

VILLAGES IN WHITE

Léa Teuscher

Lannoo



Classic destinations

These five white havens are classics for good reason. Combining whitewashed architecture with great fun, beautiful beaches and delicious food, these idyllic European destinations are extremely popular, yet certainly still worth the trip – especially slightly out of season. In Ibiza and Mykonos, you can party the night away and spend all day chilling out at the beach club, but also hike to little coves and ancient ruins. Santorini offers so much more than beautiful sunset snaps, whether you tour a local vineyard or explore the island’s lesser-known coast. A road trip to the Spanish pueblos blancos will bring adventure, great hiking and the chance to get lost in countless hilltop towns, where the perfect sea view only reveals itself at the last minute. As for the Île de Ré, it’s the best of France on a plate: fresh seafood, pretty villages, quaint cafés and dozens of beaches, all linked by easy cycling lanes.



Partying with the gods

Mykonos, Greece

Right at the centre of the sparkling Aegean Sea is the windswept island of Mykonos, whose rocky outcrops are said to be the petrified bodies of the Giants, defeated by Hercules and his friends, the Olympian gods.



Left
Little Venice's seafront bars and the church of Saint Nicholas of Ageras in Mykonos Town, a former fishing village built around a protected bay

Right
Meet Petros the Pelican, the official mascot of Mykonos since a wounded pelican was rescued by a local fisherman in the 1950s







They are easily accessible from Cádiz, Málaga or Granada, but expect some sharp hairpins along the way. And whether you go from east to west or the opposite, great sandy beaches await at the end of your journey.

Let's follow the sun, going from Granada to Cádiz, via Sierras Subbéticas Natural Park, Málaga's La Axarquía and the many villages dotted around the Grazalema mountains. En route are endless neat rows of olive trees, ancient oak forests and sixteenth-century stone churches; visits to caves and castles; and stops at charming bodegas for a bowl of chilled ajo blanco soup, goat's cheese, fresh melon and perhaps a glass of sherry.

First stop: the famous mirador of postcard-perfect Montefrío, where whitewashed houses with red tiled roofs huddle around the ruins of a hilltop Moorish castle tower. To the north is the village of Zuheros, the gateway to the hiking trails and the dramatic limestone cliffs of the Sierras Subbéticas. Walk along the Via Verde, a reclaimed railway line, before heading to Iznájar, a cute village known for its eighth-century castle and the blue flowerpots lining its Patio de las Comedias.

Then head south towards Comares, the 'balcony of La Axarquía' and the highest of the pueblos blancos. The panoramic views are incredible, whether you stay at the Hotel

Left
The pedestrianised old town of Frigiliana, a popular day trip from Nerja or Málaga

A magical world

FULVIA BERNACCA

'I've known the Egadi Islands since I was a teenager. From the very first encounter I felt a subtle, intense kind of magic, a vibration that's almost impossible to put into words,' says Fulvia Bernacca, an artist, photographer and filmmaker based in Palermo. 'Over time the island has become a second home, and its nature, the sea, the silence and the slow rhythm of each season deeply nourish my eye and my work.' Her documentary *A Frida* focused on the fishing village Borgo Marinaro di Punta Longa on Favignana, while for her 2021 project *Venacava*, she dug deep into the island's mining history. 'The blocks of stone that were extracted were called cantuna, singing stones, because when they were hit, they created sound vibrations – if they were out of tune, they were not strong enough to use.' Also a yoga teacher, Fulvia is working with Talêa Casa Mediterranea, a yoga retreat just opened by her friend Mara Guadagni, 'to share the beauty of the island and promote a more conscious tourism all year long, not just in the summer'. fulviabernacca.com; [@talea_casamediterranea](https://www.instagram.com/talea_casamediterranea)







Then, the island's pine trees, turquoise waters and beach bars serving icy caña (beer) await. Stretching along the southern side of the island, Migjorn Beach has sandy coves and rocky inlets, while off the beaten track, in the west, Cala Saona is surrounded by high red cliffs and linked by a 'lunar walk' to the Cap de Barbaria Lighthouse.

You could visit in June for the Formentera Jazz Festival, but really, the star of the show here is the unspoilt nature. Take your time to spot flamingos in the salt marshes, hedgehogs hiding in juniper bushes or lizards – the symbol of the island – sunbathing on hot stones. The most important part of the ecosystem, the Posidonia seagrass meadows that help keep the sea crystal clear, is hidden under the azure waves.

The far south of the island, all around Es Caló and La Mola, is very popular. Here you will find beautiful hotels surrounded by dunes, coves including Caló des Mort, and beach bars perched on rocky outcrops such as Xiringuito Bartolo. An ancient Roman path links Es Caló and its quaint boat huts to La Mola, which hosts a bustling 'hippy market'. Head to La Mola Lighthouse at sunset for views of the entire island turning gold and pink.



