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The heat is on for half-term

Do your homework if you're planning to flee the dreary British winter on a last-minute family sunshine break during half-term.

Besides the holiday cost, you'll need to factor in the prices in destinations and the temperature.

Researchers from Post Office Travel Money looked at the cost of a "basket" of typical family meals, drinks and other tourist staples such as sunscreen and water. It found the cheapest option at half-term will be Spain's Costa del Sol, coming in at a total of £43.

But that relatively short flight south will mean you'll be expecting only around 15-17C.

Fly further south and east to Cyprus and you'll be set for 18-19C and a basket costing £11 more than the Costa del Sol.

Tenerife is always a safe bet in February with the mercury hitting up to 21-22C, though the basket comes in at £13 more than southern Spain.

For guaranteed sunshine, the desert heat of Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt and Dubai will always deliver.

Getting there will of course mean greater expense and longer flights, but you can expect to bask in 24-25C and 26-27C respectively.

Offset that against the basket costs though, and in Egypt you'll be coughing up £73 and in Dubai it's a whopping £170 with food and booze as the main factors.

Old favourite Malta is not as far away as Cyprus on the plane, and should be around 17C, with a basket cost of £67.

Here are Mirror Travel's pick of late deals for these five half-term destinations for a family of four:

COSTA DEL SOL

■7nts a/i at the 4* Marinas de Nerja Aparthotel, Nerja, from £367pp. Fly from Manchester on February 15. onthebeach.co.uk, 0871 474 3000.

■5nts s/c at the 3* Medplaya Hotel Bali, Benalmadena, for £264pp, departing from Bristol on February 15. easyjet.com/holidays, 0843 104 1000.

CYPRUS

■7nts B&B at the 5* Alexander The Great Hotel, Paphos, from £1,409 for the family (hold luggage/transfers extra) flying from Gatwick on February 15. thomascook.com, 0844 412 5970.

MALTA

■4nts B&B at the 4* Db San Antonio Hotel & Spa, Qawra, for £382 per adult and £224 per child inc flights from Birmingham on February 16. maltadirect.com, 0845 604 0035.

SHARM EL-SHEIKH

■7nts a/i at the Coral Sea Aqua Club Thomson Family Resort from £475pp inc flights from Gatwick on Feb 17 and transfers. Manchester departure from £480pp. thomson.co.uk, 0871 230 2555.

DUBAI

■4nts B&B at the 5* Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa, UAE, from £605pp inc flights from Heathrow on February 16 and transfers from Dubai. virginholidays.co.uk, 0844 557 3859.

■3nts B&B at the 5* Hyatt Regency Dubai and Galleria from £619pp for departure from Heathrow on February 16. ba.com/dubai, 0844 493 0123.

TRAVEL

Nicola Methven takes her family camping in a regal corner of Norfolk

Sun, sea &

Holidaymakers heading to Norfolk often end up to the north and east of the county, but I say go west. There's loads in the western part to give it kudos as a family holiday destination, and we set off for our four-night stay near King's Lynn armed with several sleeping bags, a few boxes of food and a stack of towels.

Hardy campers we're not, so it was lucky the campsite had an area containing eight 'pods' – rounded wooden structures with much more protection than canvas.

Inside, there was a double bed, sofa bed, and all the essentials, a fridge, microwave and TV. So far, so good.

The kids were champing at the bit to get to the seaside so, stopping only to purchase the obligatory bucket and spade sets, we headed past the arcades and funfair rides at Hunstanton to the much more charming Old Hunstanton where, unusually for the east coast, the shore faces west.

After parking above the beach, it was a short walk down to a huge stretch of sand where we did all the things people who don't get out on a beach much do... we ran about, wrote names with sticks, drew pictures, built sandcastles and collected shells.

We'd shaken off the city and took on coastal life

The sheer expanse of open space and fresh air was exhilarating, and in no time at all we'd shaken off the city and fully embraced coastal living, Norfolk style.

