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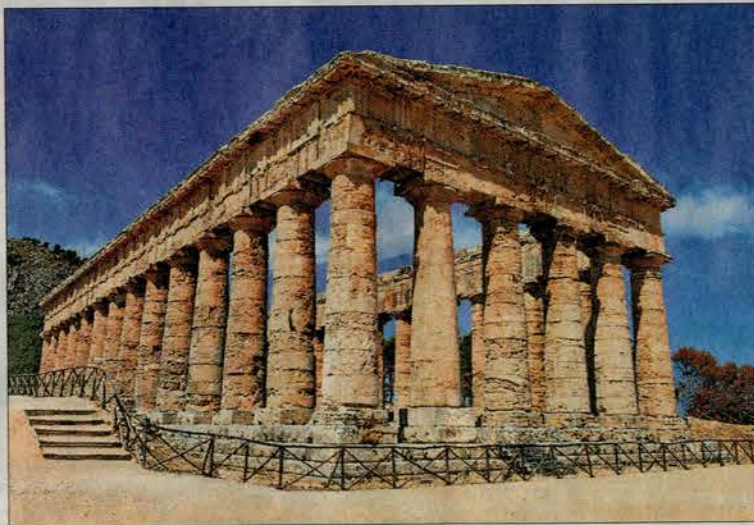
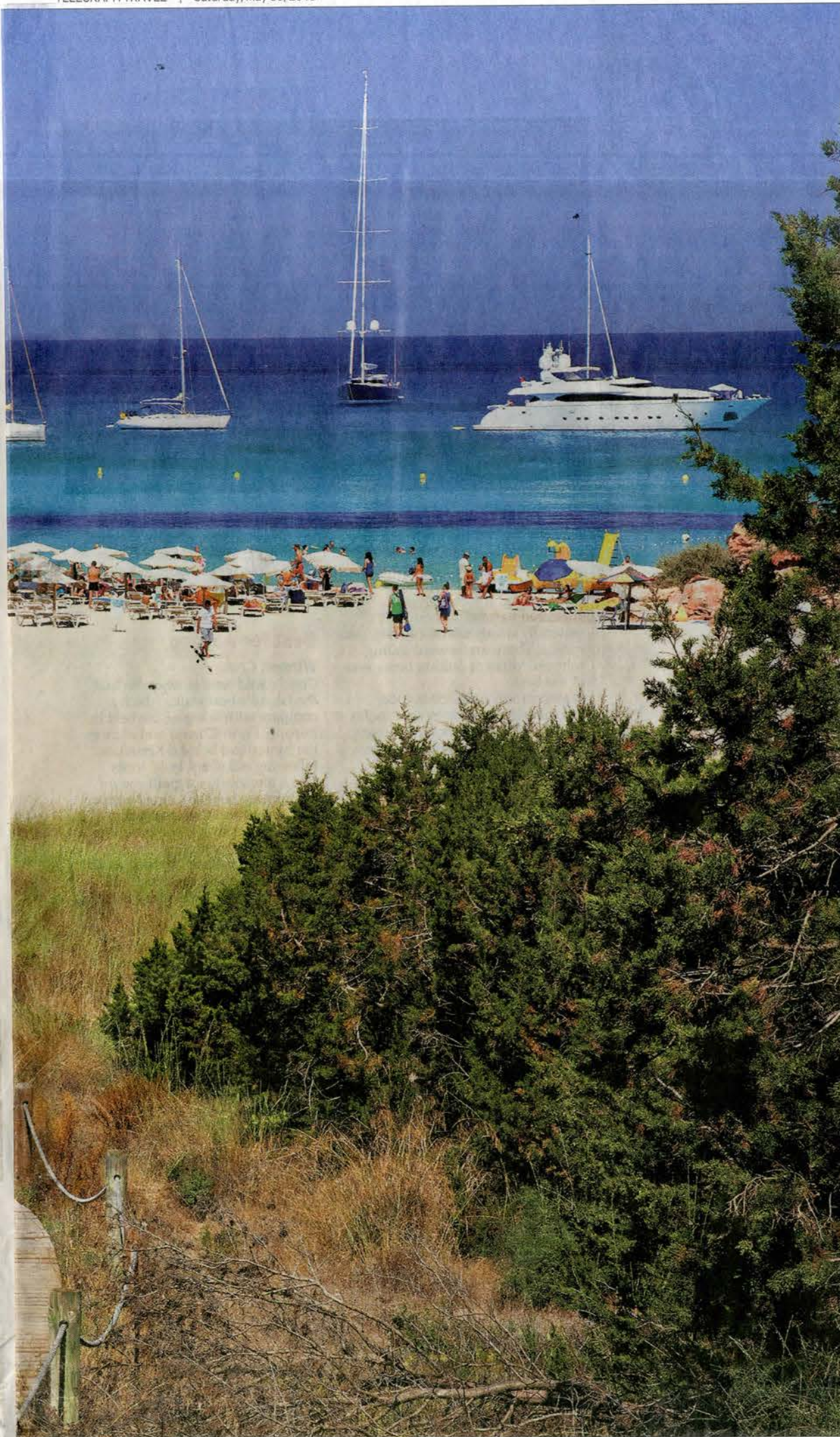
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THE 20 BEST ISLANDS IN THE MED

