

FT Series **Pink Sand: 50 fabulous beach holidays for 2019**

FT Magazine **Travel**

Top Mediterranean escapes

An expert selection from the Rome-based travel editor of *Il Sole 24 Ore*

Federico De Cesare Viola MARCH 15, 2019

1 — Argentario and Maremma, Italy



Hotel Il Pellicano

Even today, in the Maremma region, you might meet some *butteri* — the local equivalent of cowboys. But the days when this stretch of the Tuscan coast was mostly marshland synonymous with poverty, lawlessness and back-breaking farm work are long gone.

Today, it is an ideal holiday destination, with unspoilt beaches, vineyards, medieval hill towns, restaurants and traditional inns. The ideal way to get around is by horse or bike. On the Alberese estate you can ride through more than 4,000 hectares of woods, pine groves and pastures to a beautiful wild beach overlooked by the Collelungo Tower.

Further south, the Orbetello lagoon, a precious natural oasis, is gateway to the Argentario promontory, a favourite destination of celebrities and captains of industry. Here, on board a typical *gozzo* (small fishing boat), you can discover the many coves that dot the coast and pick out the unmistakable private beach and red cottages of Il Pellicano, the luxury retreat of the Sciò family, hidden in a bay behind Porto Ercole. Stay there and you can sip a martini by the swimming pool that over the years has hosted Charlie Chaplin, Henry Fonda and the Dutch royal family, among many others.

Doubles at the Hotel Pellicano (hotelilpellicano.com) start from €340; for more information on the area, go to visittuscany.com

2 — Roccapina Beach, Corsica



Domaine de Murtoli on Corsica © Raphael Salzedo/Alamy

In the south of the [island](#), a few kilometres of dirt road between Sartène and Bonifacio lead to the beach at Roccapina, an oasis of tranquillity far from the French island's

main tourist centres. This wild cove is famous for its fine sand, crystalline turquoise water and the lion of Roccapina, a natural rock sculpture.

Among the hills behind the beach, the Domaine de Murtoli is an *albergo diffuso* (spread-out hotel) — guests can choose from 20 homes, many of them former shepherds' houses from the 17th century, which have all been expertly restored, most with private pools. Though the houses are scattered over more than a kilometre, they share five-star hotel services, and the estate also has its own farm and three restaurants.

A house for two costs from €170 per night (murtoli.com); visit-corsica.com

3 — Santorini, Greece

Amid the chaos and the glut of tourists, we should not forget that Santorini is still the most spectacular island in the whole Greek archipelago, with stunning landscapes and black-sand beaches. It's hard to escape the marvel of the caldera — with its broad wall of multicoloured rocks — formed by one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history.

Santorini also delights with its romantic villages — such as Fira, Oia and, above all, Imerovigli, the “balcony of the Aegean”, from which you can admire endless sunsets — though you'll be watching them with many others by your side. Unless, that is, you stay at one of the Andronis boutique hotels, all designed to offer privacy as well as comfort. The latest is the Arcadia in Oia, which opens in June with 53 rooms, all with private pools and sunset views.

Doubles at Andronis Arcadia cost from €660 (andronisarcadia.com); santorini.gr

4 — Val di Noto, Italy



Baroque cathedral at Noto © Getty Images

South of Syracuse, Noto is a baroque marvel and an ideal place to slow down for a few days. After a breakfast of granita and brioche at Caffè Sicilia, a local institution, you can drive to some nearby, pristine and often half-deserted beaches. Above Caffè Sicilia is the San Carlo Suites, a charming B&B with views of the fabulous cathedral.

Doubles at the San Carlo Suites (sancarlosuites.com) cost from €120

5 — Begur, Spain

A favourite destination of well-heeled Barcelonans, Begur is the most charming town on the Costa Brava, with both a medieval core and some remarkable modernist architecture. Winding streets lead to fabulous rocky and sandy coves, surrounded by pine forest, where you can dive into crystal-clear waters — choose from Aiguafreda, Sa Tuna, Fornells and Aiguablava. A colonial-style building from 1866 has been transformed into the Aiguaclara boutique hotel.

Doubles at the Hotel Aiguaclara (hotelaiguaclarabegur.com) cost from €81; visitbegur.cat

6 — Bozburun Peninsula, Turkey

This harsh and wild landscape is the ideal place to escape the chaos of Marmaris and discover a more secret and serene Turkey. The jagged coastline hides charming bays, such as Selimiye, where you can stop to chat with fishermen and sailors. After exploring the peninsula, you can return to the D Maris Bay, a lavish hotel on the other side of the Gulf of Hisaronu.

The D Maris Bay (dmarisbay.com) has doubles from €233; hometurkey.com

7 — Gulf of Orosei, Sardinia

Forget the Costa Smeralda, this stretch of the central-eastern coast has the wild flavour of authentic Sardinia. Cala Luna, with its white sand and turquoise water, is one of the Med's most beautiful beaches, as are Cala Fuili and Cala Cartoe. A few steps from Su Gologone, a celebrated spring set among dramatic limestone gorges, the Su Gologone Experience Hotel offers chic rooms and excellent traditional Italian cuisine.

Doubles at the Su Gologone Experience Hotel (sugologone.it) cost from €181; sardegnaturismo.it

8 — Brač Island, Croatia



Sailing off Brač © Getty Images

Brač's Golden Horn is a strip of sand that changes shape and direction depending on the wind and is perhaps Croatia's most famous beach. The largest of the Dalmatian

islands, Brač offers other attractions, including caves, monasteries and olive groves. To discover its coastline, rent a sailboat with Secret Dalmatia.

A yacht for up to six, with skipper, costs from €700 a day or €3,000-€5,000 a week, secretdalmatia.com; croatia.hr

9 — Kea, Greece

Kea is among the least visited, most understated islands of the Cyclades. It's an oasis of relaxation, with sleepy beaches and small villages featuring excellent tavernas. The charming Porto Kea Suites is an ideal spot to sip a cocktail by the pool.

Porto Kea Suites (portokea-suites.com) has doubles from €80; visitgreece.gr

10 — Tavira, Portugal

The Algarve's prettiest and best-preserved town, genteel Tavira has an absence of big hotels and an abundance of churches. Lose yourself in the maze of old streets before taking a ferry across the lagoon to reach two long stretches of sand. Stay just inland at the Herdade da Corte, an old country estate converted to offer 11 rooms and suites.

Doubles at the Herdade da Corte (herdadedacorte.com) cost from €50; see visitportugal.com

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