



Your 13-page
travel
special starts
here

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*Struggling to find your
dream holiday? Pol O
Conghaile tracks down
the pick of the crop*

the hot list 2013

Best for active families

Family holidays don't have to involve pools and playas, you know. Camino Ways, the walking and cycling holiday specialist, has started offering child-friendly breaks along the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain.

The Camino — a long-distance walking route that ends in Santiago de Compostela — has been popular with pilgrims for centuries. Walking the route would challenge any child, of course, so the offer is, smartly, a cycling holiday.

Starting at Sarria, the seven-day package offers families the chance to cycle the last 100km of the French Way in 20km daily stages. It costs from €690 per adult, with discounts of 40pc for kids aged two to nine

and 20pc for kids aged 10-17. Bike hire, lodgings and half-board (although not flights) are included in the price.

Details: Tel: 01-525 2886; caminoways.com.



Best budget breaks

Ireland's travel trade is cautiously optimistic after healthy January sales figures, but nobody's getting carried away.

Price is still the driving consideration when it comes to booking holidays.

Direct Holidays has 14 nights at the four-star Aparthotel Holiday Palace in Benalmadena, on the Costa del Sol, from €3,013 for a family of four. The price is based on travel from Dublin in May, and the property has its own beach club — a water-inspired theme park with slides, fountains, a pirate ship and more. That's all-in for €376pp per week.

Details: Tel: 01-514 0341; directholidays.ie.



Best working holiday

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It's the wizardry of Oz — simply say the words 'working holiday' and Australia springs to mind. It's English speaking, the weather is superb, and it's a fascinating country to tour in between work opportunities.

Australia's Working Holiday Programme (immi.gov.au) allows people aged 18-30 to supplement travel in Oz through employment. Abbey Travel currently has return fares to Sydney from €835, Melbourne from €819pp or Perth from €849pp.

Abbey also offers a Working Holiday Starter Pack for €549, including a year-long working holiday visa, a year's medical and cancellation insurance, an Aussie bank account and a tax-saver pack.

Details:
Tel: 01-804 7188;
australia.ie.



Best for couples

Fancy getting away from it all on a romantic break? One good option for sweetheart deals is Thomson's Summer 2013 Collection.

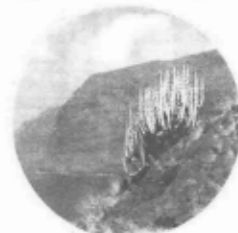
It includes a big selection of affordable four and five-star hotels in the sun, with oversized sun beds, breakfast in bed, seating at sunset points and other little touches designed with adults only in mind.

Departing June 7, Thomson has seven nights at Los Gigantes in Tenerife from €794pp, with a €75 early booking

discount per person.

Departing June 2, the company is offering seven nights in Grand Mediterraneo in Corfu from €769pp, with an early booking discount of €100 per adult.

Details: Tel: 1800 927 404; thomsonholidays.ie.



Best city break

Prague can feel like a conveyor belt at times, with legions of tourists traipsing across Charles Bridge to Prague Castle, all on the same city-break schedule.

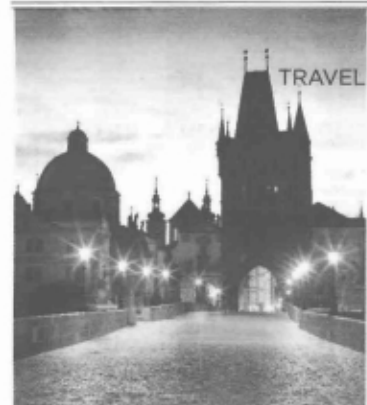
The trick is to step back, grab a Budva and plot a different route.

Why not hit the quieter Jewish quarter? Why not forget the Old Town and explore Czech cubism, or the Imperial city's 21st-century bars, clubs and galleries?

This year, there are some pretty attractive options for getting there, too. From June to September, Sunway has seat-only flights with a 20kg baggage allowance from €56 each way. Four-night packages including a four-star hotel are priced from €329pp, with five-star rates starting at €359pp.

Elsewhere, for travel over the Easter holiday period, Travel Department has flights plus four nights at the four-star Hotel Clarion Congress from €479pp. The package includes a half-day guided city tour, and an excursion to Cesky Sternberk Castle.

Details: Tel: 01-288 6828; sunway.ie, or 01-637 1600; traveldepartment.ie.



Best for green fingers

Madeira's enchanting landscapes are a nature lover's delight at the best of times, but during the Festa da Flor in May, they bloom to another level entirely.

The annual flower festival sees the Portuguese island's tropical gardens and awesome views at their finest, with thousands of revellers taking to the streets to man

colourful floats drenched in colour, in celebration of 'the island of flowers'.

Thomas Cook has seven nights' B&B at the five-star Cliff Bay in Funchal from €965pps, based on departures from Dublin on May 8. Oh, and bring an appetite — the hotel boasts a Michelin-star restaurant.

Details: Tel: 01-514 0328; thomascook.ie.

