



Making a quick escape

We don't know about you, but we're in need of some sun, sea and a nice chilled glass of sauvignon blanc, stat!

It's officially spring, or so they tell us. But truth be told, bar the lighter evenings and one or two good days, there's not all that much difference between this month and last. Here in Scotland we really do seem to have winters that just drag on and on, so what could be a better way to spend your hard-earned cash than getting away for a little while?

It's been four months since Christmas provided us with some time off work and we're itching for a break and some much-needed sun, so what are the options for a quick escape to warmer climes? Forget the usual Spanish break – been there and done that. Where else is on offer as far as quick and regular flights from Scotland go? Portugal – that's where, or, more specifically, the Algarve.

If you're looking for a reasonably-priced getaway without having to settle for a tack-tastic resort, Vilamoura in the Algarve could be just the ticket. It's seen as the most prestigious resort in Portugal and for good reason – the bustling marina is lined with fancy yachts and the abundance of golf courses attract the well-to-do set from all around the world. In fact, it's also privy to many a celebrity who come to port their super-yachts and play a round of golf or two.

When No.1 headed to Vilamoura, we were in need of some mega relaxation and a good dose of luxury, so we opted to stay in the Tivoli Victoria Hotel. The 5-star resort is set just far enough away from the main marina to be quiet and idyllic. It also has amazing panoramic views over the beautiful fairways of the Oceânico Victoria Golf Course. Most of our time was spent at the stunning pool, lounging on one of their luxe sun beds whilst sipping cocktails brought to us regularly by the faultless staff.

When we could bear to tear ourselves away from lying beneath the much-longed for sun heating our bones, the Elements Spa by Banyan Tree proved an absolutely amazing way to while away a few hours – after all, pampering is never a waste, especially not in such a luxurious spa setting.

The hotel also houses an award-winning gourmet restaurant and the



food really is to-die-for, so if you're celebrating a special occasion, make sure you book your evening meal there. You won't be disappointed.

The hotel provides a free shuttle service to Vilamoura Marina and we took advantage of this on a few of the evenings we were there. There's really nothing quite like the sun setting over the harbour whilst you sit on one of the restaurant balconies and sip a chilled wine – it's the kind of experience you want to last forever.

During the day, if you're not at the pool, the best place to chill is undoubtedly Purobeach, which is set on the beach directly in front of Tivoli Victoria's sister hotel, Tivoli Marina.

Purobeach offers serious luxury, with comfy hangover beds and swanky nomad beds plus a restaurant/bar with table service so that you can lounge on your big white bed and sip bubbly or cocktails galore. If you rent a bed for the day (reservations are advised as it can get busy), you get a big fluffy beach towel, fresh fruit, mineral water, a smoothie shot and a kit that includes facial cooling mist, after sun, fresh wipes, etc.

However, spending the day eating, drinking and renting the sun beds there can work out a little pricey, so perhaps it could be used as a special treat on the last day of your holiday.

However, if you want to do a little

bit more than just lounge around on your getaway, there are plenty of options. A sunset champagne cruise would be a very decadent way to spend an evening! Or you could try out one of the dolphin watching and cave tours.

Maybe you'd prefer to visit one of the many markets and go on a sight-seeing and shopping tour. You could even go quad biking or kayaking. Or you could just lie by the pool with a good book and a nice

cold drink and let the other half play a round of golf if he's desperate to be active!

If you're thinking of heading there very soon, in April you can expect the weather to be in the low 60s and by May it's mid-60s. From either Glasgow or Edinburgh, the flight time is around three and a half hours – so if a week off work is all you can spare, don't worry, you'll not be eating into your sun-worshipping time too much.

Where To Stay

Tivoli Victoria, in Vilamoura, is a five-star resort, set over-looking the Oceânico Victoria Golf Course. The luxurious hotel, through the collaboration of three top national galleries has been transformed into a huge display of contemporary Portuguese art. It has an indoor hydrotherapy pool, a vitality pool and a luxurious spa. The Tivoli also has two restaurants, one's an award-winning gourmet restaurant, and three bars, including a pool-side one. There are two outdoor pools and the beach is just seven minutes away. Faro International Airport is only 30 km away from the hotel. For more information or to book a room, visit: tivolihotels.co.uk

