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Tuck into these heady adventures

From fine wineries in sophisticated Corsica to preparing Thai dishes in opulent Phuket, there are plenty of dazzling destinations to savour this summer, maintains **Sarah Marshall**

CLOSE TO HOME

New Forest

Travel time: 90-minute drive

You don't need to go far to swap concrete blocks for trees and wildflowers. One of the largest remaining wild woods in Western Europe, Hampshire's 120-square-mile New Forest is teeming with 3,000 native ponies, donkeys, deer and even rare species of fungi. Cycle or trek along tracks that run through the forest, or take a Canadian Canoe tour along the Beaulieu River to look for egret, kingfishers and curlews (£32pp, newforestactivities.co.uk).

Alternatively, trot back in time on a new horse-drawn carriage tour from Lyndhurst or Brockenhurst, stopping off for a pub lunch (from £25pp, brunswickcarriages.com).

■ **A week's stay at Little Barn (sleeps two) in Emery Down, near Lyndhurst, costs from £525 in June. Visit newforestcottages.co.uk**

Bath

Travel time: 140-minute drive

Ditch the car and drift along some of the most scenic waterways in England and Wales on a canal boat holiday. There are 2,000 miles of canals and river flows to explore, but one of the easiest sections for first-time boaters runs along the Kennet and Avon Canal. Start in Bath, and continue six hours down the River Avon to Bristol Floating Harbour, or head east along a

lock-free stretch to Bradford on Avon.

■ **Drifters (drifters.co.uk; 0844 984 0322) offer a four-day canal holiday for £875 from 10-13 July on a two-person boat. For more information on the waterways visit canalrivertrust.org.uk**

SHORT-HAUL SUNSHINE

Guernsey

Travel time: 30-minute flight from Gatwick

It's unfairly earned a reputation for catering to a blue-rinse brigade, but this beach-blessed Channel Island also has a lot to offer younger, adventurous travellers. Clamber along the

rocky coastline in a helmet and wetsuit on a coasteering trip, or kayak between sandy coves on neighbouring Herm Island.

During July and August, Channel Islands Direct (channelislandsdirect.co.uk; 08444 937 095) offer a five-night holiday from £399pp staying at the four-star St Pierre Park Hotel, just outside the capital St Peter Port, including breakfast and flights.

Time a visit between 30 July and 3 August, to tie in with the bizarre Scarecrow Trail in Torteval, where straw replicas of astronauts, vicars and

even Michael Jackson pop up along an hour-and-a-half-long walking trail.

■ **Go to visitguernsey.com**

Med Cruise from Genoa, Italy

Travel time: two-hour flight from Gatwick

Ideal for indecisive travellers and anyone who prefers not to unpack their suitcase more than once, a cruise is a leisurely way to tick off multiple destinations. MSC Cruises hope to revive the glory days of glamorous sea travel on their 3,500-person ship, MSC Preziosa, which dazzles with a Swarovski crystal staircase in its central atrium and an award-winning spa.

■ **MSC Cruises are currently offering a seven-night fly-cruise from Genoa to Rome, Sicily, Sardinia, Majorca, Valencia and Marseille, from £819pp, including all meals, transfers and return flights from Gatwick to Genoa on 8 August. Upgrade to a balcony cabin for £150pp. Visit msccruises.co.uk or call 020 3426 3010**

Corsica, France

Travel time: 130-minute flight from Gatwick

Although officially part of France for more than 200 years, this



sophisticated island in the Mediterranean feels wildly different to the mainland. Boutique hotel Casa Theodora sits in hilltop village Muro, with very good access to many rugged

walking trails and fine wineries. The 16th-century property, with barrel-vaulted ceilings and opulent frescoes, is named after Theodore von Neuhoff, who proclaimed himself King of Corsica in 1736. Swim at the nearby beaches of Balagne, or lounge by an indoor pool built in the original wine cellar.

■ **Simpson Travel** (simpsontravel.com; 020 3642 8595) offer seven nights B&B from £737pp, including flights on 12 June and car hire

Alicante, Spain

Travel time: 150-minute flight from Gatwick

Spain's Costa Blanca has always appealed to Brits abroad, and now several boutique hotels are raising the profile of the destination. Owned by former football player and manager Terry Venables, the recently opened Hotel *La Escondida* is tucked into the mountains north of Alicante, close to the Font Roja National Park. Built as a hunting lodge in 1881, the restored 500-acre estate still features heavy wooden beams and hand-painted tiles. Guests can explore the national park on horseback or with bikes, while the beach is just a 30-minute drive away.

■ The hotel is currently offering a seven-day package for £980pp, including breakfast. Visit hotelescondida.com or call +34 96 551 30 46

Chamonix Valley, France

Travel time: 90-minute flight from Heathrow

As the highest mountain in the Alps, Mont Blanc has always been a holy grail for avid mountaineers. In 1865, during the golden age of mountaineering, there were an incredible 65 Alpine first ascents, including the famous Brenva-Spur.

