



DESTINATIONS TO DREAM ABOUT

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# YOUR 2020 TRAVEL & FOOD CALENDAR



Feeling the January blues? Banish them by diarising a food lover's escape. Month by month, these are 2020's hottest, coolest and all-round best destinations, from Scotland to South Carolina

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Palermo is brimming with history – not to mention local specialities; Menton offers citrus-fuelled sunshine on the French Riviera

Charleston combines southern graciousness with a slick city vibe; Stay in the cool Room Mate Bruno on a Eurostar trip to Rotterdam

# JANUARY

## PALERMO, SICILY

Sicily is Italian in name only. Two millennia of culinary influences from Andalusia, Anatolia and North Africa have resulted in unpronounceable dishes such as sfinci (ricotta fritters) and 'mpanatigghi (sweet pastries stuffed with spiced beef).

**WHY NOW?** Local residents, or Palermitani, celebrate Epiphany (6 January) with food rich in symbolism. Eating lentils brings wealth, while giuggiulena, a type of sesame-seed nougat, is proffered to children. Still peckish? In Palermo it's permissible to eat brioche con gelato (ice cream sandwiches) for breakfast.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** Street stalls near the Mercato 00 Ballarò make use of its seasonal oranges and fish. Sample involtini di pesce spada (swordfish rolls), pane e panelle (chickpea fritter sandwiches) and sfincione (thick-crust pizzas).

**JANUARY AVERAGES** ☁️

- HIGH TEMP 15°C (31°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 10°C (9°C in February)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 5 (11 in July)
- RAINY DAYS 8 (9 in December)

**WHERE TO STAY** The apartments at Butera 28 (butera28.it; from €120 per night) are in a palazzo once owned by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, famed author of *The Leopard*. The current owner is the Duchess of Palma and she offers cooking classes for €150.

**HOW TO GET THERE** EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from Gatwick, Luton and Liverpool to Palermo from £54 return.

# FEBRUARY

## MENTON, FRANCE

France's sunniest city is on the Ligurian Sea, east of Nice. Blue skies reign for 300 days a year, nourishing botanical gardens zesty with kumquats, kaffir limes and buddha's hand citrons. Menton's medieval centre is home to the Marché des Halles food market, a Franco-Italian mix of prosciutto, pâte d'olive noire and San Remo shrimp.

**WHY NOW?** From mid-February the Fête du Citron (fete-du-citron.com) takes over. Expect giant sculptures made from lemons, oranges and limes, plus night parades, craft fairs and citrus tastings.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** In 2019, three Michelin-starred Mirazur was named number one in the S Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants awards. Chef Mauro Colagreco cooks with vegetables, fruit and flowers from three potager gardens surrounding the restaurant. Tasting menus start from €160.

**FEBRUARY AVERAGES** ☁️

- HIGH TEMP 13°C (28°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 6°C (the year's lowest)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 10 (15 in June)
- RAINY DAYS 4 (6 in November)

**WHERE TO STAY** The seafront Napoléon Menton hotel (napoleon-menton.com; doubles from €82) pays artistic homage to local character Jean Cocteau. See the artist's eclectic highlights in the Musée Jean Cocteau, 10 minutes away.

**HOW TO GET THERE** EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from a dozen UK airports to nearby Nice from £53 return.

# MARCH

## CHARLESTON, USA

This South Carolina gem is said to be the USA's most friendly city. A walkable centre dazzles with distilleries, cocktail bars and diners at every turn. Add Atlantic seafood and West African ingredients such as okra, season with new direct British Airways flights and it's a recipe for success.

**WHY NOW?** The Charleston Wine and Food Festival (charlestonwineandfood.com) in early March is one of the most notable in the country. More than 100 chefs, wine pros, farmers and mixologists join together to bring free and ticketed tastings held throughout the Charleston Peninsula.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** She-crab soup is a rich seafood bisque that sums up worldly Charleston. Atlantic blue crab meat and crab roe meld with Southern cream and Low Country rice to create an all-American chowder.

**MARCH AVERAGES** ☁️

- HIGH TEMP 19°C (31°C in July)
- LOW TEMP 11°C (6°C in January)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 6 (11 in June)
- RAINY DAYS 6 (9 in August)

**WHERE TO STAY** The brand-new, five-star Hotel Bennett (hotelbennett.com; doubles from \$314). With aspirations to be the finest hotel in the South, it wows with a rooftop pool and Parisian-style splendour.

