



▲ Wish you were here? Picturesque Praia Dona Ana beach in Lagos, in the Algarve, awaits

Your opinion of September probably depends on the delicate question of whether you are under or over the age of 18. If you are still in the former, the ninth month of the year almost certainly comes with heavy connotations of the reluctant trudge back to the classroom, new textbooks, different

teachers and lengthening evenings of homework.

But if you have passed that milestone, and disappeared into the pastures of adulthood, then September is something distinctly freer. And more fun.

In fact, there is an argument that, if you are not tethered to full-time education – or not directly responsible for someone who is – then September is the greatest month for travel.

With children everywhere from Shetland to Southampton via Newcastle and Newport out of the way, Europe’s most popular destinations are quieter, and its airports are not, for the most part, full of families running to catch their flight in a haze of dropped toys and under-the-breath expletives. Moreover, the consequent lessening of demand means that holidays are usually cheaper – and considerably better value than they were weeks earlier.

Better still, September offers a Goldilocks-type of weather: neither the “too hot” scenario that

can make July and August feel like a desert survival experience, nor the “too cold” one that looms large from November onwards. Instead, this shoulder-season window revels in a meteorological “just right” that applies to most corners of the European landmass.

Of course, if you want to go further afield in search of your ideal temperature, Europe does not need to be the limit of your ambitions, and North Africa and North America can also be of service. Hopefully, one of the following trips is your perfect bowl of porridge...

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

19C-24C

The Belgian Riviera

September temperature: 19C
Flight time: One hour
Time difference: +1

Belgium’s coastline, strung along the North Sea between France and the Netherlands, is rarely lavished with praise as a potential holiday option. But there are lovely stretches of beach in the 40 or so miles between De Panne and Knokke-Heist, some of them home to soaring sand dunes. Moreover, the weather in September is still pleasant – and if you are eager to save a few pennies in these expensive times, then genuine bargains are available.

How to do it: A seven-night getaway to the four-star Beach Palace Hotel in Blankenberge (at the north end of the coastal strip), flying from Heathrow to

Brussels on September 13, costs from £578 a head, via Last Minute (020 3386 8411; lastminute.com).

Guernsey

September temperature: 19C
Flight time: One hour
Time difference: 0

If you would rather keep the journey time to a bare minimum, the second largest of the Channel Islands is a super option for the twilight of the summer, an unhurried outcrop where the pace of life rarely feels too frenetic. The capital St Peter Port slopes down to the harbour – and 13th-century fortress Castle Cornet – in a haze of shops and cafés. And if you feel like a spot of exercise, the coastal path amounts to a 39-mile complete circle.

How to do it: A seven-night getaway to the Duke of Richmond hotel – an attractive four-star in St Peter Port – flying out from Bristol on September 13, costs from £1,037 per person, through Channel Islands Direct (0800 640 9058; channelislandsdirect.co.uk).





25C-29C

Corsica

September temperature: 25C
Flight time: Two hours 30 minutes
Time difference: +1

If you want to chase the mid-20s Celsius into September, but are wedded to the thought of a holiday in France, then you may need to look beyond the mainland into the warm waters of the Tyrrhennian Sea. Corsica keeps the mercury at a reasonable level as the summer fades away further north – but is gorgeous whatever the month, especially in the south, where Bonifacio is the postcard image of a hilltop citadel. Porto-Vecchio, meanwhile, is a picture of Gallic sophistication, all lengthy lunches and yachts at anchor.

How to do it: A seven-night trip to Hotel Le Pinarello (an elegant four-star just up the coast from Porto-Vecchio), flying from Gatwick to Figari on September 14, costs from £2,172 per person, through Simpson Travel (020 3813 3560; simpsontravel.com) – including breakfast and hire car. If you feel like staying for longer, a two-week holiday to the same resort (flying out on September 14) costs from £3,638 a head, on the same basis.



