



ave you packed your bags yet? The coming year will be one of unforgettable travels as our desire to get away grows ever stronger. Post-pandemic, none of us takes travelling for granted so, despite the rising cost of living, holidays are a luxury we're reluctant to give up. According to travel marketplace Skyscanner, 70% of UK travellers are planning to spend the same if not more on getaways in 2023, but we're looking for better-value deals and want to get as much as we can out of our annual leave.

The Association of British Travel Agents' (ABTA) 2023 Report shows almost a third of us have already booked a break this year and, with 93% of us saying holidays improve our mental health and wellbeing, it's no surprise.

So where will we be jetting off to? Skyscanner identified two European destinations as being the best value: Madeira, which has had a 22% price drop since 2019, and Sofia, Bulgaria's copital, now 18% cheaper than it was before the pandemic.

All-inclusive holidays are more popular now, too, as we try to budget, with big destinations being the Canary Islands, Balearics and Turkey. We're also booking earlier to secure a better price.

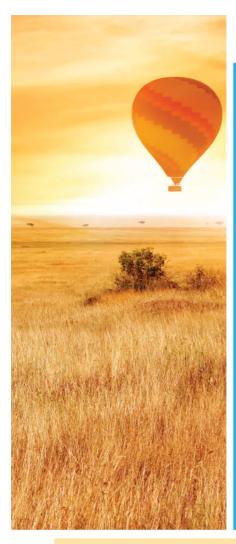
The shift towards flexibility in where and how we work has had an impact on how long we go on holiday for, too. ABTA has seen a rise in popularity for stays of 21 or even 28 nights in places such as Portugal, Malta, Mexico and Florida, with more people extending their holiday and working from abroad.

We're also trying get away off-season, when places are quieter, and we want to do it more sustainably by travelling by train or boat. Plus, we're craving experiences grounded in nature to help us reset and solo adventures for more 'me-time'.

As Naomi Hahn, VP of strategy at Skyscanner, says: 'We're hungrier than ever to discover something new – even if we have less money in our pockets. Travellers want to make up for lost time and create new experiences and memories.'

Here's our pick of the best ways to do that in 2023...

#### **Good escapes**



### VISIT A SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

The Azores, a cluster of beautiful islands in the North Atlantic, 800 miles off mainland Portugal, is currently a top pick for its eco credentials. The archipelago has been dubbed 'the world's first leading sustainable tourism destination', an EarthCheck accolade reflecting the focus placed on protecting the natural environment and resources there.

Often compared with Hawaii and Iceland, the unspoiled landscape is almost otherworldly. On São Miguel, the largest of the nine islands, you'll find deep crater lakes, clear-water coastal lagoons and the unique Furnas Valley, where geothermic heated springs bubble up into bathing pools. It's also the only place in the world where you can eat the traditional meat and vegetable stew Cozido das Furnas, which is lowered into, and actually cooked by, a volcano.

On the smaller island of Terceira there are agricultural plains encompassed by crater walls, a collapsed volcanic cone surrounded by the sea and the Algar do Carvão or the 'cavern of coal' – a volcanic



unspoiled Azores. Below: The Santa Bárbara Eco Beach Resort



vent around 90 metres deep that can be explored by descending 338 steps. GET THERE: Kuoni (kuoni.co.uk) offers seven nights at the four-star Santa Bárbara Eco Beach Resort on São Miguel from £1,299pp, including return flights (based on 8 May departure).

#### **THREE HOT NEW HOTELS FOR 2023**



# FOR AN ALL-INCLUSIVE STAY Ikos Odisia, Corfu

Opening in May, this is the brand's sixth luxury, all-inclusive hotel. With 395 bedrooms starting from £279 a night, it's located in a secluded bay across from Ikos Dassia. There are 10 pools, menus created by Michelin-starred chefs and signature spa experiences by Anne Semonin. Visit ikosresorts.com.



## FOR A WEEKEND IN LONDON The OWO, London

This much-anticipated opening, in spring, is at the Grade II-listed Old War Office in Whitehall. The Raffles hotel, with 120 rooms and suites plus 85 residencies, will also have nine restaurants, three bars and a spa and health club. It will be the first time the building is open to the public. Visit theowolondon.



## FOR A WEEKEND IN PARIS Le Grand Mazarin, Paris

This chic hotel in the Marais district comes from the team behind Crillon le Brave in Provence and Lou Pinet in Saint-Tropez and opens in early 2023. Designer Martin Brudnizki has given all 61 rooms eclectic and flamboyant interiors. There's also a bar, restaurant, and pool. Visit legrandmazarin.com.

DODITIONAL WORDS: LAIDA MILLAR PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY VINCEDUL TEROXY, LUIS FER RIVAN LOUDON LID, ADAM BRUZZONE, TOBIE CJATES MADIKWE DITAMAR LODGE PRICE OFFICE TAN TIME OF PRESS, ALWAYS CHECK THE FCDO TRAVEL ADVISED FOR A ALTERNATION OF THE ATES



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