**HOW TO GET THERE** British Airways (ba.com) flies direct to Charleston from around £500 return.

# APRIL

## ROTTERDAM, HOLLAND

Eurostar's latest route puts Holland's second city at just over three hours from London. It's a temple to modernism, with UNESCO-protected architecture, street art and a Centraal Station that rises like a solar-powered wave. Europe's largest port is also a seafood mecca, with more than 170 resident nationalities preparing local sole and sea bass.

**WHY NOW?** Rotterdam has been spruced up for May's Eurovision Song Contest, and there's a continent of flavours at hip indoor markets like Foodhallen (foodhallen.nl) and Fenix Food Factory (fenixfoodfactory.nl).

**MUST-TRY FOOD** Avoid kapsalon, a strangely beloved concoction of chips topped with shawarma meat, melted gouda and sambal hot sauce. Instead, try Rotterdam herring (said to be Holland's best) at Ruud den Haan (vishandelruuddenhaan.nl).

**APRIL AVERAGES** ☁️

- HIGH TEMP 14°C (22°C in July)
- LOW TEMP 4°C (1°C in January)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 6 (7 in May)
- RAINY DAYS 8 (13 in December)

**WHERE TO STAY** Canal-side Room Mate Bruno (room-matehotels.com; doubles from £82) is a repurposed tea warehouse once owned by the Dutch East India Company.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Eurostar (eurostar.com) links London St Pancras and Rotterdam twice daily, from £70 return. →



NO FLIGHT REQUIRED



Normandy's white sandy beaches and cider beckon visitors; get the sleeper train to Glasgow and stay in the refurbished Blythswood Square

Sunny Weymouth offers seafood served fresh; Tokyo lures the world this summer with the Olympic Games and beautiful food

MAY

NORMANDY, FRANCE

Easily accessible yet gastronomically removed from England, Normandy's highlights include oyster shacks, cider orchards and dégustation des beurres (butter tastings – yum!) – plus endless white sand beaches.



NO FLIGHT REQUIRED

**WHY NOW?** Spring flowers emblazon pastures from Saint-Malo to Le Havre. May also welcomes the **Fête du Fromage** in Pont-l'Évêque (home of the eponymous pungent cows' cheese). Expect mature aromas of Norman cheeses such as camembert, livarot and neufchâtel too.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** The apple and pear orchards of Calvados stretch back centuries, and the **Route du cidre Cru de Cambremer** is a 40km-long cider trail that pairs apple blossom with tastings at more than 20

calvados and cider factories, including **Pierre Huet** (calvados-huet.com), which also does a refreshing perry.

**WHERE TO STAY** The hotel **Domaine de Geffosses** (domainedegeffosses.fr; doubles from €63) is a timbered manor in pretty Pont-l'Évêque.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Brittany Ferries (brittany-ferries.co.uk; from £60pp return, Portsmouth to Caen), offers a copious evening buffet.

- MAY AVERAGES**
- HIGH TEMP 17°C (22°C in August)
  - LOW TEMP 7°C (1°C in February)
  - SUNSHINE HOURS 6 (7 in June)
  - RAINY DAYS 9 (11 in January)

JUNE

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

Think 10pm sunsets, sushi burritos and hole-in-the-wall Scandi-style takeaways. The Scottish city's shipbuilding wealth was funnelled into grand civic architecture, including Glasgow City Chambers and the splendid Victorian necropolis (a Glaswegian Père Lachaise).



NO FLIGHT REQUIRED

**WHY NOW?** Scotland's biggest indoor street food market, **Big Feed** (big-feed.squarespace.com), hosts food trucks such as Firedog (for Aberdeen Angus burgers with jalapeño) and Mostar Munch (for Balkan kebabs).

**MUST-TRY FOOD** The latest write-ups from blog star **Briony Cullin** (instagram.com/glasgow\_food): brekkie joints serving ricotta and figs on toast; Vietnamese restaurants vending deep-fried ice cream balls.

**WHERE TO STAY** Newly refurbished **Blythswood Square** (kimptonblythswoodsquare.com; doubles from £151) also hosts standalone Scottish diner **Bo & Birdy**.

**HOW TO GET THERE** The new **Caledonian Sleeper** (sleeper.scot; from £80pp one-way) hauls hotel-style rooms, plus a Club Car complete with haggis and malt whiskies, from London Euston to Glasgow Central.

