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# The best new Italy holiday ideas

**Live the dolce vita in Italy with these great new holiday ideas**



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## PRAIANO

### Quiet neighbour

Between the two popular towns of Amalfi and Positano lies the smaller, less ostentatious village of Praiano - a clutch of houses, small hotels and friendly trattorias strung along the Amalfi coastal road.

A network of footpaths runs between the hotels and olive groves down to two small beaches, and the town squares of Chiesa San Luca and Santa Maria Assunta come alive at night with local Italian families out for a passeggiata. Praiano has a more authentically Italian atmosphere than its brasher neighbours - partly because it features in few British operators' brochures.

Kirker (020-7593 2288, [www.kirkerholidays.com](http://www.kirkerholidays.com)) is offering Praiano for the first time this year; a three-night break at the Casa Angelina costs from £788pp, including flights and transfers.

## SARDINIA

### Beyond Smeralda

The island of Sardinia tends to conjure up images of swanky yachts and expensive resorts on glittering beaches that lure the Euro-glitterati for their summer breaks. But away from the Costa Smeralda lies a more rural Sardinia, with rugged mountain trails, lagoons teeming with flamingos, ancient vineyards and small unspoilt villages.

Inntravel offers a new walking holiday on the island, with several suggested routes for each day and a hire car to enable you to drive between hotels. The itinerary begins on the Sinis Peninsula, a wildlife haven, before heading inland to the hills of Monte Corrasi and Monte Tiscali and then on to Alghero.

Inntravel (01653 617906, [www.inntravel.co.uk](http://www.inntravel.co.uk)) has a week from £715pp, including four and five-star B&B, car hire, five dinners and walking notes, but not flights.

## SICILY

### Farming out the family

Rural tourism is becoming the big story on Sicily, with traditional farms and rural estates being converted to offer simple, authentic accommodation, often with fantastic home-cooked meals. These are rarely discovered by English tourists. There are new agrotourism properties opening every year,

and Sunvil Italy now offers five.

New this year is the Baglio Vecchio, an 18th-century family-owned farmhouse situated among centuries-old olive groves. It has ten simply furnished rooms, elegant grounds and a good-sized outdoor pool. The ancient city of Selinunte is 13km (8 miles) away. The restaurant is in a restored wine cellar, with traditional Sicilian dishes a speciality.

Sunvil (020-8758 4722, [www.sunvil.co.uk](http://www.sunvil.co.uk)) has a week at the Baglio Vecchio from £581pp, including flights, B&B and car hire.

## **BASILICATA**

### **Head for the hills**

Basilicata, possibly the least-familiar region of Italy, is set to get the attention it deserves, with operators beginning to feature the atmospheric hilltop and harbourfront towns that are scattered between the sun-scorched hills. Wedged between Puglia and Calabria, the region's short coastline is as dramatic as the Amalfi coast and the charming town of Maratea, with traditional trattorias looking out over the water, is a real find. Inland lie the Basilicatan Dolomites, perfect for hiking, horse-riding or cycling.

Real Holidays (020-7359 3938, [www.reaholidays.co.uk](http://www.reaholidays.co.uk)) has a week's half-board at La Foresteria di San Leo, a 13th-century monastery converted into an agrotourism property, from £322pp, excluding flights.

## **LUCCA**

### **Puccini on parade**

This year is the 150th anniversary of Puccini's birth, and his home province of Lucca in Tuscany has a season of concerts and celebrations. Central to the proceedings is the opening of the new open-air theatre at Torre del Lago; the first performance will take place on June 15, when the 3,200 seats are bound to be full.

The yearly Puccini festival, which runs from July 11-August 23, includes performances of Turandot, Tosca and Madam Butterfly. The local tourist office has produced Puccini-themed brochures, outlining three different weekend break itineraries that take in the streets, churches and landscapes that gave Puccini his inspiration ([www.puccini2008.it](http://www.puccini2008.it)).

## **PORTOFINO**

### **Mountain trails**

The Paths to Portofino escorted tour from ATG Oxford mixes walking between the elegant towns on the Ligurian coast with days spent in the verdant hills, dotted with olive groves and traditional farms. There are two free days in the eight-day itinerary to explore the delightful towns of Rapallo and Portofino and plenty of swimming opportunities en route to cool down after the steep descents from the inland villages to the sea.

ATG Oxford (01865 315678, [www.atg-oxford.com](http://www.atg-oxford.com)) has an eight-day trip from £2,195pp, including all meals with wine, accommodation, transfers and the services of a tour manager and a guide, but not flights.

## **SOUTH TYROL**

### **Adventure in the Alps**

The South Tyrol in the Italian alps is the "lost" region, often thought of as Austrian. It has a delightful mix of Italian and Tyrolean culture and is opening up to overseas tourism. The 2008 European Biennale of Contemporary Art will take place in the region between July 19 and November 2 and a dramatic new Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art opens in Bolzano in May. There are new places to stay, too: the Hotel Nives in the resort of Val Gardena is a small all-suite hotel, with its own wine bar and wine cellar. The wood-panelled rooms are a 21st-century take on traditional Tyrolean style.

Hotel Nives (00 39 0471 773 329, [www.hotel-nives.com](http://www.hotel-nives.com)) offers half-board from 87 euros (£65) pppn based on two sharing.

## MATERA

### Simply sassi

The town of Matera, on the border of Basilicata and Puglia, is famed for its sassi, caves hewn into the rock. Thought to be one of the oldest communities in the world, the town is a Unesco World Heritage Site. Long Travel has introduced the Sant' Angelo, a sassi that has been transformed into a small hotel. Most of the bedrooms are spacious, and the jumble of stairways and terraces forms a dramatic backdrop to the mix of antique and contemporary furniture.

Long Travel (01694 722193, [www.long-travel.co.uk](http://www.long-travel.co.uk)) has B&B at the Sant' Angelo from £40pp a night, based on two sharing.

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