On the way back to the car, we went into an antiques, arts and crafts centre, which had a vast array of gifts and knick-knacks – including original Beatles LPs from the 60s. After I'd said "don't touch" for the 100th time, it was definitely time to leave, so we headed back to the car.

PODS Rounded structures perfect for camping novices

Dinner was at The Gate pub in Middleton, a homely welcoming place with friendly staff and a decent menu of traditional meals including fish and chips, steaks and pies.

The next day, we decided to check out Castle Rising, a 12th-century fortress, which was spectacular. The children, Ruby, six, and four-year-old George, enjoyed running down the steep grass verge into the now dry moat.

From certain angles, the castle looks almost perfect. Closer inspection reveals that the roof has largely disappeared, but most of the walls are intact. There are even rooms which remain as they would have been in medieval times.

We romped around pretending to be knights and princesses, marvelling at where the oven would have been in the kitchen. Although the upper floor is no longer there, we enjoyed exploring the walkway which runs around the edge and imagining the

Cruise news

WITH **CAPTAIN GREYBEARD**

Luxury cruise line Seabourn has chosen the names of its next two ships. Seabourn Encore will launch late next year followed by Seabourn Ovation in spring 2018.

This will be the second Ovation in the worldwide cruise fleet following next summer's launch of Royal Caribbean's Ovation of the Seas – third vessel of the 4,180-passenger Quantum class.

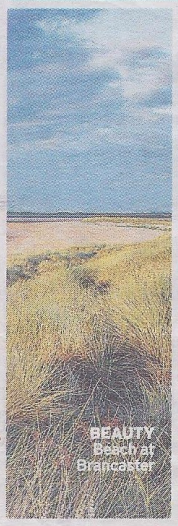
Seabourn's new pair are developments of its successful Odyssey class. The two new ships, being built in Italy, have an extra deck and are designed to carry 604 passengers each and almost the same number of crew.

The company claims the two newcomers, will give it the most modern ultra-luxury fleet in the industry.

■**Passengers from Fred Olsen's Boudicca were flown home from Tenerife on Thursday after their 18-night cruise to the Canaries and Cape Verde islands was cut short by a fire in the engine room.**

The 784 passengers affected will get a full fare refund and a 50% discount on their next booking. And the ship is expected to be repaired and shipshape by February 7 in time for a new 14-night trip to the Canaries.

Ferry passenger numbers on the UK's 75 routes were up 2.6% in 2014 to 39 million, a rise of one million travellers year on year. discoverferries.com


BEAUTY Beach at Brancaster

MAJESTIC Sandringham House

Sandringham...

STURDY 12th-century Castle Rising

BRAVE Ruby and George meet some old friends

banquets that happened there all those centuries ago.

When we'd had our fill, a five-minute walk down the road took us to the pretty Unique Garden Tea Rooms.

For any royalists out there, a trip to this part of the world would not be complete without a visit to Sandringham House, the Queen's winter residence. But if it's the great outdoors you crave, then Sandringham Country Park has 600 acres of woods and parkland. During the summer months, there are tractors with trailers to take visitors all over the grounds.

The house itself, set in extensive gardens, is worth a visit because it looks as though every gift the Queen's ever been given while trotting the globe has been put on display here. The mishmash of styles gives the place a strange feel.

As you wander around you can't help but picture the royals relaxing there over Christmas, taking the corgis for a turn in the grounds and eating one of the huge local turkeys. (sandringhamestate.co.uk, family tickets £33.50, adults £9.45.)

As the weather had perked up, we enjoyed a barbecue outside our pod and slept like logs thanks to all the fresh air we'd enjoyed.

The next day we took the children to Dinosaur Adventure, which meant driving east into mid-Norfolk to Lenwade.

The place had been recommended by friends with kids and didn't disappoint. (dinosauradventure.co.uk, adults £9.45, child £12.30.)

We walked for MILES that day, so wear decent footwear. By the end, we'd collected all eight stamps on the passport we'd been given which meant a medal each (hurrah!). My highlights were the Dinosaur Trail, where you walk through a forest peppered with prehistoric creatures, and the Secret Animal Garden, where the kids quite happily let all sorts of things crawl over their hands, including a cockroach. Yuk!

