

Revealed: the best US states to visit P.9

TRAVEL

Better late than never!

July is already upon us, but don't panic if you haven't booked your summer holiday - there are still plenty of options out there, says Greg Dickinson



SHUTTERSTOCK

How did that happen? You've just flipped the page of your calendar to find that we are now, somehow, in July, at the half-way point of the year. And if you run your finger down the days, past sports day and birthday reminders, you will see that the school summer holidays start very shortly.

If you haven't booked your holiday yet, fear not. As the airlines sweep their aisles and hotels from their Egyptian cotton linen, there is still a suite of fantastic

holidays with availability. You just need to know where to look.

Nowhere is "sold out", but across the board tour operators are reporting strong sales for the 2023 summer season, with the pandemic a distant memory and families feeling confident to travel once again. Our heat map (page 2) of Europe shows a continent with red hot-spots where your holiday options are more limited, plus

plenty of lighter orange and blue zones with more last-minute opportunities.

Comparing booking.com data in early August (5-12) with mid September (9-16), we can see that Croatia is the most booked-up European destination for hotels, with 78 per cent already sold out. Malta is also proving popular, as are Spain, Portugal and Greece. With high demand and fewer options, don't be surprised to find steeper prices in these destinations.

Turkey, however, still has plenty of space, with only 10 per cent of hotels fully booked. France and Italy are the other countries with a good number of hotel rooms available.

This broadly tallies with the flight data. Looking at the cheapest available flights between August 5 and 12, easyJet's service from Manchester to

Continued on page 2

▲ Warm welcome: Oludeniz Beach near Fethiye, on Turkey's Turquoise Coast

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British hotels

The Machrie Fairway to holiday heaven



This golf resort on the Inner Hebridean island of Islay is the perfect playground, says Hattie Garlick

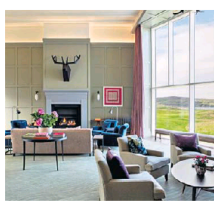
“Oh look, it’s Mum,” says the 12-year-old, as we take our first walk through the Machrie. Everyone, manager included, turns to the window, beyond which golf pros take elegant aim against a picturesque wedge of glittering turquoise sea. But no. On the wall, a black and white photo shows an old biddy gripping a crazy golf club as though it were a steam-cleaner and the ball a particularly irritating stain.

The kid has a point. On paper, I do not belong here. But neither does he. Launched in 2018 by Scotsman Gordon Campbell Gray (also responsible for London’s One Aldwych), the Machrie has hitherto earned a cult following among a conspicuously grown-up crowd composed of discerning golfers (its course is ranked sixth in Europe) and whisky drinkers (the island has nine distilleries).

Yet I detect a suppressed playfulness. The staff give a polished performance, but they also share a mischievous glint in the eye. Plus, there’s the aesthetic. Pared back, neutral, seemingly sensible, the walls are hung with modern art – not the proper decoration for a conservative clubhouse. And then, there’s the setting.

The most southerly of Scotland’s Inner Hebridean islands, Islay is quite literally – where the wild things are. Dazzling hidden beaches are dotted with wildflowers, sheep and hares. Stags swim in the waters. It is the perfect playground for untamed humans, and the Machrie’s two-bedroom lodges with their own kitchens, a brief amble from the seven-mile beach, could be the ideal place to plunk them.

So it makes a counterintuitive kind of sense that one of Britain’s best hotels for children, Another Place, the Lake is “popping up” here this summer, to launch an ongoing relationship between the two hotels. Both places, after all, have sweeping views across glistening water, issuing a siren call to those with a yen for decadent dining. Another Place’s owner, Will Ashworth, will be on site for some of August, personally organising outdoor activities for such families. After supper (from a perfectly curated menu of Islay lobster, steak and scallops), we wander



Sweeping views across glistening water issue a siren call to those with a yen for decadent dining

across the dunes and find him lighting a fire pit for us – deckchairs, marshmallows and (this being Islay) single malt at the ready, light fading over the waves.

Next morning, we bump down deserted roads to the whitewashed harbour town of Port Ellen. Local fisherman and coastguard Harold Hastie takes us out on his boat, past distilleries with legendary names stamped across their walls, a ruined castle and a tower where sea eagles nest. Craggy islets are

covered in seals. An antlered stag bobs through the water. We are inside our own Attenborough documentary. Hastie hands round whisky tumblers, and a tin of sweets for the wee ones.

The island is full of surprises, and the Machrie packs wicker baskets with sarnies and fruit salads, leaving you free to explore all day. Down one track we encounter a pristine beach where a family of sheep look deeply disgusted to have their sunbathing disturbed. After a shivery swim in crystal waters, we find a café carved out of someone’s front room, serving the plumpiest, creamiest oysters overlooking the beds they have only just vacated.

