



BEST BEACH VACATION

... DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE ...

CONTRIBUTOR: MARKETING

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Original article from <https://www.islands.com/10-best-beach-vacation-destinations-in-europe?dom=rss-default&src=syn>

Europe is home to some of the world's most-celebrated seas — the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the Aegean — and its cultural mosaic makes it a top choice for beach lovers looking to mix sun, fun, art, history and nightlife. Windsurf in the morning, visit ancient ruins in the afternoon, shop for the season's hottest beachwear before enjoying sunset cocktails and then partying until dawn. Sound good? Read on to discover the 10 best beach vacation destinations in Europe.

These spots offer the perfect beach day with a side of art, history and nightlife.

BEST BEACH VACATION DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE



1

... MYKONOS, GREECE

Few places do charm and decadence better than Mykonos. This sunny Greek island's calling cards are almost-anything-goes beaches (expect plenty of skin), Instagram-worthy Cycladic architecture (whitewashed buildings with brightly hued shutters and cascading flower boxes), 16th-century windmills (a must-see at sunset) and legendary discos and dance clubs in Mykonos Town. As for the beaches, check out Ornos Bay for pretty views and excellent windsurfing, chic Psarou for celebrity spotting and Paradise and Super Paradise for hedonistic sun-worshipping and dancing until sunrise.



2

... HVAR, CROATIA

In between swimming, sunning and windsurfing, visitors to this summer-resort island, located in the Adriatic off of Croatia's coast near Split, can tour a 13th-century fortress and cathedral, go wine tasting (if you haven't tried Croatian wine, you should) and in June and July, inhale the heavenly aroma of lavender, which grows in abundance here. Hvar's beaches are known for their intense scenic beauty — many are set in serene bays surrounded by cliffs and pine forests — and tempting options include Dubovica, Zavala and Ivan Dolac.



3

... SAINT-MALO, FRANCE

If it's seaside drama you seek, consider Saint-Malo, a walled city in France's Brittany region where the cobblestone medieval streets of Old Town are surrounded by a series of sandy beaches, some of which are only walkable at low tide and offer access to rocky islands (timetables tell you when to visit). When the tide's high, tour the Cathedral of Saint-Vincent (constructed between the 12th and 17th centuries) and the city's landmark fortress with its four round towers. Or you can always kick back and relax on Plage du Sillon, a vast beach that stretches for almost 2 miles along the English Channel.



4

... SICILY, ITALY

If you're a fan of old-school destinations — scenic, slow-paced and filled with tradition — you can't go wrong with Sicily. This Italian island, the largest in the Mediterranean, is home to stunning beaches, yummy treats such as ricotta-filled cannoli and meat-filled rice balls called arancini (both invented here) and ancient Greek and Roman ruins dating back several millennia. It also boasts Europe's most active volcano: Mt Etna. Book a beach resort for maximum access to sun and sand, or stay in charming hilltop Taormina and day trip to beaches such as Isola Bella or Giardini Naxos.



5

... THE ALGARVE, PORTUGAL

The hot Iberian sun shines along the southern coast of Portugal 300 days a year — and in summer, the region receives very little rain — so it's no surprise that the Algarve ranks among the top beach destinations in Europe. It's also incredibly pretty and quite affordable, with a variety of hotels, rental apartments and homes located in cities and villages stretching from Sagres in the east to Villa Real in the west. In between are more than 150 beaches, with Praia da Falésia near Albufeira, Praia da Camilo near Lagos and Praia da Marinha near Lagoa featuring photogenic limestone cliffs.



Recipe of the Month:

Roasted Pork with Strawberry Balsamic Sauce

CONTRIBUTOR: MARKETING

AUTHOR: HEALTH.COM

Original recipe from <https://www.health.com/recipes/roasted-pork-strawberry-balsamic-sauce>

INGREDIENTS:

1^{1/2} tablespoon olive oil, divided

1 (1-lb.) pork tenderloin, trimmed and halved crosswise

1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided

3/4 teaspoon black pepper, divided

1/2 cup white balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons strawberry preserves

1 cup fresh strawberries, quartered

1 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon

PREPARATION:

ACTIVE TIME

15

MINUTES

TOTAL TIME

25

MINUTES

QUANTITY

4

YIELDS

- 1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a 10-inch ovenproof skillet over high. Sprinkle pork halves evenly with 3/4 teaspoon of the salt and 1/2 teaspoon of the pepper. Add to skillet; cook 5 minutes, turning often to brown on all sides. Transfer skillet to oven. Roast until a thermometer inserted in the thickest portion of meat registers 145 degrees F, 12 to 14 minutes. Remove from oven; transfer pork to a cutting board.
- 2 Return skillet to stovetop; heat over medium-high. Add garlic and remaining 1/2 tablespoon oil; cook, stirring constantly, until garlic is golden, about 1 minute. Add vinegar; bring to a boil over high. Boil, stirring occasionally, until slightly reduced and thickened, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in preserves and remaining 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper until fully incorporated. Fold in fresh strawberries and tarragon.
- 3 Slice pork into 1/2-inch-thick pieces; serve with strawberry sauce.



