



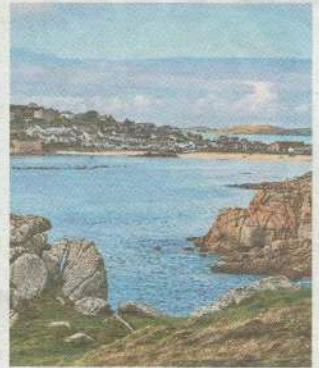
**'I never accepted she was going to die'**  
Rio Ferdinand talks about losing his wife

# Weekend

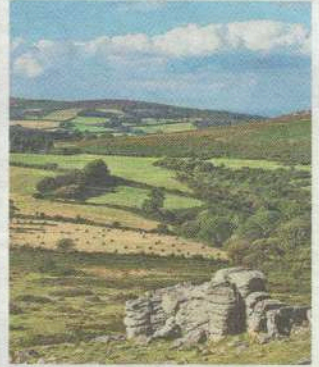
Travel  
Starts on  
page 25



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## 36 Travel

## Europe

## Where to book now for early summer sun in Europe

A traditional finca in Andalusia, a chic resort in Crete or a stylish colonial villa in Sicily — **Ben Clatworthy** picks the best places for a relaxing break

**La Bobadilla**  
 Andalusia, Spain

With April highs of 24C, this palatial five-star finca, surrounded by 350 hectares of forest and verdant olive groves, is a great place for early summer sun. It has three swimming pools, including a huge outdoor pool (heated in April). The rooms are grand, with plush four-poster beds and luxury bathrooms. The superior deluxe rooms all have a terrace or balcony. In May the pool heating is switched off, but ambient temperatures rise to a balmy 27C.

**Details** B&B doubles are from £201 (0333 331 8229, [mrandmrsmith.com](http://mrandmrsmith.com))

**El Geco Verde**  
 Altiplano de Granada, Spain

With small traditional villages tucked in sweeping plateau landscapes, this is an undiscovered corner of Andalusia, only two hours from Granada. The El Geco Verde eco-hotel perches between the Cazorla and Castril nature parks. Off the grid, the hotel is traditional in style, with basic en suite rooms, and, with no light pollution, it is a magical place for stargazing. Adventurous travellers can enjoy the rugged walks, horse riding and canoeing on offer in the region. In April expect daytime highs of 20C, rising to 22C in May.



**Details** B&B doubles are from €65 (£57) a night (01273 823700, [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com))

**Olive Tree Hotel**  
 Catalkoy, northern Cyprus

In the foothills of the Five Fingers mountain range, this grand hotel is perfect for combining lazy days by the pool with more adventurous walks to the beautiful hilltop village of Bellapais. The rooms are plush, if a little dated, while for extra space it is best to opt for one of the small single-storey villas that surround the outdoor pool. A free shuttle allows you to explore nearby

Domes of Elounda, Crete.  
 Left: La Bobadilla,  
 Andalusia





Kyrenia, with its idyllic harbour. Expect highs of 23C in April, 26C in May. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £50 a night (00 90 548 856 5000, hotelolive.com)

### Domes of Elounda

Crete, Greece

This plush resort is so child friendly, the spa has a dedicated kids' treatment menu, including "mummy and me" pedicures. There is also an all-day nanny service, a crèche and in-suite babysitting. In the family suites, which have stunning views of the island of Spinalonga or the Elounda Gulf, children sleep on two sofas in the spacious sitting room. Each suite has its own pool and there is a private beach. Over the Easter holiday period daytime temperatures are about 20C, rising to 24C in May. **Details** B&B suites cost from £194 a night (00 30 284 104 3500, domesofelounda.com)

### Pensao Agricola

Algarve, Portugal

At the fringe of Sitio do Valonga, a small village in the eastern Algarve, this stylish farmhouse hotel opened its doors last year. Expect whitewashed walls, statement lights and a mix of vintage furniture and quirky touches in the six thoughtfully designed rooms. There are free bikes to cycle to Ria Formosa's deserted beaches, as well as two resident

donkeys, and a small pool to lounge by under the sun (temperatures reach about 22C in April and 25C in May). **Details** B&B doubles are from £122 a night (0117 946 7072, l-escape.com)