All this bumping about may not be best suited to toddlers. There’s no pool or kids’ club to keep them entertained on site yet, and the Machrie would definitely benefit from a games room in case of more, well, “Scottish” weather. But on fine days, Islay is a Neverland for lost boys and girls: aged, say, seven and over. There are daily flights from Glasgow, Colonsay and Oban, but the ferry ride from Kennacraig is jaw-dropping. Build a three- or four-night stay into a week-long Scottish itinerary, and you have the perfect family adventure.

On our final morning, we take a fat bike tour, bouncing over dunes, skirting surf, and spotting oyster catchers. On our return, the staff have photo-



▲▲ Where the wild things are: The Machrie, top; the stag lounge is perfect for a drink, left ▲ Dazzling beaches are dotted with sheep

THE MACHRIE Islay, Scotland

9/10

Port Ellen, Isle of Islay
PA42 7AN
01496 302310
themachie.com

graphed the nine-year-old’s teddy in a variety of criminal activities – breaking into the sauna, the kitchen, and finally riding away on a getaway sheep. Later, a waiter smuggles haggis crisps in for the kids in the swanky cinema. Lulled by the whisky and wonderful service, I am persuaded to head out with David Foley, the Machrie’s golf pro, for a family lesson. Perhaps there’s something in the water at Islay. Or maybe it’s Foley’s expert and unpretentious passion. But either way, it’s a hole-in-one.

‘Another Place at The Machrie, Scottish island adventure’ package from £2,755 for a family of four, including three nights in a lodge, breakfast, dinner, wildlife boat trip and fat bike session

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Located in the village of Sway at the southern tip of the New Forest, this refurbished Edwardian house is nestled in five acres of carefully tended grounds. Nearby are the beaches at Millford on Sea and the sailing town of Lyminster.

Rooms feature sumptuous beds, antique furniture, vintage telephones and well-proportioned



SAVE UP TO 35%

bathrooms. The restaurant serves superb seasonal food in an elegant dining room. Telegraph Travel writer Antonia Windsor says: “This stylish house is decorated with William Morris prints and Farrow & Ball colours. Glorious gardens extend towards the forest at the back of the house. Delicious local produce is cooked up in the kitchens.”

Book by September 30 2023. Valid for stays until September 30. Call 0330 162 9851 and quote TELP0107. See terms: telegraph.co.uk/t-manor



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45%



a courtyard near the main house.

Kathryn Liston, Telegraph Travel writer, says: “Elmers Court delivers the wow factor inside and out, with a fine-dining restaurant, extensive sports facilities, a tranquil spa, and landscaped gardens with Solent views.”

Book by July 28, 2023. Valid for stays until July 31, 2023.

◆ Call 0330 173 9162 and quote TELP0107

◆ telegraph.co.uk/t-elmers-court

In the heart of the city, this 18th-century residence has original features with stylish modern touches. Interiors have high ceilings, sash windows, and antique servants’ bells in the lobby. The restaurant overlooks a walled garden and serves delicious food. Once the capital of England, Winchester has a sublime cathedral and a prestigious school.

Travel writer, says: “The hotel has delightful features, a pretty garden and the cathedral is only a five-minute walk.”

Book by July 22, 2023. Valid for stays until August 31, 2023.

◆ Call 0333 060 8761 and quote TELP0107

◆ telegraph.co.uk/t-winchester-royal

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Standing on the Thames in Marlow, The Compleat Angler overlooks a weir and elegant suspension bridge. Interiors are modern and stylish with plenty of natural light. The Riverside Restaurant makes the most of a glorious setting.



Hazel Plush, Telegraph Travel writer, says: “This characterful hotel overlooking the Thames has sumptuous interiors and a beautiful garden.”

Book by July 29, 2023. Valid for stays until July 31, 2023.

◆ Call 0330 828 0480 and quote TELP0107

◆ telegraph.co.uk/t-compleat-angler

BERYSTEDDE HOTEL & SPA

BERKSHIRE

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- ◆ A two-night stay
- ◆ Dinner each evening (£25pp allowance)
- ◆ Breakfast daily
- ◆ Full access to the thermal suite, spa & leisure facilities

SAVE UP TO
28%

Close to Ascot Racecourse, The Berystede is also within easy reach of Windsor and Eton. The Grade II-listed building has a sweeping wooden staircase, antique furniture, plush sofas and equine-inspired artworks. The Elemis spa is in a glass-fronted extension surrounded by landscaped gardens. There is also an indoor pool and gym. The brasserie-style restaurant, Acanthus, is popular with locals as well as guests.



Hazel Plush, Telegraph Travel writer, says: “An auspicious location, lovely spa, pretty gardens and a fabulous restaurant.”

Book by July 28, 2023. Valid for stays until July 31, 2023.

◆ Call 0330 822 1263 and quote TELP0107

◆ telegraph.co.uk/t-berystede