

THE SUNDAY TIMES

# travel

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magazine

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**'For 47  
quid?!'**

Chic hotels  
you won't  
believe cost  
under £100  
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## America's perfect Pacific road trip

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So little traffic, so much soul

## Sardinia

The magic of the Med  
the way it was — on  
Italy's island idyll

# Greece

Secret beaches, stunning sights, stylish stays  
& sizzling nights: 24-page Total Guide inside

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Holiday fantasy made real:

## The private island

An isle of your own... It's not just a dream, says **Laura Goulden**. Here's how to make it happen

### Think beyond the beach

Bagging yourself an island is easier if you ditch the palm-trees-and-white-sand scenario. You'll still get all the romance, but the vibe will be less Robinson Crusoe, more *Swallows and Amazons* — and a lot cheaper. On Airbnb, for instance, Norwegian host Eivind's little red cabin, on a crescent-moon-shaped rocky outcrop in Norway's Hvaler archipelago, looks like something straight out of Ransome's imagination. It's basic — no running water and an outdoor privy — but you get your own boat. Sleeps a family of four from £182 per night (airbnb.com).

### Look for an archipelago

The more islands there are in one spot, the more likely you are to find an affordable one to hire. For example, there are 44 to choose from on Lake George in New York State, one of

which, Bass Island, has room for two and a tent. It costs just £22pp a night (lakegeorge.com).

### Keep it short

If your private-island dreams are rooted firmly at the luxury end of the spectrum — white sands, infinity pools, decent Piña Coladas — you'll keep costs down by limiting your stay to just a night. That needn't mean a one-night holiday, though: many resorts in destinations such as the Maldives have private islands for guests to hop off to as part of a longer break. Take Maafushivaru resort — its sister island, Lonubo, is completely deserted except for one plush villa. Book a week at Maafushivaru — itself a collection of 48 wood and white-stone private villas — and you'll get a night on Lonubo, all for £2,705pp, with Heathrow flights (kuoni.com). If that sounds a bit steep,



WANT MORE IDEAS?

Website [privateislands.online.com](http://privateislands.online.com) lists islands to hire around the world, everywhere from the Seychelles to Australia, starting at £400 a night. Also try googling 'AirBnb private island', or contact tour operators such as Scott Dunn.

consider booking an island where you're sharing with just a few fellow guests. Pusser's Marina Cay in the British Virgin Islands is a little green fleck with just eight cottages, a short boat ride from the capital Tortola. Rooms are a tad retro, but so are the rates: doubles cost from £120, B&B (pusser.com).

### Try downsizing

Happy to forgo space? Keeping it small will do the same to your costs. For instance, Bird Island, near Placencia in Belize, would be more accurately described as a small circular pontoon. The cheery pink-and-blue wooden shack sleeps four very costly, but with the Caribbean Sea stretching out in all directions, it's unlikely you'll feel claustrophobic. From £324 per night (airbnb.com). Or sleep over on your own islet in the backwaters of Kerala. Coconut Island has one cute, red-tiled cottage and very little else — just palm trees, kingfishers and a cook who will whip up a mean curry (keralaislandresort.com; from £47pp per night, full board).

### Take your friends

What most wannabe castaways don't realise is that there are a handful of islands harbouring palatial villas or boutique hotels that suddenly become affordable if you round up some like-minded pals. For example, less than £50pp a night buys Isla del Burguillo, in the middle of a glassy reservoir an hour's drive west of Madrid. The swathes of honey-coloured sand are lovely, but the main attraction is the castle, with its own vineyard and orchard (Isla del Burguillo; sleeps 10 from £2,397 for five nights).

If only tropical surrounds will do, try Taprobane Island in Sri Lanka, a jungly outcrop just a few steps off the southern coast. The mansion comes with an infinity pool and a staff of five — for £80pp a night (taprobaneisland.com; sleeps 10 from £5,634 per week, full board). Isleta el Espino is a bit of a faff to get to — it's on Lake Nicaragua, a short boat ride from Granada — but you won't mind, because if you bring 11 friends, you can have it to yourselves for a week for £315pp, B&B (islaetalespino.com). The island has nailed eco-chic, with corrugated-iron roofs and fabulous tiles; there's even a dinky spa and yoga sessions. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY

# The Knowledge

Inside-track travel intelligence — from the experts

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