

EARLY Sept

Côte d'Azur

Take a zippy flight — or even the train — to the still-red-hot Riviera. Don't delay: next month temperatures tumble



Alfresco attraction: In the warm September air, blockbuster films are screened just above Monaco's seafront (cinemas2monaco.com; £9). And, this being Monaco, you get padded loungers, with a side table for chips and beer, instead of dodgy plastic chairs. Take a post-movie dip at Crique des Pêcheurs, the secret beach just below the Rock of Monaco.

Get me there: EasyJet (easyjet.com) has flights to Nice from seven UK airports from £64 return. SNCF (voyages-sncf.com) runs trains from London to Cannes, Antibes and Nice, via Paris, from £144 return.

or try... THE COSTA BRAVA
Today's forecast is still: 'Scorchio!'

Sunny swim: A-list Cap Ferrat may have six public beaches, but if you want privacy, nothing beats Club Dauphin at Four Seasons' Grand Hôtel du Cap Ferrat (fourseasons.com/capferrat; entry £65). Patsy and Eddy romped here in the recent *Ab Fab* film. Its Art Deco seawater pool is heated to 28°C.

Alfresco attraction: Walk to the castle promontory at Cap Roig for views of the Formigues Isles and Botanical Garden. The temperature averages 26°C in September — take a stroll via antique wooden bridges and rocky inlets down cliffs to the bay at El Crit.

Outdoor eat: Snuggled up to the Italian border, Menton is statistically the sunniest town in France. Its tastiest restaurant terrace is Maison Martin et Fils (maison-martin-et-fils.com; mains about £9), which bangs out regional specialities such as Niçoise *daube* stew and *pissaladière* onion tart.

Sunny swim: Pack your snorkel, hire a motorboat (pacoboats.com; £297 for a half-day), or kayak (kayakingcostabrava.com; from £9 an hour) from the fishing village of Tamaris and pootle to coves perfect for spotting the marine life wriggling about the reefs.

Summery sleep: Nice's south-facing Hotel Negresco (hotel-negresco-nice.com; doubles from £201, room only) soaks up the sun (and the stars: the Queen and the Beatles are former patrons). Guests get concessionary access to beach club Neptune Plage across the Promenade des Anglais. Until the end of September it hosts a Friday-night BBQ with two-Michelin-star chef Jean-Denis Rieubl.

Outdoor eat: Pai Raim (pairaim.com; mains about £12), in an Art Nouveau pile in coastal Palafrugell, serves up the likes of Catalan cod and Iberian pork with muscat and cinnamon. Nab one of its charming alfresco dining spaces.

Should it rain: Nice boasts more museums than most French cities outside Paris. The Pass Musées (en.nicetourisme.com; £8) grants access to lots of them, including the Musée des Beaux-Arts, with its works by South of France *habitués* Raoul Dufy and Pierre Bonnard.

Summery sleep: With Hotel Trias's rates dropping off-season (doubles from £181, B&B, in August down to £100 in September; and ilanahotels.com), now's the time to check in to this Art Deco icon. Covered poolside terraces foil autumn breezes, and there's a menu of Martinis to get through after that sunset swim.

Must-do: Head to Eden Plage private beach club (edenplagelamala.com). Seawater temperatures are a balmy 23°C in September and beach beds are slashed to £8 per day (down from £24 in August). Best of all, those Italian *bambini* are safely back at school.

Should it rain: Head inland to the Dalí Theatre Museum (salvador-dali.org; £11), which knocks the spots off the museums in Barcelona.

Must-do: Spain's most beautiful beach bar, Cala Banyals (calabanyals.es; open until October) is a dream at this time of year. Order a sangria and listen to the waves shushing to shore.

Get me there: Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from Luton from £55 return.



Late-summer letdown

Don't assume all France is hotter than home. By now, Brittany's high is 18°C, while Kent's trumps it at 20°C. Get a sunnier September by heading south (see left).