Taormina

September temperature: 25C
Flight time: Three hours
Time difference: +1

September trims some of the excess from the Sicilian summer. The biggest island in the Mediterranean can swelter in temperatures in the upper 30s in July and August, but by the ninth month of the year, its ardour has generally diminished to something rather more palatable. A perfect window, then, to visit east-coast Taormina, where the hillside theatre, built in the third century BC, offers ancient Greek finesse in the Italian sunshine.
How to do it: Sicily4U (020 3868 6514; sicily4u.co.uk) boasts a range of properties on the island. You can still rent Villa Kira – which can sleep up to eight, in the nearby town of Letojanni – in the week of September 27, for £4,937 (not including flights, to Catania).

Malaga

September temperature: 27C
Flight time: Three hours
Time difference: +1

September also tempers the worst of the summer heat on the Costa del Sol. Better still, with the school bell ringing, it opens up space on the beach, in the hotel, and around the swimming pool – while dramatically lowering the volume. As the de facto capital of the Andalusian coastline, Malaga is a fabulous city, its Picasso Museum full of



Bordeaux

September temperature: 24C
Flight time: One hour 40 minutes
Time difference: +1

There is arguably no better month than September in which to visit France's principal region for viticulture. The grape harvest – *la vendage* – generally begins in the middle of the month (depending on how the weather has been behaving), and is usually a cause for giddy celebration as well as hard labour in the vineyards. For example, witness the Ban des Vendages festival, held on the third Sunday of September (September 21 this year) in neighbouring wine hotspot Saint Émilion (saint-emilion-tourisme.com). Raise your glass.
How to do it: Wine-travel specialist Smooth Red (020 8877 4940; smoothred.com) serves up a four-day “city and chateau stay” which combines Bordeaux and Saint Émilion with a fair few bottles of top quality claret. From £1,940 per person, not including flights.

bright wonders (museopicassomalaga.org). Alternatively, you may just want a week on the sand.
How to do it: A seven-night all-inclusive escape to the four-star Globales Playa Estepona (50 miles down the coast, to the south-west), flying from Birmingham on September 21, costs from £868 per person, including transfers – through Tui (020 3451 2716; tui.co.uk).

The Algarve

September temperature: 27C
Flight time: Three hours
Time difference: 0

If you prefer your Iberian holidays to come with a Portuguese accent, the Algarve is always a reliable destination for sun and sand. As with the Costa del Sol, September generally makes for a calmer experience in the likes of Albufeira and Carvoeiro – and if these fabled resort towns are destinations better suited to easy relaxation than full cultural immersion, then, well, what's wrong with that? It's the end of the summer; order a drink.
How to do it: A seven-night stay (on a self-catering basis) at the five-star



▲▲ Sites to see: Lindos, Rhodes, top; Albufeira in the Algarve, above

Grand Muthu Forte Do Vale resort in Albufeira – flying from Manchester to Faro on September 20 – costs from £679 per person, through Love Holidays (01234 230440; loveholidays.com).

Rhodes

September temperature: 28C
Flight time: Four hours
Time difference: +2

With its southerly latitude, Greece stretches its summer well into the ninth month of the year. But for the comparative lack of tourists, there is little obvious difference between July and September when it comes to a week on an Aegean island. Rhodes is a splendid option for a late-season getaway. Not least at Lindos, on the east coast, which shimmers in the sun at the foot of an ancient acropolis, the Turkish shore visible in the blur beyond.
How to do it: Rhodes welcomes a wealth of flights from the UK. A seven-night stay at the three-star Avra Apartments in Lindos, flying in from Edinburgh on September 13, starts at £596 per person, with Olympic Holidays (020 8492 6868; olympicholidays.com).