### Princesa Yaiza Lanzarote

Children will be in their element at this cool hotel. There is a gigantic kids' club, Kikoland, offering babysitting for children from four months old, and lots of activities for slightly older children — from arts and crafts to football and beach games. Meanwhile, parents can kick back by the pool — expect highs of 22C in April and 24C in May — or at the luxury thalassotherapy spa. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €195 a night (00 34 928 51 93 00, princesayaiza.com)

### La Scibina Sicily

Temperatures of about 21C in April make La Scibina an ideal base from which to explore the pretty baroque towns of Ragusa, Modica and Noto. This converted almond warehouse, in Marina di Ragusa, is within easy reach of the Pozzallo and Ispica blue-flag beaches, which become popular in May, when the mercury rises to 22C. The rooms are bright and airy, with modern furnishings and stylish bathrooms. There are B&B doubles and self-catering apartments. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from £706pp, including flights and car hire (020 8758 4722, sunvil.co.uk)

### Anassa Akamas Peninsula, Cyprus

A great family hotel, the Anassa is cradled by hills that sweep down to Asprokremnos, which, with its long sweep of golden sand, is one of the best beaches on Cyprus. Many of the minimalist chic rooms have private plunge pools and terraces overlooking the sea. Anassa recently underwent a multimillion-pound refurbishment and it also features a large infinity pool and a spa. Expect temperatures in the low twenties in April, rising to mid-twenties in May. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £371 a night (0333 331 8229, mrandmrsmith.com)

### Hilton Vilamoura As Cascatas Algarve, Portugal

Tee off on the 18-hole Pinhal golf course at this cool property, 20 minutes' drive from Faro airport. Surrounded by villas and lush gardens, the hotel is home to Portugal's largest spa, with an indoor thermal pool, aroma steam bath, sauna and a gym. There are a handful of restaurants, the best being Aquarela, which serves Mediterranean barbecue food and reopens for summer in April. Expect temperatures of about 20C in April and 23C in May. **Details** Room-only doubles cost from £70 a night (hilton.com)

### The Ashbee Hotel Taormina, Sicily

Built in colonial style, this stylish villa overlooking the coast offers views towards mainland Italy and is near the lively town of Taormina. The property is surrounded by gardens with citrus trees and ornate water features, while the rooms are individually styled — ranging from cool and bright to more traditional. There is also an infinity pool with a bar and terrace, which is the place to head for sundowner drinks. A cable car to the beach is just a few minutes' walk away. Temperatures range from the low to mid-twenties in spring. **Details** Seven nights' B&B cost from £1,249pp, including flights and

transfers, departing on April 30 (01489 866994, sicilianplaces.co.uk)

### Gran Hotel Montesos Ibiza, Spain

Ibiza swarms with party-crazed holidaymakers in the summer, but head there early in the spring and discover its quieter — and classier — side. The hotel may be a Hilton, but it is one of the group's Curio collection, with a distinctive rather than corporate character. The 33 rooms are furnished in contemporary style, with strikingly modern decor in the communal areas. The hotel is close to the city's best bars, restaurants and the marina, and you can expect highs of about 19C in April, rising to the mid-twenties by May. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €135 a night (curiocollection.com)

### Totem Madrid, Spain

April is perfect city-break season — beating the summer hordes and sweltering heat. Madrid is a great bet, with its enclosed food markets and museums, and highs of 20C in April and 24C in May. The city's hotel scene is also buzzing. Totem, which opened last year, is in the heart of the Salamanca district, one of the city's most fashionable, and has 64 boutique rooms. The hotel's cocktail bar and restaurant are inspired by F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and the Damned*, with an unusual menu and waiters in 1920s period dress. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €146 a night (00 34 914 26 00 35, totem-madrid.com)

### Bahia del Duque Costa Adeje, Tenerife

With the feel of a traditional Canarian village and sitting on the beachfront, the chic Bahia del Duque is a great place for early sun, with highs of 20C in April. The resort has arguably the best spot in Costa Adeje, with gardens that slope down to the beach. There are tennis courts and pools, as well as a handful of restaurants and a L'Occitane spa. By May the temperature reaches the mid-twenties. **Details** Room-only doubles cost from €304 (00 34 922 74 69 32, bahia-duque.com)



Grand Hotel Montesos, Ibiza. Below left: The Ashbee Hotel, Taormina



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