... ELEVATED CAT FURNITURE FROM CATASTROPHICREATIONS ...

Full article on <https://blog.etsy.com/en/featured-shop-catastrophiccreations/>

CONTRIBUTOR: MARKETING

AUTHOR: VALERIE RAINS

Boy meets girl. Boy and girl bring home a cat (despite boy's allergies), and begin prototyping some functional, elegant cat furniture for their newly shared abode. Boy and girl hit on a winning formula and spin their designs into a booming business that employs 25 workers in a 12,000-square-foot facility in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It's not your typical start-up tale (or your typical rom-com plotline, for that matter), but for Mike Wilson and Megan Hanneman of CatastrophieCreations—and the more than 10,000 customers who've incorporated their handcrafted cat bridges, hammocks, and sisal poles into their pets' lives—it's the ultimate happy ending.

EXPLORE THE CATASTROPHICREATION COLLECTION

More than just a good-looking line of perches and play areas, the wall-mounted, mostly modular furniture that Mike and

Megan's team turns out gives indoor cats the energy-burning and instinct-indulging stimulation they need to be calm and content. "To me, my cats are my kids. I love giving them a really cool play place and seeing other people have the same passion we do about keeping their cats happy," Megan says. "I'm glad that we can help people realize those kinds of dreams."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF HAVING FURNITURE LIKE THIS FOR CATS?

Megan: Cats have high energy and tend to get bored, so it's really important for their environment to have a lot for them to do and interact with. Especially in a house with multiple cats—when they can run around and get some exercise, let out some steam, that actually calms them down.

Cats are also very territorial; we have four

boy cats, and every time we've brought in a new cat, we've added more wall structures so they don't feel like their area is being encroached upon. It gives way more square footage to a room when you start can using the walls that way. Then everyone can have their own high perch and look out over their kingdom.

WHICH OF YOUR PRODUCTS DO YOUR OWN CATS LIKE THE MOST?

Mike: As our cats have gotten older, they're less into jumping around and climbing on stuff and more about lounging, so their favorite things would probably be the roped bridge or the hammocks. We have quite a few hammocks across the wall at our house, and there's almost always a cat on the wall just napping. But we recently got a kitten that has a ton of energy and races all around the house and loves to run up the sisal post.

YOUR PIECES SEEM REALLY HIGH QUALITY. WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS DO YOU WORK WITH TO PRODUCE YOUR LINE?

Mike: A lot of other companies use plywood or MDF to try to get into the same price range as mass-produced pet furniture. We wanted to set ourselves apart from what other brands were doing and go for more high-end across the board, so we use only solid wood. We use a lot of pine, because it's a softer wood, which allows cats to sink their claws into it and have the traction they need to be running around on the wall.

As for our sisal posts, we've kept reinforcing them and improving them over the years, so that today they're super durable. We're just trying to make it so that our furniture lasts as long as it possibly can.

Megan: It's the same with the fabric for our hammocks. We started originally with ordinary bottom-weight fabric, and then tested out a lot of different canvases until we found one we really liked that would also hold up to our cats' use. Now we have the strongest product we've ever had, and we feel really good about it.

HOW ELSE HAS YOUR LINE EVOLVED OVER TIME?

Mike: Our first generation of furniture has visible brackets, just regular L-brackets like you could buy at any hardware store, and it's priced lower than the Cat Mod stuff, which is our second generation. It's still pretty popular for that reason. Then for the second generation of furniture, we took input from our customers and tried to address a lot of their feedback. Now we have a custom bracket that's hidden, and it's even stronger than the first ones because it stretches out the whole length of the plank on the wall. Another request people had was wanting to wash or change out the fabric for their hammocks, so we designed a version with fabric that comes on and off. In the process of brainstorming ways to do that, we got the idea for building the different modular sections so they'd work with standard 16-inch wall studs or 24-inch studs, and give the customer more flexibility with where they position the pieces on their walls.

Megan: Another change would be using attachments. We're always trying to

innovate, and I love the idea of products you can add to over time—buy something as a base, and then add this onto it, add that onto it. So that's kind of how we think about our furniture: Somebody can buy a set and then add on a feeder and a planter, or just build onto it and make it a bigger structure. That also allows people to build up to the structure they want if they don't have the money to buy it all at once, and everything will still match.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ITEMS YOU MAKE?

Mike: The roped bridge is definitely one, and our Deluxe Playplace from the first generation is still really popular, too.