▲ Light and bright: take shelter from the heat of the day in Sheraton Miramar Resort El Gouna, top; ride at Universal Endless resort



30C & UP

Limassol

September temperature: 30C
Flight time: Four hours 30 minutes
Time difference: +2

By September, Europe has generally exhausted its capacity for temperature numbers that start with a three. However, you can find a final flash of the 30s Celsius on the south coast of Cyprus, where the Mediterranean's largest island-nation uses its effectively Middle Eastern location to keep the mercury rising. In such heat, you may not want to stray far from your lounge at your Limassol resort. But then, that's pretty much the idea.

How to do it: A seven-night dash to the five-star St Raphael Resort in Limassol, flying from Gatwick on September 27, starts at £1,050 a head with breakfast (or from £1,545 on an all-inclusive basis), with British Airways Holidays (0344 493 0787; ba.com/holidays).

El Gouna

September temperature: 32C
Flight time: Five hours 30 minutes
Time difference: +2

If you really want the sort of September temperatures that send people scurrying inside in search of air-conditioned comfort, then you need to look beyond Europe. But not too far. A top possibility for respite from the winter, Egypt's Red Sea resorts also work for a final burst of undimmed summer. El Gouna, a modern resort area just to the north of Hurghada, is an increasingly popular choice.

How to do it: A seven-night all-inclusive to the five-star Sheraton Miramar Resort El Gouna, flying from Luton on September 13, costs from £1,239 per person (including checked bags and transfers), via easyJet Holidays (0330 493 0787; easyjet.com/holidays).

Orlando

September temperature: 32C
Flight time: Nine hours 30 minutes
Time difference: -5

If you are the sort of adult who loves the theme parks of Orlando, but doesn't particularly want to "enjoy" them while queuing for hours in sub-tropical heat with an army of sugar-boasted children, September is your friend. Florida's holiday capital is far less over-excited when the youngsters are struggling through double maths - while the lines at the likes of Universal Epic Universe, which opened in May, are shorter.

How to do it: A seven-night transatlantic dash to the aptly named three-star Universal Endless Summer Resort - flying from Heathrow on September 6 - costs from a basic £992 per person, through Virgin Atlantic (0344 209 4703; virginatlantic.com/holidays).

Continued on page 4

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6





▲ Looking up:
walking through
the cobbled street
of St Émilion,
Bordeaux

◀ Guernsey's
coastal path offers
39-mile circuit wi
stunning views

Continued from page 3

Bermuda

September temperature: 30C
Flight time: Seven hours 30 minutes
Time difference: -4

The asterisk above the idea of a week in Orlando in September is that the ninth month is one of the peaks of the Atlantic hurricane season, and Florida sometimes finds itself in harm's way. The same high winds can make the Caribbean a risky choice too. But Bermuda, which lies more than 1,000 miles to the north of Antigua et al, is removed from the worst of the wind - yet still enjoys the sort of September weather at which the Caribbean excels, the old Royal Naval Dockyard standing staunch in the sun.

How to do it: A seven-night September getaway to the four-star Cambridge Beaches Resort & Spa - close to the north tip of the Bermudian landmass - costs from £2,305 per person, including flights, through Inspiring Travel (01244 729699; inspiringtravel.co.uk).



◀ Fair winds: avoid the hurricanes at Bermuda's Cambridge Beaches Resort

▶ Cast away: the exquisite Englishman's Bay, Tobago



Tobago

September temperature: 30C
Flight time: 11 hours
Time difference: -4

If it absolutely has to be the Caribbean in September, then you need to pick your island wisely. Either of Trinidad or Tobago would work. The twin-island nation lies so far to the south that it sits outside the hurricane belt - with Trinidad sitting so close to Venezuela that it is sheltered by the hard shoulder of South America. Tobago, though, is the better bet: an oasis of gentle pace and castaway beauty whose beaches are world wonders.

How to do it: A seven-night all-inclusive stay at the four-star Coco Reef Resort - close to the Tobagan capital Scarborough, at the westernmost tip of the island - costs from £1,659 per person, with flights, through Tropical Sky (01342 395 271; tropicalsky.co.uk).