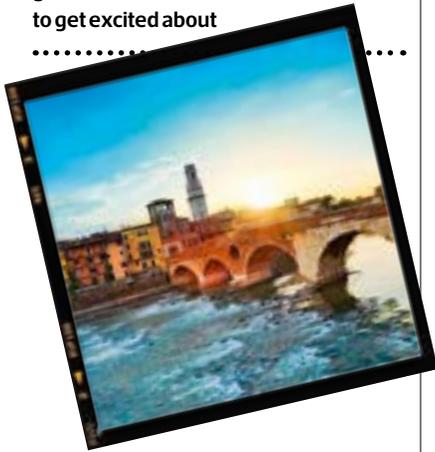


Where next?

The low-cost map continues to grow. Here are the new routes to get excited about



SHORT-HAUL

- **Bergerac** in France from Manchester (Jet2 from May 2018)
- **Bydgoszcz** in Poland from Luton (Ryanair from October 2017)
- **Costa Dorada** in Spain from Aberdeen (Thomson Airways from May 2018)
- **Crete** in Greece from Norwich (Thomson Airways from May 2018)
- **Düsseldorf** in Germany from Leeds Bradford (Flybe from October 2017)
- **La Rochelle** in France from Leeds Bradford (Jet2 from May 2018)
- **Rzeszów** in Poland from Glasgow Prestwick (Ryanair from October 2017)
- **Sion** in Switzerland from Bristol, Edinburgh, Luton, Manchester, Southend and Southampton (Powdair from December 2017 to April 2018)
- **Varna** in Bulgaria from Gatwick and Manchester (Thomson Airways from May 2018)
- **Verona** (pictured above) in Italy from Manchester (Jet2 from May 2018)

LONG-HAUL

- **Denver** from Gatwick (Norwegian from September 2017)
- **Seattle** from Gatwick (Norwegian from September 2017)
- **Singapore** (pictured below) from Gatwick (Norwegian from September 2017)



LOW-COST LESSON

5

DON'T bank on getting a couple of hours' kip on a low-cost airline — seats on newer short-haul planes no longer recline, and pillows and blankets are non-existent (or cost money; see Pimp Your Flight on page 113 for alternatives). For the best seats onboard, tap your flight details into seatguru.com, which shows seat maps and ratings.

LOW-COST LESSON

6

DON'T assume getting to the airport early means you'll be front of the queue. Low-cost check-in desks are limited (keeping those staff overheads down), which means lengthy lines, forcing staff to call forward late passengers — 'Anyone for Salzburg?' Those cheeky chaps get to queue-jump while all you can do is wait.

Bargain hunt

Six ways to stay ahead of the system and snag cheap flights

Search in disguise

If you repeatedly search for a flight on one device, the cookies in your browser can make prices increase — the site is trying to make you panic-buy. So before you take the plunge, open an Incognito page (click the options beside your URL bar) and this will take your history back to zero. Very often, the fare will have dropped on this new page.

Make these three sites your 'Favourites'

Never go straight to the airlines until you've used one of the leading flight-comparison sites. They compare millions of prices in seconds, so will save you time and money. Better still, they have calendars or bar charts that show how switching by a day or even an airport could save you money. The three best? Kayak.co.uk, momondo.co.uk and skyscanner.net.

Download Hopper

Put your flight-search details into the free Hopper app, and it tells you if you should book now or wait — this service covers low-cost airlines too (see page 30 for more). We checked flights from London to Vienna for a weekend in October. Hopper said to wait as prices

were likely to fall by about £20 over the next three weeks. But for a weekend in September, it said book now, as prices would increase by £14 in days.

Set up fare alerts

Set up fare alerts for your flight on Kayak, Momondo and Skyscanner. They'll send you emails when prices drop on a specific flight.

Sign up for airline newsletters

You'll be the first to hear about sales — which tend to happen in January, spring and autumn — so you can snaffle the lowest prices on the first day.

