

welcome to Mediterranean Europe



Cultural Calling

The cradle of Western civilisation, Mediterranean Europe boasts an unparalleled cultural legacy. Prehistoric paintings reveal the preoccupations of France's primeval cave dwellers; Greek and Roman monuments testify to the power and ambition of the ancient superpowers; Islamic art tells of Moorish sophistication; Gothic cathedrals, Renaissance palaces and baroque facades record the great artistic movements of history. The region's celebrated galleries and museums are pretty special, too, housing a considerable chunk of the Western world's combined art collection.

Food, Glorious Food

The region's passion for the finer things in life extends to the kitchen. Eating well is part and parcel of everyday life on the Med, as well as one of its great pleasures, and it doesn't have to cost a bomb. Picnicking on a loaf of freshly baked bread with cheese and olives and a bottle of wine bought from the local market could well turn out to be a holiday highlight. For dedicated foodies, France and Italy are the obvious destinations, but each country has its own culinary specialities – think tapas in Spain, kebabs in Turkey and souvlaki in Greece. And for wine buffs, the Mediterranean cellar is really quite something, with

Ancient ruins, awe-inspiring art, legendary cities and sun-kissed beaches – Mediterranean Europe is a visual and sensual feast. Visit once and you'll be hooked for life.

(left) Sveti Stefan beach (p545), Montenegro
(below) Carnevale revellers, Venice (p458), Italy



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everything from world-famous vintages to thousands of cheerful local labels.

Natural Wonders

For many holidaymakers the Mediterranean's main appeal is the promise of summer sun and long, lazy days on the beach. Each year about 200 million visitors pour into the region, making it the world's top tourist destination. While not all head straight for the beach, many do – and with good reason. The Mediterranean's beaches are superb, ranging from big, sporty sands on Portugal's western seaboard to idyllic Sardinian hideaways and rocky platforms on Croatia's craggy Dalmatian coast. But there's more to the Med than the beach,

and away from the coast the region's ancient landscape offers some truly spectacular natural sights: snow-clad Alpine peaks, bizarre rock formations, swaths of unspoiled forest and even a stunning fjord in Montenegro.

No Problem

Capping everything is the fact that Mediterranean Europe is an easy region in which to travel. Sure, services might not always be what you're used to, and some areas can be expensive, particularly in summer, but English is widely spoken, public transport more or less works, and with so many accommodation and eating options to choose from, you're sure to find somewhere to suit your style.