Undecided where to head this summer? From familiar Santorini and Crete to little-known Vis and Cavallo, dubbed the New Mustique, our experts help you choose



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than the exposed west coast.
 ● Thomson Holidays (thomson.co.uk) offers the MarBella Corfu Hotel in Agios Ioannis Peristeron on the island's south-east coast (with a kids' club for ages four to 12 years) from £855 half board, including flights, departing August 24.

Best for culture

Winner: Sicily
 The range of cultural sights in Sicily is extraordinary, from the little island of Motya, with its Phoenician ruins, to the great ancient Greek cities of Agrigento, Selinunte, Syracuse and the Doric temple at Segesta. At Piazza Armerina are some of the most charming and extensive series of Roman mosaics to survive anywhere. But even these barely stand comparison with the amazing 12th-century golden mosaics in the great cathedrals of Monreale and Cefalu, and the Palatine Chapel in Palermo. If you

prefer something more recent, there are the magnificent baroque towns of Catania and Noto.
 ● The Thinking Traveller (0207 377 8518; thethinkingtraveller.com) has a selection of villas with pools on the island. Casa Agave, costs from £646 pp (based on six sharing) for a week in June or September. Flights from £154 with Ryanair (ryanair.com).

Runner-up: Cyprus

Cyprus can't quite compete with the riches of Sicily, but it does have some treasures of its own. Some of the key sights are in the Turkish north, notably the Roman ruins at Salamis outside Famagusta, and the Byzantine/Venetian castles at Kyrenia and Hilarion. But south of the border are some remarkable Roman mosaics at Paphos, and all over the island some wonderful Byzantine churches, many with ancient wall-paintings.

Price guide

Prices quoted are per person based on two sharing a room for seven nights in June or September, with breakfast, unless stated otherwise. Holidays in the families and beaches section are for dates in the summer school holidays. All air fares are return from London for the accommodation dates specified. Prices and fares are subject to change.

● Sovereign Holidays (sovereign.com) offers the Anassa Hotel near Latchi in south west Cyprus from £1,523 with breakfast departing September 13, including flights.

Best for romance

Winner: Santorini
 The Cycladic island of Santorini is romantic almost to the point of cliché. Views west from its caldera rim, whether at sunrise or sunset, reliably mesmerise younger couples from around the globe. At dusk, especially between Oia and Thirasiá, excursion schooners in full sail glide across the improbably cobalt-blue waters of the caldera, under a frequently orange-streaked sky. Firostefáni and Oia are the classiest bases. Ikies Traditional Houses in Oia or Voreina Gallery Suites in lofty Pyrgos are best for lovers.
 ● Voreina Gallery Suites in Pyrgos (voreinasuites.gr) have great sea views. From Per night prices from £567 b&b in June. Flights from £350 with easyJet (easyjet.com).

Runner-up: Patmos

Formerly the austere domain of its famous monastery, quiet Patmos has developed into a popular place for couples. Volcanic crags pointing suggestively skyward, plus thrilling views to surrounding islands, do the trick. Swim naked at Psili Ámmos or Linginou beaches.
 ● Porto Scoutari Romantic Hotel and Suites overlooking Meloi Bay (portoscoutari.com) has a heart-shaped pool. From £339 b&b, departing June 20. Flight to the nearest island Kos from £280 with British Airways (ba.com), regular ferries from there.

