

5 cheap as chips trips

New year, low cash flow? Don't worry, **Andy Jarosz** has five fab adventure trips reached by budget airline routes. If you can bear the fanfare or the bright orange seats, happy hols!

Most people taking a short break with Ryanair or easyJet go for a city break, to explore the local culture, or to become familiar with the nightlife and cheap beer, of a large city. Yet one of the unsung benefits of the cheap flights boom is the way it has opened up some wonderful adventure breaks that would previously require so much more effort and money to do. Destinations that were difficult to get to are now only a couple of hours away and can be reached for as little as £30 (or less if you're very lucky).

Here are five suggestions for great adventure weekends that can be reached by low-cost airlines.

Kayaking in Croatia

Dubrovnik is rightly considered one of Europe's most picturesque cities, yet the crowds of tourists during the day can make this tiny city feel very crowded. But if you head out of the city you can enjoy a kayaking break, taking the chance to explore some of the nearby Elaphite islands and experience some fine seafood and local Mediterranean produce. While day kayaking trips are possible, weekend and four-day trips give you the best chance to explore the traditional islands and coastal features. The kayaking is rarely hard work, and is liberally interspersed with stops at remote beaches for a spot of snorkelling. It's a great way to enjoy a popular destination from a completely different angle. The nearest airport is Dubrovnik, served by easyJet from Gatwick and Stansted.

Cycling in Portugal

If your idea of a perfect cycling holiday is one where hills are few and far between while good food and drink are plentiful, Portugal is an excellent choice. Head to the Alentejo region in the central interior of the country, where mile after mile of endless fields are dotted with occasional cork trees while storks' nests on telegraph poles are a frequent sight. Base yourself in the lovely old walled city of Evora and explore the surrounding countryside for as many days as you have to spare. Avoid the summer months when the heat can make cycling very hard work. The nearest airport is Lisbon; easyJet goes there from London, Bristol and Edinburgh.

Climb North Africa's highest mountain

Thanks to Morocco's place on the low cost flight map you can enjoy an adventure weekend in Africa. Only three hours' flight from London, a visit to Marrakech can be combined with a two or three-day trek up Mount Toubkal, the highest mountain in North Africa. The views from the top take in the peaks of the Atlas Mountains, and on a clear day stretch out to the Sahara Desert. In summer the climb is non-technical, but in winter, reliable snow creates a playground for winter mountaineering. The nearest airport is Marrakech, served by Ryanair (from Bristol, East Midlands, Edinburgh and London) and easyJet (from Gatwick and Manchester).

Sailing in Poland

Poland has become a popular short break destination in recent years with the glut of cheap flights to and from the UK. One region that remains relatively undiscovered is the picturesque Mazurian Lake District in the north east of the country. It has long been a popular sailing area with German tourists and there is a very good tourism infrastructure in place, with good hotels, sailing schools and a choice of boat rental options. This is a flat lakeland (unlike the English Lake District) but the scenery is no less beautiful. The nearest airport is Gdansk or Warsaw; Gdansk is served by Ryanair from lots of airports; both are served by Hungarian airline Wizz Air, www.wizzair.com. It's low-budget, in case the name didn't give it away.

Climbing in Spain

Take a trip to southern Spain and head inland from the crowded coast. In little over an hour from the major resorts you'll reach Sella, a popular destination for climbers of all abilities. There's enough to keep a serious climber occupied for a full two-week break without even giving the coast a second thought. For those who only have a few days to spare it is just a question of how much of a challenge you're looking for, or if you don't want to rock climb, there are three via ferrata nearby too. The nearest airport is Alicante, served by easyJet and Ryanair from thousands of UK bases. ■

Andy writes for Tourdust.com, an adventure travel site that connects travellers with local outfitters.



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