

Travel

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'For travellers seeking a more untouched Cuba, east is the way to go'

Lydia Bell explores lesser-visited parts of the island

2 The terrace at Villa Carlotta, Sicily



20 best hotels for early summer

From a Canaries mansion to a chic Greek hideaway, catch the first rays in Europe. By **Annabelle Thorpe**

1 La Casona de Yaiza Yaiza, Lanzarote

La Casona de Yaiza has two main boasts: the village of Yaiza, a cluster of whitewashed cube-shaped houses, draped in bougainvillea, is the prettiest on the island, and the small hotel has one of Lanzarote's best restaurants. An opulent, converted mansion, it houses ten rooms that ooze Canarian country house style, while outside there's a chic pool terrace with volcano views. La Bodega, the restaurant, feels and looks rustic but the dishes, all local classics, are cooked to perfection. Temperatures are in the mid 20s in early summer. **Details** A week's B&B costs from £815pp,

including flights and car hire (020 8847 8700, cachet-travel.co.uk)

2 Villa Carlotta Taormina, Sicily

If you want a bit of old-fashioned glamour with your sunshine, it's hard to top Taormina, clinging to the slopes of Mount Etna, with glittering views of the Med from every street corner. Villa Carlotta is a supremely elegant billet, a gorgeous turn-of-the-century villa filled with Sicilian antiques and richly painted walls. A stone's throw from the main drag of Corso Umberto, its highlight is the rooftop restaurant,



freckled with fairy lights and candles at night, it's the most romantic dining spot in town. Temperatures touch 21C-25C in May and June.

Details B&B doubles cost from £156 a night (00 39 0942 626058, hotelvillacarlottataormina.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Catania from four UK airports

3 Blue Jasmine Kefalonia, Greece

New for 2016, Blue Jasmine is an exclusive, couples-only retreat with 12 suites perched on the tip of a sandy promontory. Kefalonia in the late spring

and early summer is a riot of flowers, and although temperatures are easily warm enough to spend days lazing on the nearby beach at Skala (well into the 20s), they're also ideal for walking. There's no restaurant for evening meals but there are a couple of hotels that offer excellent dining a few minutes' drive away.

Details A week's B&B costs from £618pp, including flights and car hire (020 8003 6557, simpsontravel.com)

4 Palm Beach Gran Canaria

Few places are as reliable for early summer sun as the Canaries, and the glorious beach at Maspalomas is the ▶

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sunnier part of Gran Canaria. Stay at the Palm Beach and you can fall out of the door on to the gleaming swathe of sand, with 20C at least on most days: perfect for early morning swims and sunset strolls. The Palm Beach is the Canaries' only Design Hotel, channelling a kitsch, 1960s vibe, with brightly painted walls and retro furniture. The breakfast buffet is possibly the largest in the world.

Details B&B doubles cost from £108 a night (00 800 37 46 83 57, hotel-palm-beach.co.uk). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Gran Canaria from Gatwick

5 Almyra Paphos, Cyprus

The temperature hits the high 20s in May and June in Paphos — and sea is heated up to 24C in June (rising from a nippy 17C in April). The Almyra is a gorgeous design hotel with a minimalist look and well-tended lawns in grounds leading to a beach by the south-west Cypriot city of Paphos. Although it sounds as though it's suited to couples, kids are more than welcome, with kids' clubs and family rooms. It's a short stroll to the old harbour, with its many bustling bars.

Details A week's B&B is from £965 (-escape.com/almyra). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Paphos

6 Torralbenc Menorca

Menorca is at its best in late spring, when wild flowers carpet the island, temperatures touch 25C and the summer hordes have yet to arrive. Torralbenc, once a working farm, makes a great bolt hole, with 27 rooms surrounded by 70 acres of rolling farmland and vineyards. Guests can use the hotel's bikes to cycle to the beach, or set out on foot to discover why the whole island has been designated a Unesco biosphere reserve. Natura Bissé treatments and classic Menorcan cuisine, served in the elegantly refurbished storehouse, are on offer when you return.

