

LATE SUMMER
SUN SPOTSSix
of the
best

It might be shivery in the UK, but it's still *sizzling* in these six spots — every one of them short-haul, sunny, and warm well into autumn...



1 Gallura, Sardinia

Little-known and lovely

October daytime high: 22°C

Run to the sun: Never heard of it? That's the beauty of Gallura — a captivating coastal stretch in northern Sardinia that is unfairly eclipsed by the bling and billions of the nearby Costa Smeralda. Lucky for you: Gallura has the same glassy waters, the same craggy terrain, even the same *spaghetti alla bottarga* in its fish restaurants. But the crowds are paltry, and the prices, too. Here, it's all about the beaches, which give the islands of the Maldives a run for their money: Spiaggia dell'Isola dei Gabbiani is a spit so slender you can catch rays on both sides, while La Licciola is a sandy curve perfect for families. Make the time to take a boat trip to the Maddalena islands, an archipelago with water of extraordinary clarity — it's

impossible to tell where the sky ends and the sea begins.

Alfresco eats: At Il Paguro it still feels like summer every day — with its alfresco tables, a fishy menu, and seafood that you can pluck straight from a tank (mains about £12; 00 39 0789 702036).

Sunny sleep: The Valle dell'Erica estate, with cottages and a main hotel, is right on La Licciola beach, but has private strands, too — its coves are most sheltered in autumn (delphinahotels.co.uk; doubles from £288, half board).

Get me there: Meridiana (meridiana.it) flies from Gatwick to Olbia airport, an hour's drive from Gallura, from £74 return.



2 Essaouira, Morocco

Boho and breezy

October daytime high: 20°C

Run to the sun: It's said that you can walk the breezy, Atlantic beaches all the way from Essaouira to Cape Town. Luckily, you need only stroll 45 minutes to find beach bars touting fried fish, lolloping camels, and groovy surfers (watch out for the fierce rip tides). Or grab a taxi down to Sidi Kaouki (about £10, 30 minutes), a wilder beach that's actually more sheltered. If poolside is your preferred spot, head out to the Jardin des Douars (jardindesdouars.com) where, for the price of lunch (£11), you have access to two pools among gardens bursting with jasmine and roses.

Alfresco eats: The driftwood dining room of Ocean Vagabond (oceanvagabond.com; mains

about £14) at the far end of Essaouira beach is perfect for whiling away an afternoon over a bottle of rosé and Saint Pierre fish steamed in coconut milk. In Sidi Kaouki, don't miss Chez Abdou (00 212 613 037691), a stone beach shack for fish fresh off the boat.

Sunny sleep: About 3km out of town on a gentle rise above the beach, Auberge Tangaro (auberge-tangaro.com; doubles from £63, B&B) is a boho bolthole in desert gardens surrounding a great pool. Rooms are simple, but each has its own little sunny terrace, and there are plenty of breezy nooks, like the open-sided reading room.

Get me there: EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from Luton to Essaouira from £23 one way.



3 Málaga, Spain

Cool and cultured

October daytime high: 24°C

Run to the sun: Málaga is blissful now — summer's crowds have gone, but the waters are a come-on-in 21°C. Malagueta beach is closest to the centre; carry on east and you'll reach the secret sands of Baños del Carmen. Málaga has serious art cred, too, but you can stay alfresco: check out Soho's street art, and the stained-glass cube atop the Pompidou gallery.

Alfresco eats: Continue beyond Baños del Carmen to Pedregalejo beach for *espetos* — sardines skewered and grilled over olive wood — at restaurants such as El Cabra (restaurantelcabra.es; mains about £8). These places are popular with Sunday-lunching families, so book ahead. Come evening, grab a jacket for a *tapas*

crawl round the Old Town. Try Wendy Gamba (10 Calle Fresca), Los Gatos (9 Plaza de Uncibay), or take a tour with insider Victor Garrido (welovetapas.com; £41pp).

Sunny sleep: Málaga's recently restored '20s *grande dame*, the Gran Hotel Miramar, is right next to Malagueta beach, but if you don't want sand between your toes, its outdoor pool stays open 'til late October. Rooms are modern (bag one of the few with sea views). Doubles from £196, B&B (granhotelmiramarmalaga.com).