Join loyalty schemes

Even if you never intend to fly with an airline again, it's worth signing up for its free membership programme. With BA, for example, Executive Club members get free seat selection 24 hours before departure from their first flight. Sign up to Avios, and earn points with multiple airlines; before long, you could have enough points for a 'Reward Saver Flight' to destinations across Europe — this costs points plus just £35 (taxes and fees). Use these in peak season to make the biggest savings.



WHERE'S THAT?!

Linz, Austria

Never heard of it. Why should I go?

With all the stately period architecture and clean, serene lines of Vienna, Linz, once home to Mozart and Bruckner, is a pocket-sized, culture-packed city in the Austrian north that's perfect for a weekend's exploration. But it's not just about history: this city on the Danube has a distinctly modern side, too, with contemporary arts and science museums, and hip hotels.

Who flies there? Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from Stansted, from just £67 return.

What can I do? Get a feel for Linz's old-school side first: the pastel rows of Renaissance buildings that line the enormous Hauptplatz Square feel like a scene from Mozart's day. En route to the rambling, boxy Linz Castle (landesmuseum.at; £6), stop to view the 16th-century house the famous composer was born in (Altstadt 17). Then, switch gears. The ARS Electronica Centre (pictured left in frame) is a bonkers interactive arts, science and technology museum with an exterior that illuminates the banks of

the Danube with thousands of lights (aec.at; £8). Take in experimental Modern Art at the (also glowing) Lentos Art Museum, and catch a performance at the glass-fronted Brucknerhaus concert hall (brucknerhaus.at; £7).

Where should I eat and drink? Heard of the Linzer Torte? This jammy, almond-filled delight is supposedly the oldest cake in the world — and Jindrak, open for nearly 90 years on Herrenstrasse, is the place to try one (linzertorte.at; tarts about £4). You may not be in Vienna, but for knockout *Wiener Schnitzel* alongside cooling glasses of local Grüner Veltliner wine, head to swish modern Verdi, just beyond the city centre (verdi.at; mains about £18) — its little outdoor terrace is a delightful spot in summer.

And stay? Hotel am Domplatz does the new-and-old thing perfectly: big, modern windows and whitewashed rooms look out to the stone features of neighbouring St Mary's cathedral, while artsy sculptures dot the communal spaces (00 43 732 773000, hotelamdomplatz.am; doubles from £89, room only).





Dinard, France

Never heard of it. Why should I go?

It's got a thick layer of Belle Epoque glamour — wedding-cake casino, little beach, sculpted villas and design-y shops — but is remarkably devoid of Brits. A fact that's all the stranger once you consider cobbled port city Saint-Malo is only a 10-minute boat ride away, and charmingly wonky medieval Dinan is just a 30-minute drive.

Who flies there? Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from Stansted from a stonkingly cheap £20 round trip.

What can I do? Dinard is the wealthy Parisian's holiday destination of choice in Brittany, and a saunter around town shows you why. In a small bundle of

streets you'll find cutesy homeware shops, fragrant *biscuiteries* and lively cafes. A patch of golden beach can steal an afternoon, but to see the town's full-frontal beauty, walk the narrow, cliff-hugging seaside paths — you'll come across wave-battered rocks and *fin-de-siècle* villas. Sail to Saint-Malo in a sea bus (compagniecorsaire.com; £7 return) to walk the ramparts and explore forts, then pop down to Dinan, where half-timbered houses and a grand 12th-century basilica ladle on Breton photo opps.

Where should I eat and drink? You're by the sea, so from spring 'til autumn get stuck in with *fruits de mer* at Restaurant La Gonnelle — it's so close to the water

you could practically waggle a toe in it, and Breton lobster and ginger-laced prawns are menu favourites (lagonelle.com; mains about £20). If you're journeying over to Saint-Malo, drop into Breizh Café *crêperie*, where lashings of salty butter and tall glasses of artisan cider are *de rigueur* (breizhcafe.com; mains about £9).

And stay? Cliffside former aquarium Castelbrac is an essay in mid-century-modern cool, and has rooms with balconies overlooking Dinard's swirling waters. And neck a cocktail in the Aquarium Bar, with its glittering columns of green and gold mosaics (00 33 299 803000, castelbrac.com; doubles from £205, room only).

