

THE BEST PLACES TO GO ON VACATION IN APRIL

Where to catch the sun (but not too much sun) this spring break

For most of us in the northern hemisphere, April is the month of expectation, the first point in the year where the sun is just starting to peek through, a time to size up the swimming shorts and get down the gym. Of course, we don't all live in the frozen north, in London or New York. For some, it is the first point of *escape* from the burning heat of summer. Whichever way you're looking at it, however, it is a good time to take a break. To help you make the most of the month, we bring you the top six spots for an April vacation.

WOLWEDANS DUNES LODGE

NAMIB DESERT, NAMIBIA

Namibia doesn't do badly on the sun front; the place gets upwards of 300 days of the stuff each year. As you might imagine, though, it can get a little bit hot. In April, however, it is at its most comfortable – a personable 25°C. Perhaps this explains why Prince Harry and Ms Meghan Markle are high-tailing it there after their wedding for their honeymoon. It's unclear where they are staying, but they could do much worse than the Wolwedans Dunes Lodge, with its operatic views, attentive staff and comfortable rooms. This safari camp is set amid the grandeur of the red-sand dunes, with options to explore the desert or head out to the beautiful Skeleton Coast or the Etosha National Park. Whatever you choose, you won't be disappointed.

Insider tip: one of the best ways to see the Namib desert is from the air. The hotel can arrange hot-air balloon trips for you, including a champagne breakfast at the landing spot.

AMANRUYA



- Photograph courtesy of Aman

BODRUM, TURKEY

Bodrum in high summer is inferno-like, a roiling morass of perspiring bodies and sunburnt skin, with temperatures reaching up into the mid-thirties and beyond. At this time of year, though, it is more likely to be in the early twenties, making it ideal for exploring the peninsula, with its endless olive groves down to the Aegean and its medieval stone fortress (the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, one of the Seven Wonders of the World). Amanruya is *the* place to base yourself. Thirty minutes from the centre of town, it occupies 60 acres of forest-covered hillside. It is make-believe beautiful and indeed its name translates as “peaceful dream”, which incidentally is what you are likely to have in any of its traditional 36 stone pavilions, with their marble floors, mahogany ceilings and baths the size of a

zeppelin. Each pavilion has its own dining area and pool to cool off in after a walk along the coast.

Insider tip: the sea-view pavilions' infinity pools are on raised platforms to give you uninterrupted views out over the sea.

aman.com

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ANDERSON & SHEPPARD Slim-Fit Mid-Length Paisley-Print Swim Shorts

GRAN HOTEL MANZANA KEMPINSKI LA HABANA

• HAVANA, CUBA

Oh Cuba, how we love you so. Your beautiful cities, bright culture and sugar-white beaches. March and April are the most moderate months when it comes to the weather, with the temperature hovering around the 25°C mark. Head to Havana to soak up the Spanish colonial-era architecture, the cobbled plazas and civic mansions, and make a pilgrimage to the Museum of the Revolution or Nuestra Señora de la Merced, before heading out of the city for some beach-based R&R. Park yourself at Havana's newest five-star hotel, the Gran Hotel Manzana Kempinski La Habana, with its dreamy rooftop swimming pool, cigar lounge and Confluencia restaurant.

Insider tip: most restaurants in the large hotels here are state-run and not always top-notch quality. However, the Confluencia escapes that fate by working with local independent *paladares* restaurants, so fill your boots.

kempinski.com

TRUNK HOTEL

TOKYO, JAPAN

For some 1,200 years, the Japanese have made almost an art of appreciating cherry blossom season. It is the season that launched a million haiku. And according to the Cherry Blossom Forecast – yes, there is such a thing – this is the best time to indulge in *hanami*, which translates as “flower viewing”. Ueno Park in Tokyo is a good place to start, being one of the oldest public areas in the city, and home to a number of museums, shrines and more than 100 blooming cherry blossom trees.

Otherwise, head to Yanaka neighbourhood in the east to experience its blossom-filled cemetery. Rest your head at the newly opened Trunk Hotel in the city's bustling, boutique-filled Shibuya district. Stylish, pared back and operating a "made in Japan" policy, which means the hotel relies on local suppliers, it is the perfect jumping-off point from which to experience the city.

Insider tip: visit in the first week-and-a-half of April and you will find the cherry blossom festival in full flow. A thousand lanterns illuminate the park and visitors are encouraged to celebrate the arrival of spring under a night sky.

trunk-hotel.com

HOTEL VAN ZANDT

Spring is by far the best time to take a trip to the Lone Star State, as the days are clear and bright without being too scorching. Scour Austin's bars and performance venues – such as the famous Broken Spoke honky-tonk or The Little Longhorn Saloon – and then, when you need a bit of a breather, drive out into the Texan desert at Marfa and visit Mr Donald Judd's vast art installation at the Chinati Foundation. The newly opened Hotel van Zandt is the place to lay your head in Austin. All exposed brick and with original art pieces throughout, it plays on the city's reputation for being the creative hub of the south and frankly we can't get enough of it, especially that eminently Instagrammable rooftop pool.

Insider tip: as much as Austin is about music, it is also about something else: pork ribs. The city is famous for them. Make a beeline to Micklethwait Craft Meats and indulge in its peppery toothsome ribs.

hotelvanzandt.com

HOTEL SANT FRANCESC

PALMA, MAJORCA

Once viewed as a somewhat dowdy destination, in recent years Majorca has had something of a renaissance, with luxury hotels opening like bluebells in spring. Palma, the capital, which plays host to the royal castle and capacious marina, is the cosmopolitan heart and the place where the Hotel Sant Francesc recently opened. After a day visiting the Arabs Baths or the Unesco World Heritage Status mountain range, Serra de Tramuntana – or swimming in the warm Mediterranean sea, if that

is your bag – retreat to Sant Francesc, housed in a mansion block built in 1860. It has 42 rooms, each as pretty as the next, three restaurants, a rooftop pool, which is exceptionally good for people watching and some of the prettiest public areas we have ever laid eyes on.

Insider tip: if sailing is your thing – as captain or indeed spectator – make a beeline for the city from 30 March to 7 April when the 49th edition of the Trofeo Princesa Sofía will be held in the Bay of Palma.

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