

# The great escapes

With everything from luxurious island getaways to midnight sun in the Arctic Circle on the cards, now is the time to choose your ultimate holiday for 2021. **TRISTAN PARKER** looks at four travel attractions for next year

The year 2020 will be remembered for a lot of things, but great holidays isn't likely to be one of them. With countless travel plans put on hold or abandoned altogether, many people have now set their sights on 2021 and are already mapping out – and booking – where to go.

Many people are also thinking big to make up for lost time, ticking off once-in-a-lifetime experiences and bucket-list destinations as well as revisiting old favourites, all to wash away the disappointments of this year's

travel chaos. "The cancellation of so many holidays has certainly not weakened the appetite for travel," says Liz Edwards, head of PR for TUI UK and Ireland.

"Familiar European destinations remain popular for 2021, but many people are also looking to upgrade, treating themselves with higher-rated hotels, or even moving from a short- or mid-haul destination to a long-haul one."

Travel habits are also changing. Events this year have made people reassess their priorities when it comes to holidays.

"We've recently seen some clear

trends emerging," says Derek Jones, the UK managing director of Kuoni, "such as searches for isolated retreats, private villas and secluded locations."

Thankfully, it's still entirely possible to find whatever you're looking for in a holiday. Although our own worlds felt a lot smaller during 2020, the wider world is still a big place and there's still a lot of choice out there, whether you're after somewhere secluded or a little livelier, all-out luxury or jaw-dropping scenery, outdoor adventuring or just a place to relax with a good glass of wine.



## THE GREEK ISLANDS

These Mediterranean islands should be on everyone's must-see list and they'll appeal to anyone who is after a sunny, peaceful and easy escape-from-it-all. There are hundreds of islands to choose from and you can find whatever kind of holiday you like by picking different places. If you want picture-perfect views of gleaming seas, visit Naxos or Kefalonia. If you want tranquillity in a traditional Greek village, try Folegandros. If you're keen for culture and history, see the sights of Rhodes. If you need nightlife, Corfu and Crete can deliver. And if you want that sunset photo, you'll find it on Santorini. A big bonus is that the islands are also easy and relatively cheap to get to from the UK (the main ones have airports), and costs once you're there are generally very affordable.

## Island life

**Rent a scooter** if possible, as they provide an easy way to explore – but drive safely!

**Take a stash of euros** with you, as cash machines aren't always available.

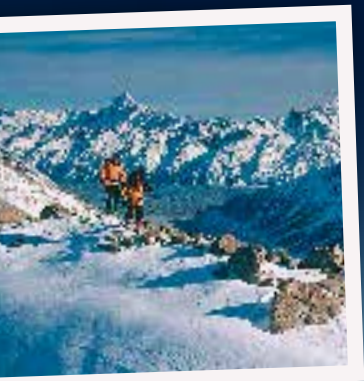
**Try some smaller or lesser-known islands**, as they're often the most rewarding.

**Watching the sunset** from Oia in Santorini is a must, but get there early to bag a good spot.

**Refresh yourself** with a paloma, a Mexican cocktail of tequila, lime and grapefruit soda that's popular around the islands.

**Travelling between nearby islands** is generally easy due to an extensive ferry network, but check timetables in advance. Hop between islands but don't try to see too many. Pick a few and get to know them well, making for a more relaxing and fulfilling trip.

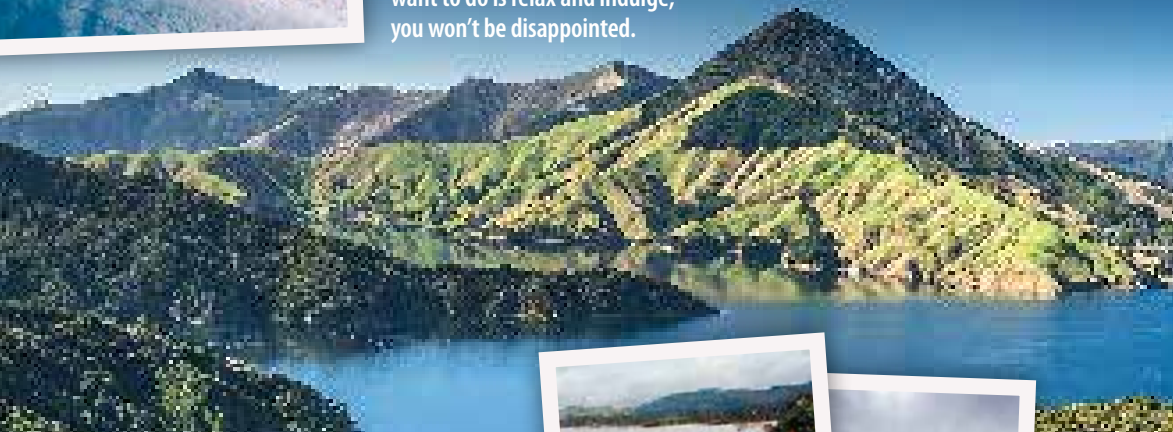




## NEW ZEALAND

If you want to make up for missed holiday time, go big and head to New Zealand. It's perfect if you're keen to be outdoors and get back to nature (which many people have been longing for this year), with 13 national parks covering 30,000 square kilometres and providing pretty much every outdoor pursuit imaginable.

