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Off-Season Travel

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The arrival of Labor Day doesn't mean you have to stop traveling to your favorite summer spots. Come Autumn, temperatures have dropped, tourists have fled, and a reservation at the best restaurant in town is easier to snag. Here's our list of destinations to check out in the off-season.

FALL

NANTUCKET

Nantucket is an idyllic New England escape with its 82 miles of coastline, dramatic cliffs, historic lighthouses, and 19th century mansions. During the cooler months, the crowds are gone, the ocean is still warm, and the weather is perfect for enjoying outdoor activities. Bike to Cisco Brewery, known for their local brews and live music, or to Something Natural for the best sandwich on island. Take part in lobstering or surfcasting lessons at **The Wauwinet** – experiences only offered in September and October – or charter a Hinckley Yacht and sail the Harbor. November also marks the start of Nantucket Bay Scallop season, one of the island's best kept secrets. Weekend events such as the Maritime Festival (September 29), celebrating the island's seafaring heritage with boat races and harpoon throwing, and the family-friendly Cranberry Festival (October 6-7) also take place. After Labor Day, hotel offers including **Nantucket Island Resorts'** "Hot Dates, Cool Rates" bring starting rates to \$195 per night, while direct flights from New York and Washington DC are still available through October.

PROVENCE

While most consider summer the best time to visit Provence, come Fall the crowds have dissipated and average temperatures are in the 60s. Go in September and October to experience the olive and grape harvests – known as vendange. **Domaine de Manville**, the restored farming estate, has bikes at the ready for guests to ride to tastings at the 12 surrounding wineries and mills producing olive oil with the Vallée des Baux de Provence AOC designation. Guests can also take part in the quintessential tradition of visiting daily farmer's markets in the local villages where Chef Matthieu Dupuis Baupal, who recently earned his first Michelin star, will join them to shop for seasonal produce. While tourists may be inclined to visit in June to snap the obligatory photo among the lavender fields, many don't know that they can spot a different purple flower, Saffron, bloom in Autumn. The region is home to many saffron farms that open their doors to the public during the fall harvest season.

SOUTHERN ITALY

Through October, **Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo** is hosting a pop-up restaurant on the Literary Terrace to celebrate its 145 year anniversary. Named after the influential German painter who resided in Taormina, the Otto Geleng pop-up, is an intimate restaurant open each evening for 16 guests and with views of Mount Etna and the Ionian Sea. The tasting menu features Otto (eight) dishes designed by the property's chef Roberto Toro, highlighting local produce and traditional Sicilian culinary methods with a vibrant twist. The wildest island in Sicily's cobalt blue archipelago, Filicudi is the most alluring of the seven islands and one of the most untouched. Discovering the daily life of the islanders and their warm Aeolian hospitality, guests of **Belmond Villa Sant'Andrea** meet a resident cave artist, crafting artwork using natural materials including pebbles, colored glass, and driftwood, before heading out with the local fishermen to fish for the catch of the day which can then be prepared for lunch. There is nothing more "dolce vita" than indulging in a picnic at the foot of the ancient basilica of Sant'Eustachio in Scala, the oldest village on the Amalfi Coast. Guests of **Belmond Hotel Caruso** can feast on Chef Mimmo di Raffaele's meal of Neapolitan focaccia dressed with local cherry tomatoes, mozzarella sandwiches, spaghetti omelettes with salami, and a slice of Caprese cake – and a glass of ice-cold limoncello to wash it down, of course.

PORTUGAL

Most think of Portugal as a summer hot spot, but those in the know wait until Fall to visit when the crowds have disappeared. **Belmond Reid's Palace** invites guests to rise early and enjoy the first light from Pico do Arieiro, Madeira's third highest peak and one of the few spots on the island to admire the sunrise. Beneath the clouds, hikers will take in the view of the mountains clad in lush vegetation – most notably the striking purple *Echium candicans*, fondly known as the 'pride of Madeira.' Afterwards, a private butler serves a well-deserved breakfast of pastries, fresh fruit, and champagne for guests to enjoy in nature.

WINTER

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NAPA VALLEY

From November through April, Napa Valley celebrates Cabernet Season. For those in the know, this is the best time to visit. Following the late-summer harvest, the crowds have dwindled, the pace slows down and, as its moniker suggests, the region's famed Cabernet Sauvignons are released. It's a time to relax, savor, and restore. Foliage is at eye level as the vines become dormant along Silverado Trail. Brilliant yellow wild mustard flowers, purple lupine, golden California poppies, and crimson clover are scattered through the vineyards and along country lanes. During this time of year visitors can easily nab reservations at hotspot restaurants such as French Laundry and The Restaurant at Meadowood. Greater access to wineries is another bonus with more opportunities to meet winemakers and receive impromptu glimpses behind the scenes. With a slight chill in the air, it's the ideal time to indulge in a mud bath incorporating the Valley's natural geothermal spring water and mineral-rich volcanic ash.

LONDON

There's arguably no place more magical during wintertime than London. No stranger to fickle weather, the city embraces the chilly temperatures and makes the most of the season – and what better time to stop in for a pint at a cozy pub? Every street seems to be dotted with twinkle lights and there are no less than a dozen outdoor ice-skating rinks open to the public – Somerset House is a must visit. It's easy to spend an entire day museum hopping, especially as most are free to visit, from the Victoria and Albert to the Tate Modern to the National Gallery, where the *Courtauld Impressionists: From Manet To Cézanne* exhibition will run until January 20, 2019. Don't miss **The Bloomsbury's** Dalloway Terrace, which transforms into a winter wonderland covered by a canopy of frosted ferns and pine cones resembling a modern Narnia. Guests can stay warm while they enjoy their afternoon tea thanks to faux fur blankets and hot water bottles.