- JUNE AVERAGES**
- HIGH TEMP 17°C (19°C in August)
  - LOW TEMP 11°C (2°C in January)
  - SUNSHINE HOURS 5 (6 in May)
  - RAINY DAYS 12 (17 in January)

JULY

WEYMOUTH, ENGLAND

This gorgeous Georgian south coast resort is one of Britain's sunniest towns. The outer harbour hosts a large working fishing fleet, providing mackerel, bream and turbot to restaurants in the surrounding port.



NO FLIGHT REQUIRED

**WHY NOW?** Held from 11-12 July, the **Dorset Seafood Festival** (dorsetseafood.co.uk) is the country's largest free seafood fair, with 100 stalls dishing up crab cakes, fresh oysters and flutes of Nyetimber Classic Cuvée, a cracking English sparkling wine.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** **Crustacean** (crustaceanrestaurant.co.uk) wins plaudits for its ability to source harbour-fresh seafood and serve it with minimal adornment. Simple, in-season platters include a whole crab (£23 and they leave the cracking to you) or whole lobster (£29, with a choice of orange, rosemary or caper butter).

**WHERE TO STAY** With a command of Weymouth's esplanade, rooms at the **Bay View Hotel** (bayview-weymouth.co.uk; doubles from £65) delivers on the promise of bay windows overlooking the English Channel.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Trains from London Waterloo to Weymouth take less than 3 hours.

- JULY AVERAGES**
- HIGH TEMP 19°C (20°C in August)
  - LOW TEMP 15°C (5°C in January)
  - SUNSHINE HOURS 7 (7 in July)
  - RAINY DAYS 7 (12 in January)

AUGUST

TOKYO, JAPAN

Easily one of the world's great capitals of cuisine, Tokyo has been given an Olympian upgrade, adding new bargain hotels and English-speaking food tours to its 21st-century skyline.

**WHY NOW?** The **2020 Summer Olympics** are held from 24 July-9 August. In a re-run of the 1964 games, when Tokyo wowed the world with its technology, this year's event will awe with humanoid robots, driverless buses and maglev trains capable of 600km per hour speeds.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** A weak yen has slashed prices for foreigners visiting Japan. Aside from Michelin-starred **ramen** for around £10, try open-all-hours **Kura Sushi**, where almost every conveyor belt item (tempura shrimp double nigiri, salmon maki foursome) costs ¥100 (around 70p). And take a copy of **Tim Anderson's Tokyo Stories** (Hardie Grant £26) with you.

**WHERE TO STAY** **ONE@Tokyo** (onetokyo.com; doubles from £60) mixes small, tidy rooms with breathtaking public spaces and views.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Air France (airfrance.com) and Emirates (emirates.com) have the best value flights in August (around £650 return). Or fly to Osaka and take the train to Tokyo. →

- AUGUST AVERAGES**
- HIGH TEMP 31°C (the year's highest)
  - LOW TEMP 24°C (2°C in January)
  - SUNSHINE HOURS 6 (the year's highest)
  - RAINY DAYS 8 (the year's highest)



Seafood is king on bucolic Saaremaa Island, especially in the Georg Ots Spa Hotel; laid-back Rijeka is European Capital of Culture 2020



Aqaba's year-round sun could be reason enough to visit, but there's great eating too; Nuremberg's sparkling Christmas market



# SEPTEMBER

## SAAREMAA ISLAND, ESTONIA

Estonia's largest island is part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Half is forest crisscrossed by nature trails and hiking routes, while seaside meadows host 80 per cent of the country's plant species, including 36 types of wild orchid. Organic farms and crayfish colonies complete the picture.

**WHY NOW?** Come September the Scandi crowds recede, while whooper swans and barnacle geese cast migratory trails overhead. In the capital, Kuressaare, which has more hot spring spas per capita than anywhere else on earth, the curative season kicks off.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** Anything with the 'Saaremaa ehtne toode' label, meaning it's island-sourced – although you'll be fighting 300 local grey seals for native flounder and crayfish. **Alexander** (padaste.ee), the area's best restaurant, focuses on carefully selected Nordic Islands cuisine.

**WHERE TO STAY** In Kuressaare, the Georg Ots Spa Hotel (gospa.ee; doubles from €75) has an award-winning restaurant serving slow-cooked trout with apple butter, plus pork tenderloin with lingonberry crumble.