Details Seaview doubles cost from £187



a night, B&B (00 34 971 37 72 11, torralbenc.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Mahon from five UK airports

7 Amare Marbella Beach Spain

The Amare reopened its doors in February with a glam new look: fresh white-walled rooms, a hydrotherapy spa and the only rooftop terrace in Marbella. Right on the waterfront, the restaurant terrace opens straight on to the sand, along with a bar area that's perfect for sundowners. Pack a jewelled sarong and designer flip-flops — this is a see-and-be-seen kind of place, particularly at night.

when guest DJs whip up an Ibiza-esque vibe. Temperatures are in the mid 20s in May and June.

Details B&B doubles cost from £93 a night (0800 843493, amarehotels.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Malaga from nine UK airports

8 La Moresca Marina di Ragusa, Sicily

La Moresca is a delightful art nouveau villa and former private home converted into a 15-room hotel that combines early 20th-century architecture and design with a contemporary, minimalist style.

Temperatures are reliably in the mid 20s in early summer. It's a short walk down to the town's soft, sandy beach, and the terrace on the top of the tower has wonderful views. The real X factor, though, is the owner, Carlomaria, whose local knowledge can turn an enjoyable trip into an unforgettable one.

Details B&B doubles cost from £233 a night (-escape.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Catania from four UK airports

9 Kapsaliana Village Hotel Crete

Crete's southerly location makes it one of the warmest islands in May with days mainly in the mid 20s — and a stay at

Kapsaliana Village is unlike anywhere else in Greece. The houses, once part of a 17th-century monastery, have been carefully restored to create 17 rooms and suites, with muted decor and exposed walls, a restaurant, winter lounge and massage area. Just ambling around the former village is a pleasure in itself but for a little more life the buzzy waterfront at Rethymnon is a 20-minute drive away.

Details B&B doubles cost from £130 a night (00 30 28310 83400, kapsalianavillage.gr). Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies to Chania from six UK airports

10 Pylaia Hotel Astypalaia, Greece

You have to make the effort to get to Astypalaia. It's either a nine-hour ferry



journey or a short flight from the mainland, but if you're looking for that holy grail — an unspoilt Greek island — it will certainly hit the spot. The Pylaia is the island's standout hotel, a slick, 27-room boutique just outside the main town of Chora. In early summer, when temperatures can touch 30C, the island is blissfully peaceful, and with gorgeous beaches within walking distance and fresh seafood for dinner, there's no need to move far once you finally arrive.

Details B&B doubles cost from £74 a night (00 30 22430 61070, pylaiahotel.gr/en). Olympic Air (olympicair.com) flies the 45-minute journey from Athens to Astypalaia. Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies to Athens from Stansted



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11 Petra Segreta
Olbia, Sardinia

May is the perfect time to visit Sardinia, when you get highs of 22C, but before room rates rocket, the roads get clogged and the beautiful Costa Smeralda beaches heave with visitors. Petra Segreta is a 25-room bolt hole in the hills above the sea that feels pleasingly contemporary without being too minimalist. There's a good-sized pool, a small spa and a restaurant that serves beautifully presented plates of locally sourced food.

Details B&B doubles cost from £171 a night (00 39 0789 187 6441, petrasegretaresort.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Olbia from Gatwick

12 Casale del Murgese
Puglia, Italy

Puglia's southerly location means temperatures are always a few degrees warmer than the northern coast, and in early summer the beaches are blissfully peaceful. Expect top temperatures above 25C in May and June. Stay at Casale del Murgese, a sleekly converted *masseria* that's new to Long Travel for 2016; there are only 33 rooms, surrounded by lush gardens and olive trees, and the pretty fishing village of Savelletti — and neighbouring beaches — are a few kilometres away.

Details A week's B&B costs from £487pp, including car hire but not flights (01694 722193, long-travel.co.uk). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Brindisi from Gatwick

13 Es Moli Majorca, Spain

It may not be the hottest spot in the Med in early summer — about 20C-24C — but Es Moli is a great place to visit before the streets of Deia get jammed with busloads of tourists. The hotel is 500m from the village, perched on the hillside above, so most rooms, the dining terrace and the lush pool area have gorgeous

views. The icing on the cake is the free hotel shuttle to the beach terraces at La Muleta.