Dear Pam....

Our agony aunt gives the lowdown on flying low-cost

Pam Ann, alter-ego of Australian comedian-writer Caroline Reid, has a cult following worldwide. Madonna called the air hostess 'cruelly funny', while Elton John requested she crew his private jet. In this one-off column, Pam solves your low-cost problems.

'Is it true that what happens down route, stays down route? I've heard cabin crew are up to all sorts of funny business when away from home.' Let's just say there's a lot you can do on a Corby Trouser Press at the Holiday Inn.

'I was recently injured on a low-cost flight by sitting next to a very big man in a very small seat. I wish I'd complained, but what would I have said?' Write to the airline and suggest they take out some of their seats and replace them with exercise bikes. This way the big people can pedal, lose some weight, and generate the plane's engines.

'I'm keen to keep my swimsuit figure. What do you recommend from the trolley?' Sit halfway along the aircraft. Any low-cost carrier will have run out of *panini* by row 11.

'I feel much safer being flown by a dashing pilot. Are low-cost pilots less handsome?' Low-cost pilots are glorified mini cab drivers. 'How much to Prague?' 'I'll do it for a tenner.'

'A couple want me to give up my window seat so they can sit together. How can I refuse?' Headset and zero eye-contact works a treat.

'You've been everywhere. Is there a city on the low-cost map to avoid?' Research your destinations carefully. Some carriers say they fly to Vienna, but really you land in Bratislava and have to cycle.

Pam is currently on tour, for dates, see pamann.com or follow on Instagram (@pamannwantsagram).

LOW-COST LESSON

7

DON'T be afraid to enquire about those unexplained empty front few rows in the plane. They are often cordoned off for off-duty crew or less able passengers, but if there are none on board, they can be allocated at the discretion of staff. If you don't ask, you don't get!

LOW-COST LESSON

8

DO check the cost of calling a low-cost airline beforehand (whether to its booking line, complaints department, whatever). Non-geographic telephone numbers (such as those beginning 0845 or 0870) usually cost far more than a normal call, and often aren't included in your mobile phone plan. Beware!





When it all goes wrong

Know your flight rights! Our guide to compensation and complaints

Need to know

You have rights when you fly into or out of an EU airport on any airline (see caa.co.uk/passengers for more details and claim forms). For cancellations and denied boarding (ie, getting bumped), no matter the cause, you are always entitled to 'care and assistance'. This is defined as 'reasonable' food and drink, reimbursement for essential phone calls, accommodation if the delay is overnight, and transport to the accommodation.

What to do if:

Your flight is delayed

'Care and assistance', as above, should kick in after two hours (if you're on a short-haul flight), three (medium), or four (long-haul). If the delay exceeds three hours (worked out by arrival time, not when you left) and the airline is at fault, you can claim compensation of €250-€600 (£220-£527), depending on the length of flight and the delay.

Your flight is cancelled on the day

The choice is yours — a refund or alternative flight. If you choose a refund, that is all you get. If you choose to have the airline book you onto another flight, you'll also be entitled to 'care and assistance'. If the airline is at fault, depending on the replacement flights, you can also claim varying levels of compensation from €125 to €600 (£110 to £527) — see caa.co.uk/passengers for details.

You're bumped

If the airline has overbooked, you're entitled to another flight or a refund. If you volunteered to give up your seat, you will get whatever compensation you can negotiate. If you did not volunteer, your compensation levels are defined in law, usually from €125 to €600 (£110 to £527), depending on the flight duration and time difference from your original flight.

Your luggage is delayed

If your bag goes walkies, it's considered 'delayed' for the first 21 days — then lost. During the 'delay' period, you're entitled to compensation for essentials. Each airline has its own rules, and you'll have to fight if you want more than it offers.

Your luggage is lost

Baggage missing for more than 21 days is covered by the Montreal Convention. The max you'll get is about £1,000, no matter how many diamonds you had stashed. You'll have to claim for *them* on your own insurance.

