

Edited by  
Jo Fernández

# What's new... ESTravel



**Fashion forward:** the Portrait Firenze sits on the banks of the River Arno

## HAUTE COUTURE HOTEL

### DESTINATION ITALY

THE Lungarno Collection, owned by the Ferragamo fashion family, is adding to its four existing hotels in the group, all clustered around the

Ponte Vecchio, with the all-suite Portrait Firenze on the banks of the River Arno on May 1.

Taking inspiration from the birth of Florence's haute couture in the Fifties, the designer behind the bijou chain of hotels – Michele Bonan – has styled this hotel using dark

floorboards and marble bathrooms, with monochrome fashion shots lining pale walls.

Each of the 34 suites is decked out with handmade furniture, kitchenettes stocked with gourmet products, personalised mini-bars and iPads (for the duration of the

stay). Anything can be arranged, from personal trainers and in-room massage, to tours of Tuscany and a babysitting service.

■ From €450 B&B, lungarnocollection.com. British Airways launches a new direct flight to Florence from London City Airport on March 31, ba.com

### WEEKEND IDEA



The four-star Sopwell House in St Albans, Hertfordshire (a former residence of Lord Mountbatten), has a one-night Valentine's package from £279 per double B&B with champagne and canapes on arrival, a four-course dinner in The Restaurant, a rose and full use of the spa facilities. Available February 14 and 15. ■ sopwellhouse.co.uk

### WHAT'S GOING ON IN...

#### JAMAICA MAR 7-9

Kingston's City Run Weekend kicks off with a carnival before the half-marathon and 5K race/walk. Entry from £6, pre-register at kingstonscityrun.com

■ BA flies four times weekly from Gatwick to Kingston, returns from £722, ba.com

### LAST-MINUTE HOTEL NEWS

■ Cheval Three Quays' collection of 97 serviced and 62 extended stay luxury serviced one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments open in March on the Thames's North Bank. One-bedroom flats from £132pp per night, chevalresidences.com

■ The five-star Oitavos hotel and spa, near Lisbon, hosts the third Oitavos Classic golf tournament from Thursday to Sunday. Three nights including three rounds at Oitavos Dunes from £669 B&B, theoitavos.com

### AHEAD OF THE PACK

Flowers? Chocolates? Are you bored with the usual run-of-the-mill Valentine's Day gifts?

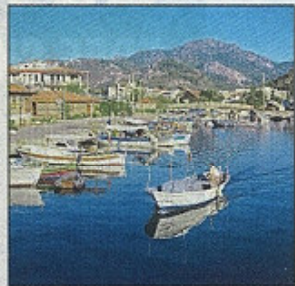
If your loved one is a skier, what better seasonal and unisex present than this nine carat gold skier pin which is part of the Catherine Best Off Piste ski-themed jewellery collection, which includes skier earrings and a money clip? Can be worn

as a tie pin, brooch or shown off on the slopes.

■ From £260, catherinebest.com



**ROUTE NEWS**  
Malaysia Airlines launches a four-times weekly service from Heathrow to Krabi in Thailand (via Kuala Lumpur) today, returns from £639 (until February 28), malaysiaairlines.com



Marvellous Marmaris: the resort town has a pretty harbour lined with boats

## MAY IS THE BEST MONTH FOR A TRIP TO TURKEY

Simon says



SIMON CALDER

WHAT part of Turkey is best for a holiday for myself and my husband, and what is the best month for weather, ie, not too hot? – Bernadette Layton

IN a typical year, 2.5 million British travellers have the good fortune to holiday in Turkey. It is a beautiful, friendly and vast nation. Most visitors, though, stick to the Mediterranean and Aegean resorts in the south and west of the country, or the largest city, Istanbul.

Timing is easy: whichever you choose, the ideal months to take a holiday in Turkey are May and September. You can be sure of warm days and pleasant evenings, without the sometimes extreme heat of high summer (note that the sea will be significantly warmer in September than May). The months between October and April deliver plenty of sunny days but it can also be cold and wet.

After a number of holidays all along the coast, my favourite resorts are Marmaris and Alanya. Both are cheerful, relaxed towns with long stretches of beach nearby. They are also well-placed for deeper exploration of Turkey. For a week's holiday, I recommend a low-cost package; prices for May are excellent. From Gatwick, Thomson or Thomas Cook will fly you to either resort, with self-catering accommodation, for £300-£350; you could safely wait for a late bargain.

Istanbul is also easy to reach, even though easyJet abandons its flights to the city in March. BA, Turkish Airlines, Pegasus or Atlasjet will get you there from various London airports for fares starting at around £150 return. See bit.ly/Istan48 for our latest 48 Hours guide. You could create a bespoke city-and-coast trip, but the cost is likely to rise steeply.

■ Email your queries to s@hols.tv