Now, 150 years later, a series of

events are taking place in the Chamonix Valley to celebrate the anniversary of these historic climbs.

■ **Inghams** (ingham.co.uk; 01483 791 114) offers seven nights half board at the Chalet Hotel Sapinière from £379pp, including flights on 10 June and transfers. As part of their stay, guests also receive free packed lunches and afternoon tea

MID-HAUL RELAXATION

Fethiye, Turkey

Travel time: four-hour flight from Gatwick

Although tourist gulets (Turkish yachts) pile in from April to October, Fethiye's natural harbour on Turkey's Turquoise Coast is still one of the most scenic and culturally-rich spots in the country. The Hellenistic theatre by the main quay once belonged to the ancient city of Telmessos, while the nearby ghost town of Kayaköy, abandoned in the early 20th century, is also on the historical sightseeing circuit. But most people come here to explore the bay and sun-soaked islands, including the blue lagoon at Oludeniz.

The Yacht Classic Hotel overlooks the marina in Fethiye and has its own private waterfront, along with an adults-only swimming pool and Turkish spa.

■ **Anatolian Sky Holidays** (anatoliansky.co.uk; 0844 273 2254) offer seven nights B&B for £336pp, including transfers and flights on 8 June

Peloponnese, Greece

Travel time: 210-minute flight from Heathrow and 150-minute transfer from Athens

Informed by a belief the body should function as a unified organism, Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, prescribed a combination of diet, gym, massage and sea bathing to fend off disease.

Had he been around a few millennia later, he'd have probably directed patients to Amanzoe, an exquisite property set high in hilly olive groves overlooking the silky Aegean Sea.

Owned by the Aman group, masters

in luxury, the colonnaded resort offers an excellent wellbeing programme with guest therapists throughout the year, and can also arrange excursions to a nearby, century-old bee farm and the ancient amphitheatre at Epidauros.

■ **Simpson Travel** (simpsontravel.com; 020 3642 8595) offer seven nights B&B from £5,482pp, including flights and transfers

LONG-HAUL ADVENTURE

Arctic Circle

Travel time: 23-hour indirect flight from Heathrow

Packing jumpers and thermals for a summer holiday might not sound appealing, but June to September is the best period to access High Arctic regions. One Ocean Expeditions are running a special 11-day Arctic Circle in Focus: Photography Symposium, combining the Canadian Arctic with the west coast of Greenland.

The voyage, departing from Iqaluit, will provide photographers of all levels with an opportunity to take pictures of polar bears, walrus, seals, whales, Inuit settlements,

glaciers, fjords and icebergs.

Professional photographers will also be onboard to offer advice and give lectures.

■ **The One Ocean Expeditions** (oneoceanexpeditions.com) Photographic Symposium, 2-12 August, costs £3,616pp

Phuket, Thailand

Travel time: 14-hour indirect flight from Heathrow

Rainy season may just be around the corner, but that shouldn't rule out a visit to Thailand in June. Showers are often short, the crowds have dispersed and prices are generally lower. But even if the skies open, there's plenty to distract guests at all-villa getaway Paresa, located in the Kamala cliffs along Phuket's "millionaires' mile". Learn how to prepare Thai dishes at the hotel's cookery school, or zone out with a massage in the spa. Villas and an infinity pool look out to the Andaman Sea, while tropical forest hugs the remainder of

the resort.

■ **Destinology** (destinology.co.uk; 01204 821419) offer seven nights B&B from £1,299pp for bookings made by 30 June. Includes flights and transfers

Maasai Mara, Kenya

Travel time: 630-minute indirect flight from Heathrow

Lions may be declining in Africa as a whole but in the Maasai Mara prides are exploding in number, and with the annual wildebeest migration soon to start there's set to be even more action on the plains.

As well as channeling money directly to local Maasai landowners, conservancies (community-owned land near the reserves) also provide guests with some of the very best wildlife-viewing opportunities.

Positioned in a game-filled valley in one of the Mara's youngest conservancies, Naboisho, the exceptional six-tented Valley Camp employs some of Kenya's best-trained guides who know every big cat in the area by name. The camp opens on 1 June, and is currently offering a deal to stay four nights and pay for three.

■ **Prices from £1,443 per night, including meals, activities and transfers. Visit** kicheche.com/valley-camp. Kenya Airways flies to Nairobi from £491 return. Visit kenya-airways.com/uk

Always popular with Brits, boutique hotels are now raising the Costa Blanca's profile



ALAMY; REX FEATURES

Clockwise from top: the Turquoise Coast at Fethiye, Turkey; the Maasai Mara in Kenya; Chamonix Valley, France; a New Forest pony

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