

Lake Wörthersee boasts fresh air, crystal-clear waters and a buzzy atmosphere

hotel and explore the paths that wind around the lake. Sign up for the spa's detox exfoliation.

When to go: May to October.
The flight: Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from London to Klagenfurt from £45 return.
Flight time: 2 hours.
Go: Doubles at Lake's – My Lake Hotel & Spa (mylakehotel.com) from £191.

For smart family fun Verdura, Sicily

Fly to: PALERMO

Luxury and family fun don't always go together, but Verdura, on the southern coast of Sicily, manages the combination perfectly. Part of the Rocco Forte group, Verdura is that rare breed: a resort that is stylish, but also well geared up for families. It has 203 rooms and suites (which can be child-proofed), a babysitting service, a kids' club, which offers activities such as pottery classes, cooking lessons and acting sessions, and a special club for teens. Perhaps most importantly for tired parents (and also child-free travellers), you can easily escape the kids, with two 18-hole golf courses, six tennis courts, a 60m infinity pool, four restaurants and a fabulous spa at your disposal. Verdura is an 80-minute drive from Palermo airport – the journey might not thrill the kids, but they'll be grinning as soon as they arrive.

Must do: Chill out in the spa's mineral-rich thalassotherapy pools – the water will do wonders for your skin. Visit the nearby town of Sciacca for baroque architecture and a taste of slow-paced Sicilian living.

people flock here for the fresh air, crystal-clear waters and buzzy atmosphere. In a beautiful spot overlooking the lake, the hotel has 73 studios and suites and two penthouses, all designed in a luxe, contemporary style; some have decks overlooking the lake, others views of the park. The spa is gorgeous, with an extensive selection of treatments, indoor/outdoor pools, saunas and a steam bath. The outside beach club – complete with poolside cabanas and daytime DJs – does the lazy summer vibe perfectly.

Must do: Jump in – the turquoise waters of Lake Wörthersee are amazing for swimming. Hire a bike from the

For luxurious lakeside R&R

Lake Wörthersee, Austria

Fly to: KLAGENFURT

Klagenfurt may not be the most obviously appealing location for a holiday, but only 15 minutes drive from its airport lies Lake's, a boutique spa hotel set on the shores of the picturesque Lake Wörthersee in the foothills of the Alps. Known as the Monte Carlo of Austria, the lake is home to a number of spa retreats. While it's beautiful in winter, it really comes alive in the summer, when

Lake Wörthersee is amazing for swimming

Plan a sightseeing trip to the Greek temples at Agrigento and Selinunte.

When to go: May to October.
The flight: EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from London to Palermo from £52 return.
Flight time: 3 hours.
Go: Doubles at Verdura Golf & Spa Resort (verduraresort.com) from £166.

For hip Scandi style Ystad Saltsjöbad, Sweden

Fly to: MALMO

Scandinavia is having a bit of a moment, thanks to designer labels such as Sweden's Acne and Denmark's By Malene Birger, Stieg Larsson's bestselling Millennium trilogy and TV's *The Killing*. The southern Swedish province of Skåne is the setting for another popular Scandi detective series, *Wallander*. The area has a number of stylish coastal resorts and is known as a creative hub, with artists, authors and musicians attracted by the scenery and the magical light.

Fly to Malmö, Sweden's third largest city, and then drive half an hour to Ystad, to stay at Ystad Saltsjöbad, a chic but relaxed spa resort. Centred around a huge outdoor swimming pool, the hotel has a fantastic spa and restaurant. Overlooking a mile-long white sand beach, it's like a Swedish version of the Hamptons.

Must do: Explore Ystad, the home of Kurt Wallander (played by Kenneth Branagh in the BBC One version). Check out Vendel Ales Stenar (vendelrestauranger.se) in Österlen, where an organic bakery, an informal grill and a high-end restaurant are all under the watchful eye of Swedish super-chef Anders Vendel. Sample the Swedish version of champagne at the Köpingsberg vineyard (kopingsberg.se). Then take a cookery class at Ystad Saltsjöbad.

When to go: Year-round, although June to September is best for weather.
The flight: Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from London to Malmö from £41.98 return.
Flight time: 55 minutes.
Go: Doubles at Ystad Saltsjöbad (ysb.se) from £165.

For a magical weekend Carcassonne, France

Fly to: CARCASSONNE

For a fairytale location, look no further than Carcassonne. The setting for Kate

Mosse's blockbuster book *Labyrinth*, this quiet medieval town, complete with winding cobbled streets and a turreted castle said to have inspired Walt Disney, is one of the most photographed places in France – and with good reason. Surrounded by fields of poppies and sunflowers, vineyards and tranquil little villages, it's textbook South of France, without the often astronomical price tag.

Enjoying a prime location next to St Nazarius' Basilica, Hôtel de la Cité is the place to stay. The 47 rooms and 14 suites are all individually decorated, with pale furnishings in some rooms and stained glass windows and balconies in others. The garden is stunning; it's dotted with tables and chairs you can sink into for a glass of rosé at sunset, and there's also a heated pool.

Must do: Browse at Carcassonne's morning market in Place Carnot, below the walled city in the Ville Basse. Sample the region's speciality, cassoulet (a one-pot dish of beans, sausage and duck), which is on offer everywhere. Head to the Med – only a 40-minute drive away. Enjoy dinner in La Barbacane, the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant.

When to go: April to October.
The flight: Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from London to Carcassonne from £41.98 return.
Flight time: 1 hour 45 minutes.
Go: Doubles at Hôtel de la Cité (hoteldelacite.com) from £152.



The stylish Sicilian resort of Verdura



A boardwalk stroll at Ystad Saltsjöbad



Carcassonne's walled city and castle