Above
A narrow arcade in La Savina, the first point of entry for visitors to the island

Left
Formentera's rocky coastline, including the small cove of Caló des Mort, is best explored by boat



Above
The church of El Pilar de la Mola, a village on the highest point of the island



Right
The traditional fishing village of Es Caló San Agustín, where boats are stored in simple sheds and launched into the sea using rustic wooden ramps

Dalí's surrealist seaside retreat

Cadaqués, Spain

The flamboyant surrealist painter Salvador Dalí is forever linked with Cadaqués, a rocky, windswept fishing village hunkering in a small bay in the middle of the Costa Brava's Cap de Creus Peninsula.



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The 18th-century Old Watch House, once a lookout point for spotting smugglers in Polperro

Left
A giant egg sculpture at the Salvador Dalí House Museum in Port Lligat, just north of Cadaqués

Right
The 16th-century Santa Maria church towers over the old town of Cadaqués and its two small beaches







Sidi Bou Said has always been a cultural centre, first as a place of religious pilgrimage, later attracting leading musicians and writers of the Husainid dynasty, and finally as a hub for the artists of the École de Tunis in the mid-twentieth century, including Jellal Ben Abdallah. Known for his finely detailed scenes of daily life, Ben Abdallah was friends with the couturier Azzedine Alaïa, who built a holiday home here to reconnect with his Tunisian roots. It is now a foundation, Dar Alaïa, hosting temporary exhibitions.

But perhaps the most influential artist in town was Rodolphe d'Erlanger, a German-French baron married to an Italian countess. A painter and expert in Tunisian and Arabic music who wrote a definitive six-volume guide on the subject, he built a palace, Ennejma Ezzahra, in Sidi Bou Said in the 1900s. Now a beautiful museum, the lavish building popularised the town's pre-existing blue-and-white style, and d'Erlanger later helped pass regulations to make sure all buildings in the historic centre matched this aesthetic.

Shop for contemporary art at Le Violon Bleu gallery, then stroll through the town for crafts and souvenirs. Make sure to stop for local street food – including bambalouni doughnuts, lablabi chickpea stew and fricassé sandwiches – before heading to the clifftop viewpoint, with the ancient city of Carthage just visible on the horizon.



Sidi Bou Said has been a cultural centre since the 13th century

Right

A display of handmade Tunisian ceramics with vibrant colours and intricate designs

Below

Tunisian mashrabiyas, typical oriel windows with intricate wooden latticework screens, can be found all around town

Opposite, top

The Palace of Erlanger, or Ennejma Ezzahra, is now a museum and Centre for Arabic and Mediterranean Music

Opposite, bottom

Local pastries including makrout, made from semolina dough and a date filling, and soaked in honey syrup







An island in the sun

Djerba, Tunisia

So important was the island of Djerba to the Romans' trade routes connecting Africa, Europe and the Middle East that they built a 7.5-kilometre-long causeway to link it to the mainland. Although it is still in use today (slightly upgraded, of course), most visitors arrive by plane, since the airport is only minutes away from Djerba's famous beaches.

Above

One of the 'pirate boats' used for tourist excursions to Flamingo Island and its fine white sandy beach

Left

A vibrant pink bougainvillea in the historic centre of Houmt Souk, Djerba's main town



Above
A carpet shop in the old medina, a walled town accessed through only four main entrances

Left
Built by the Portuguese in the 15th century, the Al Kamra Tower overlooks Asilah's fishing port

Opposite, left
A plate of halwa chebakia, deep-fried sesame cookies

Opposite, right
The entrance to Er Raissouli Palace, built in 1909 by a powerful pirate called Ahmed el-Raisuli

Over the centuries, it has evolved from Phoenician trading post to pirate base and finally arty hotspot, and today it makes for a great summer destination.

Despite this long and rich history, the town had been crumbling away until the late 1970s, when Mohammed Benaissa and Mohammed Melehi created an annual summer festival to fund its restoration. The freshly whitewashed walls have provided the perfect blank canvas to budding local artists and international creatives ever since. This means Asilah's white façades are punctuated with not only bright doors and shutters, but also bold murals depicting everything from footballers to contemporary takes on Arabic calligraphy.

There are four main entrances to the walled town, including Bab Homar, a round tower topped by a

faded Portuguese royal coat of arms. Inside are a great mosque and a jumble of small lanes leading to the sea. A highlight is Er Raissouli Palace, built in 1909 by a powerful pirate, Ahmed el-Raisuli. Having made his money kidnapping wealthy Westerners, he moved into this lavish building (open during the festival only) and became the local governor.

The town is at its busiest on Thursdays during the weekly market. Shop for souvenirs before taking a break with a cup of mint tea, a m'semen pancake or deep-fried chebakia pastry. Or grab some olives and bread for a picnic on one of the vast sandy beaches. In R'milat, there are shacks serving grilled sardines and fish tajines (paella also often features on menus here, a remnant of the long Spanish rule over the region).

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