You cannot help but picture royals relaxing

We headed back via the North Norfolk coastal town of Cromer, where we enjoyed dinner in the Cliftonville Hotel's Bolton's Bistro before driving back to our pod.

The campsite – King's Lynn Caravan & Camping Park – is perfectly placed near the A47 to get out and about easily into King's Lynn itself with its historic buildings, shops and markets.

The washrooms were kept clean and there were plenty of showers, so no queuing – always a bonus when indulging in a spot of communal living.

Our last day of fun in the West Norfolk sun was spent at Brancaster, another enormous stretch of sand where we bravely had a picnic without a windbreak. The children even put on their swimsuits and ended up wet, sandy and happy.

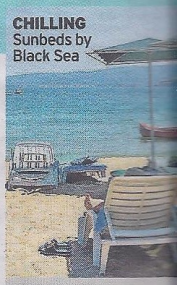
Our stay had been jam-packed and we hadn't even had time to make it along to the RSPB nature reserve or the Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary.

But there's always next summer...

Get there

- Pitchup.com has breaks in a Camping Mega Pod (sleeps up to 4) at King's Lynn Caravan and Camping Park from →£40pn. The site also offers pitches for traditional camping.
- King's Lynn Caravan and Camping Park is in North Runcton, close to the the Hardwick roundabout where the A47, A10, A149 and A17 meet. King's Lynn railway station is about 4 miles
- Tourist info: visitnorfolk.co.uk

BEST TIME TO GO If Norfolk's good enough for the Queen it's good enough for the west of us spring-autumn


CHILLING Sunbeds by Black Sea

Water, w... at Bulga...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE

with a balcony overl... pool, beach and the t... and everything is spot... – we even see maid... sand off the footpaths...

Each of the four h... own swimming pool ... at the Marina Beach ... huge, and literally a few... the beach.

There are plenty of s... sunshades, both roun... and on the beach, so ... problem finding one... e... the Germans and Russians – who make up the majority of the hotel's guests – ignore the signs saying that it is forbidden to reserve them.

The Marina Beach pool is where all the activities, such as water polo and aquarobics, take pl... these are happening th... music so if you want more relaxing you m... use one of the other p...

For us, however, it is... and Alison enjoys a vigorous workouts. w... happy to spend sever... in the water regardless going on elsewhere.

Other leisure activiti... at Duni include tenn... mini golf, mountain ... various watersports.

In the evenings t... excellent entertainm... put on shows at th... amphitheatre in th...

Get ther...

- Balkan Holidays ha... Marina Beach Hotel in... inc flights from Gatwi... Manchester departure... £520pp. Transfers inc... balkanholidays.co.uk.
- Tourist info: bulgar...

TIME ZONE UK +2hr...

CURRENCY Lev £1 =...

BEST TIME TO GO ...

CHURCHILL REMEMBERED WITH FULL YEA...

Fifty years ago yesterday the nation said farewell at a state funeral for the man regarded by many as the Greatest Briton.

And to mark the death of wartime prime minister Sir Winston Churchill, aged 90, there will be a series of events through the year.

The Death of a Hero exhibition at his family home in Chartwell, Kent, runs to November 1 and explores the latter weeks of his life, the funeral and his legacy.

It features artefacts such as the flag that flew over Washington DC the day he died and a chance to walk in his footsteps on a Life and Legacy family trail at the National Trust property. nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell To February 27 £6.50 adult/£3.25 child (house is closed, exhibition open); from February 28-November 1 £13 adult/£6.50 child (house open).

London's Science Museum is hosting a major exhibition Churchill: Science in War and Peace to March 1, 2016.

It spotlights individual scientists and their achievements under the direction of Churchill in two sections – the uniqueness of scientific innovations to the British war effort, and how the huge wave of wartime research boosted the science of the 1950s. Admission free. sciencemuseum.org.uk

Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire was the birthplace of Churchill and it will reopen on February 14 with a newly refreshed, permanent exhibition on his life. It will include