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The prettiest (and ugliest) seaside towns in Europe

What are the European equivalents of elegant St Ives, and where is more like Skegness? We asked our experts to reveal all

Telegraph Travel experts

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Nafplio has everything you could want from a Greek seaside town Credit: Darren Robb

[The seaside towns of Britain are a mixed bunch](#). We're blessed with some absolute delights, from Southwold to St Ives, from North Berwick to Bamburgh, from Whitstable to Whitby, and from St Davids to St Andrews. But for every elegant Llandudno, there's a down-at-heel Rhyl, Skegness or [Weston-super-Mare](#).

Across the Channel, contrary to what some may think, it's a similar story. There are [seaside gems](#), and there are eyesores. Here, our experts in France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Croatia, Turkey and Greece sort the wheat from the chaff.

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Five overlooked corners of

The prettiest Collioure, France



Collioure – come for the Occitanie beauty, stay for the tiny fish Credit: Stefano Politi Markovina/Getty

How cool does a place have to be to get away with anchovies as its local speciality? Pretty cool – in fact, as cool as Collioure on the deep south Roussillon coast. This is the only spot on the Occitanie seaside with that sheen of glamour coating Riviera resorts further east. It boasts art, history and bronzed beautiful people by the beachful. But, though cool, it's also hot, fierce of sun, sea – and the colours which drove Matisse and Derain towards fauvism.

Here, the flat Occitan coast runs into the dying sighs of the Pyrenees. Up spring rocks, creeks, and hills bearing forts and vertical vineyards. In town, the huge château of the Kings of Mallorca (long story) oversees a labyrinth of tiny streets, the beaches and the sense that the glam prettiness is subordinate to the tempestuous Catalan temperament. The talk is not of A-listers and airhead international flotsam and jetsam. It is of strong wine, rugby – and anchovies. Call in at the Maison Desclaux for all your anchovy requirements (maison-desclaux.com).

Where to stay: The elegant Casa Païral (hotel-casa-pairal.com); doubles from £112). *Anthony Peregrine*

Cefalù, Sicily, Italy



Climb to the top of the cliff overlooking Cefalù for unmatched views of the town Credit: iStockphoto



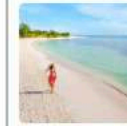
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A favourite for many reasons, not least a host of good memories across several visits, notably relaxing here after a hike through the Madonie mountains from Enna, at Sicily's heart. It's a perfect little medieval town (visitsicily.info/en/cefalu) made special by its sublime setting – under an immense, step-sided crag – and a matchless Norman Romanesque cathedral that frames the palms and pretty cafés on Piazza del Duomo. It's only a small town beach, but nearby Salinelle, Caldura and Pollina offer further options.

Where to stay: In town at Taliammari (taliammari.it; doubles from £160), or overlooking the sea two miles east at Kalura (hotelkalura.com; doubles from £120). *Tim Jepson*

Comporta, Portugal



Comporta's distinctive white and blue buildings run onto a magnificent stretch of beach. Credit: Greg Dickinson

Choosing just one favourite seaside resort in a country with many thousands of miles of coastline is tricky, but I'll plump for [Comporta](#). Despite being increasingly famous for the A-list residents who live around it, you will still probably see more storks, perched on bell towers and chimneys, than humans on the glorious stretch of seaside. The village itself has maintained its charms, and is filled with characteristic white-washed buildings with blue trim. Step inside any of the enticing shops, though, and there is a definite South of France flair. This is a Mediterranean meets the Atlantic delight. Chic and breezy.

Where to stay: A two-minute stroll from the town's shops and restaurants, and within walking distance of the beach, is stylish [AlmaLusa Comporta](#), offering doubles from €130. *Mary Lussiana*

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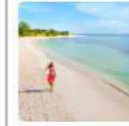
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Rovinj, Croatia



Expect sun, sea and exquisite sunsets in Rovinj Credit: Moment RF

Picture-perfect, with its alluring old town perched on a tiny peninsula, capped by a hilltop church, Rovinj has everything you need for a quintessential beach holiday – a dreamy fishing harbour rimmed by seafood restaurants, plus modern summery hotels and reliable watersports providers. Catch a shuttle-boat to the pine-scented Sveti Andrija islet for a swim, join a scuba-diving trip to the Baron Gautsch wreck, or cycle the leafy paths of Zlatni Rt park. Take a sunset stroll along the coast, dine on grilled seabass (Rovinj has two Michelin-starred venues), and round off with waterside cocktails by candle-light.

Where to stay: [The Grand Park Hotel](#), with fantastic views of the old town and a spa with a spectacular rooftop pool. *Jane Foster*

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