

**Sun**

**AWARD-WINNING**  
**travel**

Edited by **LISA MINOT**



**hot spot**

**TENERIFE is 27C.** Seven nights' B&B at the 4★ Gara Suites is from £677pp, including flights from Newcastle on August 11. For more information, see [onthebeach.co.uk](http://onthebeach.co.uk).

**hot spot**

**IT'S 33C IN MAJORCA** – seven nights' all-inclusive at the 3★ Club Cala Romani Hotel is from £514pp, including Bournemouth flights on August 31. See [loveholidays.com](http://loveholidays.com).



**ROTTERDAM'S** lively nightlife, quirky architecture and innovative cuisine are easier to reach because of new breaks with easyJet holidays. It has launched packages to the Dutch city, which is a 27-minute train journey from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. From £229pp, packages include flights, a hotel room and 23kg luggage per

person. Paul Bixby, easyJet holidays' commercial director said: "We're always looking to expand our offering so, it made sense to add Rotterdam to our collection." The breaks include three nights' room-only at the 4★ NH Atlanta Rotterdam from £309pp, flying from London Luton on January 21, 2024. Call 0330 365 5005 or see [easyjet.com/en/holidays](http://easyjet.com/en/holidays).



**CAR-hire prices** have dropped by an average of 37 per cent compared to last year, according to TravelSupermarket. Between June 2022 and June 2023, the cost of hiring a car fell in popular holiday spots including Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Greece to an average of £48.06 per day from £76.38. Ireland saw the biggest dip of the countries looked at – dropping 72 per cent from £173.55 to £48.97.

There have also been big price drops in Croatia (52 per cent), Spain (40 per cent) and Italy (49 per cent). The cheapest destination to hire a car this summer is Malta, with a daily average cost of £25.81. Switzerland has the most expensive car hire rates, of £102 per day – still 19 per cent down on last year's £126.25 fees. To help keep costs down, TravelSupermarket recommends

prepaying for your booking to avoid the risk of prices rising or selected cars becoming booked up. Stephanie Marinkovic, senior content editor at Ice Travel Group, TravelSupermarket's parent company, warned: "The cheapest won't always be the best option." She suggests checking review sites like TrustPilot to avoid additional charges. For more information, see [travelsupermarket.com](http://travelsupermarket.com).



**CHILL... swimming pool**

**CAMBRIDGE BELFRY**  
**Cambourne**  
**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** Just under a 30-minute drive from the city centre, The Cambridge Belfry attracts a mishmash of stag and hen dos, families and businessmen who come to use the large conference rooms.

The red-brick building is rather dated on the inside, but the gardens are well kept with an outdoor terrace that overlooks a small lake.

**ROOMS ANY GOOD?** The 120 rooms are basic yet comfy and vary in size from classic doubles to penthouse suites geared up for families, with a sofa bed, Elemis toiletries and mini fridge. Our suite could do with a bit of a facelift, but it was an ideal base for exploring historic Cambridge with its bunting-lined streets and boutique shops.

**EAT THERE OR GRAB A PIZZA?** If you don't fancy travelling into the city, the main restaurant offers classic British grub including burgers, salads, pastas and steaks. I chose the seabass, which was well cooked with a deliciously crispy skin, although it was the oozing chocolate fondant dessert that really won me over.

**WHAT ELSE?** If you're after a spa day that won't break the bank, this is the place.

For just over £100 you can bag a 50-minute spa treatment, three-course dinner, an overnight stay with brekkie and an Elemis gift.

Just make sure to enquire about the swimming classes in advance to avoid having to share the pool with kids.

**SO YOU'D GO BACK?** It's not the place for a tranquil couples getaway, but it's ideal for group adventures.

**WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?** The spa staycation package costs from £109pp when booked by August 31 and is available for summer stays.

**SOPHIE SWIETOCHOWSKI**



**SERENE... hotel spa**

**FINNAIR SERVICE TO BODØ, WAY UP PAST ARCTIC CIRCLE**



**The Northern flights**



**SCENIC... Saltstraumen, Norway**

**IT'S 10pm and I've just jumped into the freezing Norwegian sea.**

The water is a toe-numbing 8C and it feels like there are tiny pins in my legs as I try to catch my breath.

Even summers spent in Yorkshire's Whitby, where the sea often felt like an ice bath, hadn't quite prepared me for this plunge.

The thing I'm really struggling to get used to, though, is not the cold, but the fact that the sun is still shining well into the night.

*We are so far north that the sun will not set tonight at all – or, in fact, any day until late August.*

Those who live in Bodø, in northern Norway, revel in this endless daylight, staying out late in the bars and restaurants.

Our guide Julie Abelsen tells me that locals will even go skiing on the snowy peaks in their bikinis in the midnight sun.

Making the journey this far above the Arctic Circle, is usually reserved for those seeking a glimpse of the wintery Northern Lights.

But now Finnair has launched a new route for summer from Helsinki to Bodø.

From the plane window we saw

**GO: BODØ**

**GETTING THERE:** Return flights from Heathrow to Bodø cost from £379pp. See [finnair.com](http://finnair.com).

**STAYING THERE:** One night's room-only at the Radisson Blu hotel is from £62.45, based on two people sharing. See [radissonhotels.com](http://radissonhotels.com).

glaciers, snowy peaks, and mesmerising mountain streams.

For thousands of years, Norwegian fishermen would stop in Bodø on journeys to the Lofoten Islands, known for their fisheries which provided cod to most of Europe.

Now the town, a former NATO air station, has a bustling collection of high-end restaurants, bars and hotels, including the Radisson Blu, which was our base for the next few days.

The fjord here, which is lit up at all hours of the day during the summer months, is captivating and at the centre of all aspects of life in Bodø.

The best way to see it – when you're not jumping in it – is by boat which can take you to the Saltstraumen strait.

It has one of the strongest tidal

currents in the world and every six hours up to 400million cubic metres of sea water forces its way through a 150-metres-wide strait in the fjord, creating a natural spectacle that's unlike anything I've ever seen.

The current can gain speeds of up to 20 knots, or 23mph, which can create whirlpools up to ten metres in diameter.

Our RIB boat takes us right on to the currents, where our guide, Esten, cuts the engine off so we can feel the full force of the water.

As we sail through the Salten fjord, Esten spots a sea eagle swooping down in the distance.

**Delicious fish**

This is Northern Europe's largest bird of prey and its wingspan can reach up to 2.4 metres.

He throws fish into the water near our boat and one of the huge birds swoops down to scoop them up just metres from where we are.

It turns out it's not just the birds that love the fish and this water, though. Everyone I spoke to in Bodø has an affinity with the water of the fjord.

The local speciality meal is stock-fish, made with cod and using a method which dates back to the times of the Vikings. From February

to May, the fish are hung by the sea using huge wooden stocks and exposed to the elements above the Arctic Circle.

With temperatures around freezing and just the right balance of wind, sun and rain, the climate is ideal for drying the fish, which results in a delicious flavour.

We sampled it at Bryggerikaia restaurant, on the harbour.

Almost everything I eat in Bodø is local, unsurprisingly.

Why would they travel elsewhere for fresh ingredients when there is a huge fjord full of delicious fish on their doorstep?

And the berries grown here are excellent too, with a super-sweet flavour thanks to the long hours of sunshine they get.

After dinner, we set out on a hike up to Keiservarden, Bodø's city mountain from which you can see the border with Sweden and the Lofoten Wall, a collection of mountain peaks.

It is close to midnight but the skies are still blue and the sun is still shining. And with just a few magical days to spend here, I was rather glad.

*I didn't want to sleep through any of it.*

**JULIA ATHERLEY**