

Island weekends

From bustling cities to otherwise unpopulated escapes, circumscribed pieces of land can offer boundless rewards

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Kayak between Grecian isles

Odysseus famously returned to Ithaca on a magically fast Phaeacian ship. Much Better Adventures' two-day trip visits some of the Ionian archipelago's lesser-known isles in a humbler vessel: the kayak (from £183; muchbetteradventures.com). Going by this mode of transport comes with the benefit of being able to explore small coves reached only by sea – and the bragging rights of having got there under your own paddle-power. Highlights include camping on a beach and barbecuing under the stars on Meganisi, and snorkelling around the uninhabited island of Thilia (pictured), in warm waters such a vivid shade of cyan it's hard to believe they haven't been Instagram filtered.

ARRIVE EasyJet flies to Preveza Airport from London (from £310; easyjet.com). From there, it's a 40-minute taxi (£35) to Nidri.

STAY With a pool and location set just back from Nidri beach, George hotel is a good spot to stay the night before the trip (£105; hotelgeorge.gr).



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Go vertical in Manhattan

Encircled by rivers, Manhattan's island geography makes it easier to photograph its jungle of skyscrapers. This much-snapped skyline is undergoing its biggest change in decades, with the opening of the £22 billion Hudson Yards in March (hudsonyardsnewyork.com). Spend a Saturday among its six new skyscrapers, wandering its public park, connected to the popular High Line walk, and scaling Vessel, a beehive-like monument of 154 flights of interwoven stairs. For context, then spend your Sunday touring historic Manhattan, visiting Fraunces Tavern, a bar, restaurant and museum in New York's oldest building, which predates the American Revolution by half a century. You should also call into nearby 15 Park Row, which was one of the world's first skyscrapers, at 119m when it opened in 1899, but is now dwarfed by the nearby One World Trade Center.

ARRIVE Virgin Atlantic flies direct from various UK cities (from £400; virginatlantic.com).

STAY The High Line Hotel, in a converted 19th-century building with stained glass windows, is yards from the eponymous park (from £208; thehighlinehotel.com).

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Rent your own island in the Cotswolds

Cut off from their surroundings, islands appeal because of their leisurely pace. It doesn't get much slower than on Filly Island. Just south of Cirencester, this one-acre eyot lies between a millstream and the gentle River Churn. Accessed by humpback bridge – pooh sticks, anyone? –

the island and storehouse-turned-cottage on it are rented for £625 for three nights (uniquehomestays.com), proving that you don't have to be Richard Branson to have your own private escape for the weekend. There's not much to do here other than feed the ducks, cosy up to the wood-burning stove, or tuck into the crusty bread and homemade preserves provided in the welcome hamper – and that's the point. The golden-stone towns of the Cotswolds, with their cream teas and heritage pubs, are a short drive should further distractions be needed. But, with at-home chefs and spa therapists offered as extras, you may not want to leave.

ARRIVE Collection from Kemble station (gwr.com) is included. By car, Filly Island is 15 minutes from the M4. →



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Soak-in the Faroe Islands

Layer-cake mountains, cliffs plunging into the frothy Atlantic, green pastures interrupted only by hobbit-house-like, grass-roofed cottages – no wonder Denmark’s Faroe Islands are loved by hikers. But after a weekend outside, buffeted by wild winds (there’s a reason those moorlands are treeless) you’re going to crave warmth. If the cuddly embrace of a newly purchased traditional Faroese jumper won’t suffice, consider renting your own mini Scandinavian spa. Rib 62 brings trailers with oak barrel hot tubs and saunas to anywhere on the islands that’s drivable from Tórshavn, the Faroese capital (*up to 16 people; £330 for the day, £450 if you’re more than 12 miles from Tórshavn; rib62.com*), so you can enjoy your chosen bay or hilltop vista in steamy comfort. As the name suggests, the company also runs boat tours around the isles (*from £47*).

ARRIVE Atlantic Airways flies from UK cities via Copenhagen to Vágur (*from £475; atlanticairways.com*).

STAY A 30-minute stroll from Tórshavn, Hotel Føroyar merges a traditional grass roof with modern glass walls looking out to the harbour below (*from £215; hotelforoyar.fo*).

PHOTOGRAPHS: JUSTIN FOULKES; PLACKAT/H/SHUTTERSTOCK



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Go caving in the Balearics

Overshadowed by Ibiza, Menorca and Mallorca, the quiet little sibling among the Balearic Islands, Formentera, is happily underexploited. There’s no airport, many of the roads are dirt tracks and a ban on new seafront construction has left much of the coast backed only by sand dunes. Throw in pale sands and clear waters and it’s easy to see

why Formentera has been called Europe’s hidden Caribbean. Many are happy to spend an entire weekend here on the beach. But more adventurous types can explore the island’s – literally – hidden side on a cave hike with Walking Formentera (*£22; walkingformentera.es*). The four-and-a-half hour spelunk has participants shimmying through narrow gaps and under a cascade of stalactites before emerging to views over the whole island at sunset.

ARRIVE Ferries to Formentera run from Ibiza Town (*35 mins; £40 rtn*). EasyJet flies from various UK cities to Ibiza (*from £115; easyjet.com*).

STAY Dunas Playa has a pool and bungalow with kitchens, set in dunes by the sea (*from £75; dunasplaya.com*).

ISLAND-HOPPING
Compare ferry routes and prices to fit in as much as possible on a long weekend in Scotland, Croatia, Greece, Finland and other island-rich countries in Europe
(directferries.co.uk).