You miss a connection

If you're transferring to a flight with the same airline, and the connection cock-up is their fault, your rights are the same as for flight delays. If the second leg is on *another* airline, neither of the two is responsible — you are. (Ditto if you arrived too late.) You'll have to hope for airline staff to help you out, or buy another ticket. Insurance may cover this.

LOW-COST LESSON

9

DON'T pay extra to choose seats in a bid to avoid the passengers-boarding scrum. There is no longer any major low-cost airline that doesn't allocate seats. You can pay to choose, by all means (good for families), but don't bother if it's not important to you — you will get a seat number at check-in anyway.

LOW-COST LESSON

10

DO pack a small snack. Even when you're prepared to pay for trolley food, the crew might not reach you before landing (especially if you're flying over a meal time), or your food choice can run out. When travelling late morning, you'll often find earlier passengers have bought all the breakfast items. On one recent flight from Ibiza, outbound fliers had drunk the plane dry!

Style-high club

Who wears it best in our battle of the low-cost uniforms?



Thomson

Is she no-frills crew, or club-class? We can't tell. Like Thomson, she's cleverly nailed that somewhere-in-the-middle look. **7/10**

Flybe

A blast of upbeat purple gets our thumbs-up: proof you can be chic and cheap. If the heels matched, too (we checked), Flybe would have scored an extra point. **8/10**



Monarch

Bright and sunny — just like Monarch's destinations list. Loses points for dinner-lady-style dress though. **6/10**

Ryanair

The palette doesn't stray from blue and yellow — but it's much slicker than some might expect. A bit like flying Ryanair these days... **6/10**



Norwegian

The Scandi carrier wins in our style stakes thanks to its glam cape (though what you can't see is the men's dodgy blazer). **9/10**

EasyJet

As uniforms go, this is the greatest transformation — 1995 launch staff wore baggy black jeans and an orange polo shirt. How times change. **8/10**





Trondheim, Norway

Never heard of it. Why should I go?

With utilitarian rainbow facades lining a tranquil river, an enormous medieval cathedral, and cosy restaurants to escape to when temperatures drop, historic Trondheim — 500km north of Oslo — is a Scandi holiday dream. It's cheaper than the Nordic capitals, and more manageable in a weekend, too, yet it wears the long summer nights and snowflake-flecked festive season just as well as Copenhagen or Stockholm.

Who flies there? Norwegian Air (norwegian.com) flies from Gatwick, from £69 return.

What can I do? Viking port, medieval capital, burial place of ancient royalty — it's a wonder Trondheim isn't better known. Its rose-windowed cathedral

was built nearly 1,000 years ago, and is often named as Scandinavia's finest church (the Norwegian monarch is still crowned here; check out the royal bling in the adjoining Palace Museum; £7). A winding river frames the cathedral, leading to crayon-hued wooden warehouses housing restaurants, shops and galleries.

Wander along the tree-lined boulevard of Munkegata, passing 19th-century wood-panelled architecture, then head to pretty manor-house-cum-music-museum Ringve. After a walk round its interactive gallery of 2,000 instruments, nibble a jam-smothered waffle in the cafe (ringve.no; £11).

Where should I eat and drink? Among the wonky clapboard houses of the 18th-century Old Town, kitsch lunch

stop Baklandet Skydsstation specialises in Norwegian classics, including artisan *aquavit*, herring platters and reindeer casserole (skydsstation.no; mains about £18). For poshed-up modern Euro dishes such as *entrecôte* or trout with buckwheat, try sophisticated, moodily lit Emilies Eld (emilieseld.no; mains about £33). In a red clapboard edifice perched on the river Nidelven, Havfruen is the locals' favourite seafood spot (havfruen.no; mains about £27) — try the crayfish plucked from the city's fjord.

And stay? It's business-y, but Scandic Nidelven's free buffet breakfast is so epic you won't care (00 4773 568000, scandichotels.com; doubles from £105, B&B). The hotel is well-placed, too — an easy wander from the Old Town. ■