Shore thing: clockwise from top left, the coast from Cap Martin looking out to Monaco; facade in Nice; sunny Menton; the Promenade des Anglais, Nice; *pissaladière* onion tart; Nice sunset; Menton; *salade Niçoise*; Monte Carlo's Grand Casino; fountain in Menton; Four Seasons' Cap Ferrat; alfresco Monaco; Rodin's *The Kiss*, in Nice's Musée des Beaux-Arts

The sun's still shining on Italy's southerly isle — choose the south side over the north: it's two degrees warmer

Alfresco attraction: Take a seat and imagine watching a tragedy unfold on stage in the Greek amphitheatre in Syracuse (regione.sicilia.it; £8). This 140m-stone semicircle is almost perfectly intact — and, off-season, almost tourist-free. Across the road is the Romans' version and the echoey cavern used by Dionysius as a prison.

Sunny swim: Stock up at the kiosk by the signpost to Vendicari (vendicari.net), a marshy reserve near Noto — this is the last human you'll see for yonks! Storks and avocets forge a path up the boardwalk to Calamosche, a seemingly forgotten sandy cove.

Outdoor eat: In the late-afternoon sun, Noto glimmers as if faced in gold. Caffè Sicilia sits in thrall at the foot of the Baroque cathedral. Overstuffed *cannoli* hit the sweet spot, and scoops of *granita* (£4) — in daring flavours such as tomato, basil or cedar — hold you off until dinner.

Summery sleep: Calm beaches are only 30 minutes away from Le Lumie (lelumie.com; doubles from £91, B&B), but once you're cloistered in its lemon and bergamot orchard, all that sand will seem a bit of a bother. Book the Brown Deluxe room: its balcony has day-long sun and a view of Modica, the Baroque town famous for its chocolate.

Should it rain: Book into a show at Ortigia's puppet theatre (teatro deipupisiracusa.it; £7.15). The spectacles come with flamboyant costumes and melodrama worthy of the Grand Opera. The dialogue is in Italian, but that won't matter when the music ramps up and the heads roll.

Must-do: Take a stroll along the cobbled promenade that circles the island city of Ortigia, over Byzantine fortress walls and rocky shores where kids plunge into the Med. You'll need a *gelato* to follow, naturally — savour it on the steps of the Duomo.

Get me there: Norwegian (norwegian.com) flies direct from Gatwick to Catania from £163 return.

or try...

CORSICA

Picnic à la plage? Corsica's a corker

Alfresco attraction: Step aside Stonehenge. From 4,000 to 3,500 years ago, ancient Corsicans built a megalithic settlement at Filitosa (filitosa.fr; £5.50), about an hour away from Ajaccio. The current site is a pastoral stone wilderness shaded by centuries-old olive trees.

Sunny swim: Plage Rondinara, a 40-minute drive from Porto Vecchio, is reckoned to be one of the best beaches in the world. It's a perfect semi-circle of sand, clasping a turquoise lagoon.

Outdoor eat: Corsican cuisine is divided into *mer* and *terre*. Campo di Monte (fermecampodimonte.com; set menu with drinks £46) is the latter. Head to a clearing in the wild forested hills above St Florent for a farmhouse feast of wild-boar stew and rustic wine.

Summery sleep: On St Florent's shimmering seafront, Demeure Loredana (demeureloredana.com; doubles from £162, room only) has 18 chi-chi rooms (most with sea views) arranged around a vast infinity pool. The town's stunning Plage de la Roya is a 15-minute stroll away.

Should it rain: Visit the Clos d'Alzeto vineyard (vineyard-closdazeto.com) — it's one of dozens of boutique island wineries that produce crisp Vermentino whites and punchily fat Sciaccarello reds. Tastings are free, but it's diplomatic to buy a few bottles.

Must-do: Take a boat trip around the Scandola Nature Reserve (promenades-en-mer.org; £47 from Ajaccio or Porticcio). This volcanic finger of red rock crumbles into the Med to form one big Unesco World Heritage Site. Fishing is banned — so expect eagles and dolphins.

Get me there: EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies Gatwick to Ajaccio, and Manchester to Bastia, from £69 return.



Late-summer letdown

Morocco? Are you mad? It's actually still so hot you should skip it till autumn (see page 125). The daytime high in Marrakech is a sweaty 33°C — no fun for anyone.

Centre stage: the Greek theatre in Syracuse; above, the waterfront in Ortigia; church in Baroque Modica; Noto's cathedral; *cannoli* pastries; right from top, Val di Noto; detail of a Baroque terrace in Modica; Modica's cathedral at night