Get me there: Málaga airport is a 20-minute cab ride from town. Monarch (monarch.co.uk) flies year-round from five UK airports, including Manchester and Gatwick, with returns from £86. >



4 Halkidiki, Greece

Boat trips and beach clubs

October daytime high: 22°C

Run to the sun: You might just squeeze an extra degree out of a Greek island (see page 82), but this sunny slice of mainland Greece is an autumn winner since flights run year-round. So when you spot a hot spell in November (it happens), book a seat and you could be basking on Bonfire Night. The prettiest of Halkidiki's three peninsulas is Athos: fluffy pine forests, crystalline waters, and unspoilt islands crying out to be conquered by you and your picnic blanket. With a real community, fishing village Ouranoupolis has tavernas and *pensiones* that never close, while its beach clubs (free beds and broly when you order drinks) stay open into autumn. Or take the £2 ferry to timewarp Ammouliani island, where old

men really do play backgammon at breakfast and the town taxis a horse and carriage.

Alfresco eats: Armyra is a breezy beach grill; its fish soup dazzles (00 30 23 7744 0070; mains about £14). Or try waterfront Lemoniadis taverna (00 30 23 7707 1355; mains around £8).

Sunny sleep: Authentic Greek-owned Eagles Villas has stylish cottage suites from £399 per night (sleeps four; eaglesvillas.gr, 00 30 23 7703 1070). Each has Aegean views (pictured), outdoor pool, and sun-trap terrace.

Get me there: EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Thessaloniki — 90 mins from Athos — from Gatwick and Manchester, from £58 return.



5 Gozo, Malta

History and harbourfronts

October daytime high: 24°C

Run to the sun: A sun-loved speck in the southern Med, Malta's sleepy sidekick comes into its own in autumn, when cooler temperatures make sightseeing a breeze and you'll get the best beaches to yourself. Aim high — up to hilltop capital, Victoria, with its citadel dominating the skyline. Wander down 16th-century alleys and gaze from the ramparts at terraced farmland unfurling to the sea. Trails lattice the landscape, tempting walkers through herb scrub, and along sheer-edged cliffs. Cool off at Ramla Bay, a sweep of rust-red sand beneath Calypso Cave, where Homer's nymph held Odysseus captive.

Alfresco eats: Fresh and simple is the mantra at the Mgarr ix-Xini

seafood shack, its primary-coloured chairs and tables set just back from the pebbly creek (mains about £18). Gleneagles bar in Mgarr is the spot for sundowners, with weathered fishermen and well-heeled yachties sipping local Cisk beer on the harbour-view balcony (Triq ix-Xatt).

Sunny sleep: Just 10 rooms share the two sun-lit pools at ThirtySeven Gozo, a fashionable farmhouse conversion 15 minutes' walk from the sea (thirtysevengozo.com; doubles from £161, B&B).

Get me there: BA (ba.com) flies to Malta from Gatwick from £98 return. Then take the ferry to Gozo (gozochannel.com; £4).

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6 Formentera, Spain

Hot, hot, hot and healthy

October daytime high: 24°C

Run to the sun: The little-sister island to Ibiza — only 25 minutes by ferry (£18) — Formentera isn't just the hottest of the Balearics, it's also the driest. Parents of young kids — this means you can still sun-bake in October half-term, yet needn't fly more than 150 minutes. She's a sassy little sibling too: with the style and sophistication of Ibiza, but a wholesome social scene (expect lots of juice bars and yoga studios) that keeps the stag-dos at bay. Case in point, its string of ultra-cool, celeb-y beach restaurants along pristine Playas de ses Illetes and de Levante: both sand-underfoot Tanga (for *paella*; restaurantetanga.com) and starry Juan y Andrea (for autographs; juanyandrea.com) sedately shut up shop by 7pm. Beach done, sea

swum, make for pretty Sant Francesc Xavier town — it's as lovely for a dusk drink as it is for a morning-market mooch.

Alfresco eats: Ca Na Joana in Sant Francesc Xavier serves local dishes just as granny (Joana) used to make, in a flower-festooned courtyard (canajoanaformentera.es; mains about £15).

Sunny sleep: The villa season can run longer than hotels' — island specialists decodeformentera.com and passepartout-homes.com have a selection (two-bed rentals from £2,381 a week).

Get me there: BA (ba.com) flies year-round to Ibiza from eight UK airports from £79 return. See illesbalears.travel for details on late-season ferries. ■

