

Title:

Cheap Weekend Break

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Summary:

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Article Body:

One of the most significant aspects of vacation travel in Europe has been the recent explosion of interest in the short break vacation market. No-frills airlines have led the way to opening up cheap routes from London and regional airports to destinations all over Europe. A short weekend break in some thrilling city has now become a viable alternative to sitting home in front of the television set.

A UK survey of Britain's vacation habits recently shows that this weekend escape plan is now worth a phenomenal £34 billion a year. People are spending an average amount of £760 a year on these short breaks, flying off to European cities, cultural festivals and sporting events.

The three-day break is most popular, with 21% of respondents taking Friday off work to fly out and 34% arriving back late Sunday evening, giving them some 55 hours away.

Edinburgh and Glasgow were some of the most popular weekend break locations in UK, while Paris, Amsterdam, Palma, Dublin, Brussels, Venice, Nice and Madrid were their most popular European weekend destinations. Other airlines have reported strong interest in Prague, Rome and Barcelona.

The key ingredients to a successful weekend break away were spending quality

time with a partner, sampling local food and drink, cultural sightseeing, weather and, (for the ladies), shopping. Nightlife, perhaps unsurprisingly, was more important to the younger travelers than the more elderly.

Psychologist Dr. Aric Sigman said, "The results indicate that the British have now developed proper escape plans to counterbalance the fact that they work the longest hours in Europe. The low cost and accessibility of short haul travel now enables people to act out the growing need to be physically and geographically removed from their everyday surroundings in order to truly get away psychologically and emotionally. In fact it has been found that when it comes to dealing with stress, frequent short breaks are more effective than infrequent long holidays. What is interesting is that most people spend their weekend breaks in a low-key way involving time alone with their partner, dining and R&R as opposed to the frenetic activity and nightlife sought by previous generations."

Whatever the reason, many UK residents are now taking advantage of rock bottom no-frills prices to spend four or more short breaks in the thrilling cities of Ireland, Scandinavia, Europe and the Mediterranean during the summer months, the German Christmas Markets and Alpine or Spanish ski slopes in winter. Visitors to the UK from North America are also taking advantage of these no-frills flight options, spicing up their vacation in England with short breaks in cities as far afield as Copenhagen, Berlin, Prague in the Czech Republic, Spain's Barcelona and Athens in Greece.

Given the astronomical prices charged by West End restaurants where dinner for two can set you back £250 or more, it makes sense to take off for a paella to the sound of Spanish guitar in Barcelona, a spaghetti and a bottle of Bardolino under the stars at a pavement restaurant in the Piazza Santa Maria in Rome's Trastevere, or a more expensive romantic dinner for two on a Seine bateau mouche in Paris. Before only the jeunesse dore and the jet setting glitterati could afford such extravagances. But things have changed and many prefer to take a number of such fun jaunts through the year rather than undergo the hassles concomitant with organizing a long vacation.