**HOW TO GET THERE** EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from London Gatwick to Tallinn from £44 return.

### SEPTEMBER AVERAGES

- HIGH TEMP 15°C (22°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 9°C (-4°C in January)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 5 (10 in June)
- RAINY DAYS 11 (15 in November)

# OCTOBER

## ISTRIA, CROATIA

In October, Istria's vineyards, which nurture crisp malvasia whites and complex teran reds, curl auburn in the softening sun. Hilltop olive farms and forests of holm oak cast a Tuscan backdrop, with added Adriatic oysters and cellar-cured pršut ham.

**WHY NOW?** You can now fly to nearby Rijeka, Croatia's third largest city and biggest fishing port, which will be **European Capital of Culture 2020**. A Venetian sugar refinery has been turned into a museum. Hapsburg-era townhouses host restaurants serving cuttlefish pie and £5 platters of marinated sea bass.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** Its own fishing boats supply the red mullet and squid to Rijeka's Michelin-starred **Restaurant Draga di Lovrana** (dragadilovrana.hr). The £48 tasting menu sparkles with local prawn ceviche and crisp duck breast with chestnuts.

**WHERE TO STAY** Gourmet retreat **Roxanich Wine & Heritage Hotel** (roxanich.hr; doubles from €83) can organise truffle hunting, cellar tours and foraging in the bucolic hinterland.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from London Stansted to Rijeka from £130 return.

### OCTOBER AVERAGES

- HIGH TEMP 18°C (21°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 6°C (-4°C in January)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 5 (10 in July)
- RAINY DAYS 8 (the year's highest)

# NOVEMBER

## AQABA, JORDAN

Searing skies meet sizzling cuisine on the banks of the Red Sea. Divers can spot the species served in the sprawling souk, while food tours include date molasses making, Arabian flatbread baking and mastering the local layered honey, butter and nut pastry, hooch.

**WHY NOW?** Budget flights connect London to Aqaba in under six hours. If you have the time, from here, the new **Jordan Trail** (jordantrail.org) is a 40-day hike that promises movie-set routes to the ancient archaeological site of Petra and the mesmerising red-rock and desert landscape of Wadi Rum. Day-trip hikes from Aqaba can be arranged locally (see below).

**MUST-TRY FOOD** The classic fish and rice dish, sayadieh, chugged south from Lebanon via the Hejaz railway, which once linked Syria with Saudi Arabia. The Aqabawi version pairs caramelised onions with almonds, cardamom and pan-fried bass, all drizzled in tahini sauce.

**WHERE TO STAY** The smart new **Lacosta Hotel** (lacosta-hotel.com; doubles from £68) can organise trips to Petra, Wadi Rum and local dive sites.

**HOW TO GET THERE** EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from London Gatwick to Aqaba from £200 return.

PHOTOGRAPH: UWE NIKLAS/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

### NOVEMBER AVERAGES

- HIGH TEMP 27°C (40°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 16°C (10°C in January)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 8 (13 in July)
- RAINY DAYS 0 (0 all year round)

# DECEMBER

## NUREMBERG, GERMANY

Knuckles of pork and steins of black beer have their place. But contemporary Nuremberg cuisine is more likely to embrace menus of sweetbreads with plum vinegar, and squid with chanterelles and cider butter.

**WHY NOW?** The **Christmas market** (christkindlesmarkt.de) ranks as Europe's classiest. Mass-produced trinkets are banned; carefully sourced foodstuffs are the norm, while mulled wine vendors use reusable cups. Also present are booths highlighting the origins of Nuremberg's migrant culinary communities, such as Antalya in Turkey and Kharkiv in Ukraine.

**MUST-TRY FOOD** The city's bratwurst, the tasty nürnberger. These pork sausages are blended with marjoram and owe their svelte nature, so it's said, to enterprising hoteliers who slid them through keyholes to guests locked in during the city's nightly curfew in plague times. Around 800 million are made each year.

**WHERE TO STAY** **Hotel Victoria** (hotelvictoria.de; doubles from €98) has been serving gingerbread snaps and bretzels for breakfast since 1896.

**HOW TO GET THERE** Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from London Stansted to Nuremberg from £35 return.

### DECEMBER AVERAGES

- HIGH TEMP 4°C (25°C in July)
- LOW TEMP -2°C (-3°C in February)
- SUNSHINE HOURS 3 (8 in July)
- RAINY DAYS 9 (the year's highest)