

## Winter sun

# Some like it hot

For those who prefer to be in the sun during the winter, Paula Lester seeks out seven top European hotspots

**S**HOULD you, like the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, long to 'live in the sunshine, swim the sea, drink the wild air' all year round, finding an easily reachable location that has reliable winter sunshine may seem like a difficult task. But Europe has some surprisingly warm corners where you can go to escape the winter blues.

For Bronya Heaver of Knight Frank, the Balearic island of Mallorca has what it takes to head the sunshine stakes. 'It's sunny all year round, with temperatures in the late teens and early twenties in the winter months—I even got sunburnt when I went there for Christmas.' As well as recommending locations around the island's capital, Palma, because they're 'perfect for being able to enjoy the hustle and bustle, golf, the coastline and marina life in the winter months', Miss Heaver singles out the west coast's Valldemossa and Deià. 'These are sleeper villages, but Deià in particular is quite a niche, sought-after area, having been named one of the most idyllic places to live in the world [by *Forbes* magazine],' she explains. 'Typical buyers tend to be 40-plus, and mostly British, but we're noticing an increase in German clients, together with a few younger buyers, who are attracted to the area for golf and sailing.'

Cala Llamp, a sophisticated four-bedroom villa with a vast terrace and infinity pool offering views over Port d'Andratx is on the market for £3.3m (€3.8m) through Knight Frank (020-7629 8171). If you'd prefer a more secluded retreat, the agents also have a traditional, 10-bedroom *finca* in Deià on their books, priced at £3.43m (€3.95m).

West of Mallorca, past the Pillars of Hercules, the Portuguese island of Madeira is situated close to North Africa, which makes



**FOR SALE**  
**£1.61m** **Spetses (€1.85m)**  
**A pretty, painted residence just over 80 yards from the island's quaint Old Harbour**  
*Savills (020-7016 3740).*

it the first choice of many experienced winter sun-seekers. 'It's really popular with the British because it has year-round sunshine and has some of the highest temperatures in Europe through the winter—I went in February and it was pretty hot,' says Joanna Leverett of Savills. 'Funchal, the capital, is lovely, and I fell in love with the mountainous, lush scenery and flowers—it's a very pretty island. People tend to dismiss Madeira as a retirement colony, but there are lots of young people and families, too.'

Savills are currently marketing Quinta do Lorde, a new luxury resort on the Ponta



**FOR SALE**  
**£220k** **Madeira (€253,000)**  
**Properties at Quinta do Lorde, a new luxury resort on the Ponta de São peninsula**  
*Savills (020-7016 3740)*

de São peninsula, which will offer properties priced from £220,000 to £807,580 (€253,000-€928,000) (020-7016 3740).

Sardinia's turquoise blue seas, white sandy beaches and, according to Miss Heaver, 'Riviera-style living, similar to the Côte d'Azur', have long appealed to high-end international buyers and northern Italians from Milan, many of whom have holiday homes on the island. 'The southern side of the island, around Cagliari, has a great climate that's not unlike that of its near neighbour, Tunisia,' says Jelena Cvjetkovic of Savills. 'It's bustling and brimming with activity in the summer, and, although it's quieter in the winter, there's still a lot to do if you choose a bolthole in the city.'

Savills currently have a luxury three-bedroom apartment in the historic centre of the island's capital, priced at £565,600 (€650,000) (020-7016 3740). For those in search of Mediterranean magic, it will be hard to resist the charm of the lovingly restored, peach-coloured, four-bedroom villa I Due Leoni, in Porto Cervo, which is on the market through Knight Frank (020-7629 8171) at £6.53m (€7.5m).

For many Britons, however, the allure of Tuscany remains strong. Apart from the enduring romantic appeal of the region's rolling landscape, Miss Heaver identifies mild winter days as a big draw. 'Temp-

eratures only drop to about 10° and the shops and restaurants remain open all year round,' she says, adding that although the British presence in the market remains strong, there's been a recent influx of Scandinavian, Danish and Belgian buyers. Those after an Italian idyll need look no further than the traditional six-bedroom stone farmhouse of Podere Belvedere in Val d'Orcia, available through Knight Frank (020-7629 8171) priced at £5.22m (€6m).

Covering just over 116 square miles in land area, Malta might be one of the world's smallest countries, but a daily average of five to six hours' sunshine makes it a great place to be from October to December. 'Winter is very pleasant here in Malta,' comments Franco Valletta, chairman of Savills' Malta associate, Dhalia Real Estate Services. 'The island gives people the chance to relax and switch off, but it also has a lot to offer due to its history, architecture and archaeology.' Until three years ago, the British dominated the international property market on Malta and Gozo, but nowadays, desirable apartments with unobstructed sea views in upmarket St Julian's, just north of the capital, Valletta, are increasingly sought by Scandinavians and South Africans, who

can expect to pay £2,610-£3,916 (€3,000-€4,500) per sq m for prime locations.

George Bernard Shaw's view that 'those who wish to see heaven on earth should come to Dubrovnik' is a sentiment with which Miss Cvjetkovic wholeheartedly agrees. 'It gets an average of 240 days' sunshine a year, so if you catch it in the right month in the winter, it's beautiful,' she says of the ancient Croatian walled city. Just up the Adriatic coast from Dubrovnik, Savills (020-7016 3740) are selling a sleek, contemporary-style property, Villa Agava, in the picturesque village of Splitska on the island of Braç, for £1.65m (€1.895m).

But surely the ultimate winter-sun desti-



**FOR SALE**  
**£5.22m** **Tuscany (€6m)**  
**Traditional six-bedroom stone farmhouse of Podere Belvedere in Val d'Orcia**  
*Knight Frank (020-7629 8171)*



**FOR SALE**  
**£3.3m** **Mallorca (€3.8m)**  
**Cala Llamp, a villa with views over Port d'Andratx**  
*Knight Frank (020-7629 8171).*

nation has to be the Greek island of Spetses, off the south coast of the Peloponnese mainland, reached via a 2½-hour ferry ride from Athens. 'It's a quiet place to go and chill out,' says Miss Cvjetkovic. 'There are no cars and lots of little secluded bays.'

Canny Athenian second-home owners have already snapped up many of the island's elegant and authentic properties, which often have attractive wooden balconies and covered courtyards. However, £1.61m (€1.850m) will secure a pretty, painted residence just over 80 yards from the island's quaint Old Harbour, through Savills (020-7016 3740).



**FOR SALE**  
**£6.53m** **Sardinia (€7.5m)**  
**Newly restored four-bedroom villa I Due Leoni, in Porto Cervo,**  
*Knight Frank (020-7629 8171)*



**FOR SALE**  
**£1.65m** **Croatia (€1.895m)**  
**Villa Agava, in the village of Splitska on the island of Braç**  
*Savills (020-7016 3740)*