Details A week's B&B costs from £1,112pp, including flights (01293 731498, sovereign.com)

14 Casa Arte
Lagos, Algarve, Portugal

There are only five rooms at the Moorish-influenced Casa Arte, tucked



away between citrus and olive groves, a 5km drive from the Algarve's stunning beaches, where top temperatures hit about 23C in early summer. The owner, Sarah, is always on hand to provide everything from chilled wine to restaurant recommendations, although suppers can be had at the hotel (on request) three nights a week. It's tempting just to laze by the teal-blue pool but nearby Lagos is well worth a visit, as are the walking trails of the Vicentine Coast Natural Park.

Details B&B doubles cost from £120 a night (00 351 915 282 287, casaarte-hotel.com). Monarch (monarch.co.uk) flies to Faro from five UK airports

15 The Londa
Limassol, Cyprus

Daily highs reach 29C on Limassol's busy coastal strip in early summer. It may not be for everyone but once you're through the doors at the Londa, any lingering sense of frenzy soon melts away. The hippest hotel on the island, it has 68 spacious, light-filled rooms (the hotel looks on to the beach), an Elemis spa, and a bar that pulls in a bronzed and beautiful crowd. The restaurant, Le Caprice, serves artfully presented Italian dishes in a dining room straight out of the pages of *Wallpaper**.

Details B&B doubles cost from £115 a night (00 357 25 865 555, londahotel.com). Monarch (monarch.co.uk) flies to Larnaca from five UK airports

16 Purple Apricot
Paxos, Greece

With only seven rooms, the Purple Apricot is perfect for those who want somewhere small and personal without scrimping on style. Each bedroom is different, from Moroccan exoticism to crisp English decor, and because it's adults only, the pretty pool area is an ideal place to relax. Paxos basks in warm sunshine in early summer (in the mid 20s), an ideal time to discover the beaches of Kipiadi and Levrechio, or to hike through the flower-clad hills.

Details A week's B&B costs from £914pp, including flights (020 8003 6557, simpsonstravel.com)

17 Domes of Elounda
Crete

Overlooking Mirabello Bay in northeastern Crete, the Domes of Elounda is a top-class hotel with a spa; it's a member of the hip Mr & Mrs Smith hotel collection. The style is chi-chi and features swanky suites with designer furniture and splendid views from private terraces facing across the sea. The upmarket spa has a sauna, steam room and indoor seawater pool, there's

also access to a private patch of sand. The temperature is well into the 20s in May and June.

Details A week's B&B is from £2,010 for two people (mrandmrsmith.com). EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Heraklion, about an hour away

18 Santa Marina Resort
Mykonos, Greece

A serious party town in high summer, in May and early June Mykonos Town and the beautiful Bay of Ornos have a far more chilled-out air, and you can expect pleasant, mid-20s weather. Santa Marina sits above the bay and is an ideal fly-and-flop option, boasting the only private beach on the island, two restaurants — including the new Buddha Bar Beach — and the sleek Lotus Spa. The bright lights of Mykonos Town are five minutes away, perfect for dipping into in the early evening before retiring to Santa Marina for supper.

Details A week's B&B costs from £1,375pp, including flights (0161 826 9695, carrier.co.uk)

19 Miraggio Thermal Resort Halkidiki, Greece

Opening on May 27, when you can expect temperatures in the high 20s on some days, the Miraggio is Greece's first five-star thermal resort, making the most of its location on Halkidiki's sparkling coastline. Not one for fans of boutique hotels, it's a sprawl of a place, with 300 rooms, five restaurants and a "Kids Planet" with football academy. Yet spa-philes will love it — it comes with a floating sauna so guests can jump straight into the sea, numerous pools and a state-of-the-art thermal complex.

Details B&B doubles cost from £150 a night (00 30 23740 20289, miraggio.gr). Thomson Airways (thomson.co.uk) flies to Halkidiki from four UK airports

20 Anassa Polis, Cyprus

After a three-year, multimillion-euro refurb, Cyprus's grand dame hotel is back, with all-new rooms, additional villas and a new kids' club. Built by a beach on the northwest coast in the style of a traditional Cypriot village, the Anassa is a respite from the island's usual high-rise hotel style, and the gardens — which run down to the sea — are so beautifully maintained, it's hard not to spend the entire week in a hammock. Temperatures regularly touch the mid 20s in May and June.

Details A week's half-board costs from £1,250pp, including flights (020 8682 5040, scotttdunn.com)

Temperatures are the monthly average high for May and June from weather2travel.com