

# Summer sizzlers

**Head to one of Europe's hot spots for 2010**

## Malta

You can swim in crystal clear water at the Blue Lagoon



The pool at the Grand Hotel Excelsior

Malta is renowned for its low rainfall and cool sea breezes, making it a perfect summer destination.

When you're not relaxing in the sun, take a trip to the old capital of Mdina and stroll around the medieval hilltop town. The De Mondian restaurant at The Xara Palace hotel is a great spot for dinner ([www.xarapalace.com.mt](http://www.xarapalace.com.mt)).

In the new capital, Valletta, you'll find shops and cafés, the majestic St John's Co-Cathedral and the Upper Barrakka Gardens, with fantastic views of the Grand Harbour. It's quiet at night, so if you want a lively evening out, head to the bars in nearby St Julian's.

There are plenty of boat trips on offer enabling you to explore Malta's two smaller islands – Gozo, where you'll find sheltered coves, salt pans and a natural rock arch, and Comino, where you can swim in the crystal clear waters of the Blue Lagoon. See [www.visitmalta.com](http://www.visitmalta.com) and [www.boatlinkmalta.com](http://www.boatlinkmalta.com) for more information on boat tours and day trips.

**Where to stay:** The Grand Hotel Excelsior ([www.excelsior.com.mt](http://www.excelsior.com.mt))

is just a few minutes walk from Valletta. It boasts comfy rooms and a huge outdoor pool overlooking the sea. Double rooms from £100.

**Who goes there?** Kelis, Kid Rock and the Scissor Sisters stayed at the Excelsior in June. They were taking part in Malta Music Week, an annual event that includes dance parties at outdoor clubs and a huge gig in Valletta – which is free, so it's a good time to visit!

**How to book:** Air Malta ([www.airmalta.com](http://www.airmalta.com), 0906 103 0012) offers return flights from the UK from £99.

Scissor Sisters Jake Shears and Ana Matronic in Malta in June



## Palma

The stunning Le Seu cathedral



Hotel Convent de la Missió's stylish interior



If your ideal afternoon involves strolling along a yacht-lined promenade, with the odd glass of cava on the sunny terrace of a beachfront café, you'll love this Majorcan city. Spend some time meandering through the twisting lanes of the Old Town, and visit the imposing gothic La Seu cathedral. There is a sandy beach just 20 minutes' walk from the town centre.

Another great afternoon pastime is a visit to the Macià Batle winery ([www.maciabatle.com](http://www.maciabatle.com)). It's a short train ride from Palma, and they offer a complimentary tour and tasting of their award-winning local wines.

After dark, head to La Lonja, for two of Palma's best bars: Puro – a trendy venue with chic décor and good DJs – and Abaco, a quirky fruit-filled manor house that serves amazing but expensive cocktails. Or walk along the coast to Portixol, a small former fishing village that now houses many bars and restaurants. Dinner at the Portixol hotel ([www.portixol.com](http://www.portixol.com)), which overlooks the marina, is a real treat.

**Where to stay:** The stylish Hotel Convent de la Missió ([www.conventdelamissio.com](http://www.conventdelamissio.com)) is ten minutes walk from the Old

Town, and just metres from lots of enticing shoe shops! The popular Cappuccino café, set in the pretty courtyard of an old mansion, is also nearby. The on-site restaurant Simply Fosh offers delicious Mallorcan-influenced haute cuisine in modern surroundings.

**Who goes there?** Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas have visited Palma.

**How to book:** Balearic Discovery, which specialises in tailor-made trips to Mallorca, offers a three-night stay at Hotel Convent de la Missió from £585 including breakfast. See [www.balearicdiscovery.com](http://www.balearicdiscovery.com) or email [jane@balearicdiscovery.com](mailto:jane@balearicdiscovery.com). Monarch offers flights to Palma from £76.99 return. To book, visit [www.monarch.co.uk](http://www.monarch.co.uk).

Catherine and Michael have visited Palma



## Dubrovnik

The Old Town sits inside a 2km stone wall



Hotel Bellevue's lounge has spectacular sea views



The Old Town of Dubrovnik, in Croatia, is a charming maze of ancient stone buildings, narrow streets and café-filled squares. A great way to start your visit is by walking along the 2km wall that circles the city and offers a fantastic view of the buildings within it.

Inside the walls, there are restaurants to suit all tastes, from pizzerias to gourmet eateries. There are lively bars tucked away down the side streets, or for a chilled out evening, head to Buza, which is reached through a hole in the city wall and nestles into the cliff face looking out to sea, making it the ideal spot for a sundowner.

Also just outside the city wall is the Eastwest Beach Club, set on one of Dubrovnik's cleanest beaches. There, you can hire a comfy lounger for the day and enjoy a tasty lunch at the restaurant.

And don't miss the chance to head over to Lokrum island, 15 minutes from the old port by ferry. There are forested paths to explore, an ancient fort to visit, peacocks roaming the island and steps leading from the rocky coastline straight into the clear green sea – perfect for a refreshing swim.

**Where to stay:** The

five-star Hotel Bellevue is a 10-minute walk from the Old Town. Perched high on a cliff, it overlooks a sheltered bay and has an indoor infinity pool with fantastic views of the sea.

**Who goes there?** Beyoncé and Jay-Z, Tom Cruise and Naomi Campbell have all been spotted in Dubrovnik.

**How to book:** Classic Collection Holidays ([www.classic-collection.co.uk](http://www.classic-collection.co.uk), 0800 294 9315) offers four nights b&b at Hotel Bellevue from £863 per person this September including return flights with easyJet and private transfers.

Beyoncé and Jay-Z in Dubrovnik last August