Megan: The floating sisal post, too. That came out of an idea I had to mount a sisal pole on one of our floating shelves. I made a prototype and showed it to Mike and another buddy when we were hanging out in the shop after hours. We started tossing around ideas and someone turned it sideways and said, "Hey, what if this just came out of the wall by itself?"

You've sold more than 10,000 items on Etsy. Did you ever think your shop would get this big?

Mike: It's been really crazy. When things first started ramping up, a buddy of mine that I've known since I was 14 came and started doing woodworking in our garage with us; then a really good friend of Megan's from Portland ended up moving here and helping us, too. It was the four of us making everything out of our townhome. Today we're in a 4,000-square-foot commercial space, and we just signed a lease to move into a 12,000-square-foot place. We've pretty much been doubling each year, which is really exciting.

WOW. WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT MAGIC COMES FROM?

Megan: When we first started making the furniture for ourselves, we just kept thinking like, Wow, it would be awesome if our cats had this hammock on the wall; wow, what if we had a bunch of hammocks on the wall, and they could climb up them? Then we'd make the things that we imagined, and right away, people were contacting us saying, "Oh my gosh, I didn't know this existed; this is what I've been looking for forever."



WHAT'S NEXT?

Mike: In the next four months or so, we're coming out with a line of cat trees, so we'll have something for people who aren't interested in mounting anything on the wall. We're also working with a group of engineers to develop a sleeker version of our Cat Mod that should be more moderately priced. We're really excited about that.

Follow CatastrophCreations on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

Portraits and workshop photographs by Samantha James, all other photographs courtesy of CatastrophCreations.



... YOU'RE EXHAUSTED: SHOULD YOU SLEEP MORE OR EXERCISE? ...

Full article on <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/is-it-better-to-sleep-more-or-exercise-heres-the-truth>

CONTRIBUTOR: MARKETING

AUTHOR: RAY BASS

It's late and you're tired. Maybe you're watching a show, reading a book, getting home late, or awake for another reason. Whatever it is, you know you shouldn't be up this late, especially because you have a workout planned in the morning.

All of a sudden it's morning. Your alarm is blaring, the sun is rising, and it feels like there's no way you could possibly work out right now. You hardly slept, after all, and even though you tell yourself you should exercise, your body is craving more shut-eye.

Which do you choose? The extra rest or endorphin rush? More importantly, which should you choose? We asked clinical psychologist and sleep specialist Michael Breus, Ph.D., aka the Sleep Doctor, whether he recommends snoozing or sweating.

HOW DOES NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP AFFECT OUR WORKOUTS?

"There are several areas where lack of both quality and quantity of sleep can affect your performance," Breus says. "These aspects are quantifiable."

LESS FUEL IN YOUR TANK

"Reduced energy via lack of sleep (specifically stages 3 and 4) decreases glycogen storage," Breus told mbg. "Without fuel in the tank, you're running on reserves."

Impaired visual tracking
If you've ever played a sport, lifted weights, or run on a treadmill, you know that impaired attention just isn't going to cut it—and if you are sleep deprived, that's exactly what you'll get. "Performance measures of predictive visual tracking accurately reflect impaired attention due to acute sleep deprivation," he says.

REDUCED ACCURACY

Breus also notes that hand-eye

coordination has been directly linked to sleep deprivation—when you sleep less, your coordination suffers. Again, not what we want when we're exercising.

POOR DECISION MAKING

"Studies show that sleep-deprived individuals will know the risks of their decisions but not care what those risks are, and take risks unnecessarily," Breus says.

INTERRUPTED RECOVERY

If you've ever spoken to an athlete or trainer (or read this article), you know how important recovery is after a workout. Well, not getting enough sleep can interrupt and impair that process.

As Breus puts it, "Sleep deprivation, sleep disturbance, and circadian rhythm disturbance all affect the overall restorative and recovery aspects of sleep."

INCREASED PAIN PERCEPTION

Believe it or not, Breus says that sleep can also affect how we perceive pain. Namely, sleep deprivation can make pain, well, more painful.

SHOULD YOU SLEEP OR WORKOUT?

If you must choose between working out for an hour or getting another hour of sleep (meaning you'd get an adequate amount of sleep if you slept, and not enough if you worked out), Breus says that sleep is the best choice. Too many of our psychological and physical processes and abilities are impaired when we're sleep deprived—exercising won't improve that, and this lack of proper functioning can put our bodies at risk.

**"IF YOU ARE SLEEP DEPRIVED," BREUS SAYS,
"YOU HAVE THE LIKELIHOOD OF SEVERAL THINGS:**

- 1** Injury: This seems to rise when a person is sleep deprived.
- 2** You will perceive the exertion in exercise to be more (i.e., working out when sleep deprived feels more difficult).
- 3** You will likely not perform at your best.

- • • **So the next time you're wondering whether you should hit the gym or hit the sheets, first consider the consequences, and then try to get more sleep the next night. In the meantime, hit snooze. It's only one workout.**