle wandering, glimpsing leafy courtyards and Modernista flourishes in the Old Town streets.

Eat: Graze on grown-up *tapas* at Hotel Cort's alfresco tables (hotelcort.com; mains about £16), in the Old Town's loveliest square. Or fine-dine in the romantic courtyard of Quadrat (hotelsantfrancesc.com; mains about £21).

Sleep: Well-placed in the centre, stylish new Boutique Hotel Sant Jaume (boutiquehotelsantjaume.com; doubles from £142, room only) laps up the rays with its own fourth-floor terrace and pool (and sorts rare rainy days with a sauna).

Get me there: Flybe (flybe.com) begins Palma flights in late March from Exeter and Southampton, from £45 one way, and in late May from Doncaster-Sheffield. Norwegian (norwegian.com) flies from Gatwick, from £30 one way.

4 Paphos, Cyprus Sunshine and lunch alfresco

Why spring wins: Never mind the archaeological riches and gorgeous natural surroundings here — springtime in Paphos is all about the sunlight. The heat arrives here before anywhere else in the Med, and by late April highs are in the early 20s, with nine hours of sunshine a day. The sea may not have warmed up, but it's hot enough for dining outdoors and loafing on the beach. Head 40km up the coast to the Akamas Peninsula National Park for gentle hiking — it's at its floral zenith in spring and, chances are,

you'll have the 8km Aphrodite Trail all to yourself.

Eat: The one restaurant you must try is the Seven St Georges ([facebook.com/7StGeorges](https://www.facebook.com/7StGeorges); from £18), just up the road in Yeroskipou. Here George Demetriades serves probably the best *meze* in the world. There's no menu, but the rules are quite simple: George will keep bringing small plates — rabbit, *kleftiko* (slow-cooked lamb), fish, salads, cheese, samphire and more — until you tell him to stop. If you get to 20 dishes, you've done well.

Sleep: Simple, cheap and with the best views in town, the family-run Axiothea (axiotheahotel.com; doubles from £48, B&B) is the

budget pick. The posher choice is the dazzlingly minimalist Almyra (almyra.com; doubles from £108, B&B): there's a spa, four pools and it's as friendly to families as it's cool for couples.

Get me there: Thomas Cook (thomascookairlines.com) has returns from Manchester, Bristol, East Midlands and Glasgow from £126. Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from Stansted, from £25 one way. >