But you don't have to break sweat to get the most out of New Zealand. It's also a country famed for food and wine, so if all you want to do is relax and indulge, you won't be disappointed.



## Adventure awaits

New Zealanders love their outdoor pursuits. Here are some of the best to try...

### HIKING

There are trails to suit all levels. The Tongariro Alpine Crossing, a designated Great Walks, is popular, featuring views of volcanic craters and the Emerald Lakes.

### SKIING

Ski down a volcano or over a glacier during New Zealand's ski season (June to October).

### MUD BATHS

Bathe in a naturally warm geothermal mud pool at Hell's Gate, Rotorua, before jumping into a sulphur spa.

### BUNGEE JUMPING

Hardened adrenaline junkies should try the Nevis Bungy in Queenstown, the country's highest, at a terrifying 134 metres.

### STARGAZING

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park and Lake Tekapo in Canterbury are world-famous stargazing sites and run tours to help you to spot the sparkle.



## Time for wine

Visit New Zealand's top wine regions and sample the very best tipples

### MARLBOROUGH

The country's most famous wine region, which made its name with sublime Sauvignon Blanc.

### HAWKE'S BAY

Known for its many standout restaurants as well as superb wine.

### CENTRAL OTAGO

It's all about the Pinot Noir, which flourishes in the region's extreme climates.

### GISBORNE

The easternmost city in the world, it also produces show-stopping Chardonnay.

### WAIRARAPA

Another prime producer of Pinot Noir, Wairarapa also boasts scenic stops, such as the striking Putangirua Pinnacles rock formations.

## FINLAND

The clean air, gorgeous scenery and remote wilderness of the Nordic countries have never seemed more appealing. And although it used to get overlooked in favour of headline-grabbers such as Iceland and Sweden, more people are catching on to the many charms of Finland.

Like its Nordic neighbours, Finland has the incredible

vistas, fascinating sights, hip cities full of culture and culinary excellence, charming old towns and outdoor sports galore, but all with fewer tourists. Finland has been named the world's happiest country (three years in a row) and the world's safest country. The Finns are clearly doing something right – go and see for yourself exactly what it is.



## Not to miss

### THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

The world's best natural light show is visible in Lapland, at the top of Finland, on about 200 nights per year.

### ISLAND HOPPING

See some of Finland's highlights by driving or cycling the beautiful Turku Archipelago Trail.

### TAKING A SAUNA

Saunas are a way of life for Finnish people. Strip off, join in and sweat out your worries.

### MIDNIGHT SUN

Witness round-the-clock daylight in summer by heading north of the Arctic Circle for night-time sunshine.

### SUOMENLINNA FORTRESS

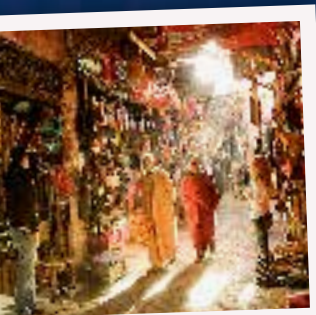
This sprawling 18th-century sea fortress is easily reachable from Helsinki and features parks, museums, a Japanese tea room, an open-air theatre and, of course, several saunas.



## MARRAKESH

It's not difficult to find a reason to see this bustling Moroccan city, but expect to hear even more about it, as people begin seeking an exotic holiday minus the long-haul travel: flights from London take around three and a half hours.

Once you're there, take a deep breath and dive in, as that's the only way to experience Marrakesh. There are a million and one things going on at any time and you'll want to see them all. One of the city's key strengths is the sheer variety of what you'll do: getting lost wandering the labyrinthine medina, finding the perfect rooftop restaurant to watch the sun set, trying new street food, or just gazing at the intricate beauty of a riad. And that's probably all on day one.



### *For culture vultures*

**Try these venues for the  
best art and culture**

#### **MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT**

This striking building celebrates the iconic fashion designer's life and work.

#### **RIAD YIMA**

See how Moroccan artist Hassan Hajjaj's decorated this tea room

#### **GALERIE COMPTOIR DES MINES**

Soak up the art deco architecture and contemporary artwork.

#### **JARDIN MAJORELLE**

A botanical garden filled with worldwide exotic flora.

#### **MAISON DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE**

Learn the history of Morocco through historical photographs.