



With temperatures across the world soaring, residents and tourists alike are looking towards new pastures to escape the ever-growing heatwaves – and “coolcationing” is fast becoming the new word on the tourism radar

# Cool Runnings

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ABOVE: The cliff-nestled Sümela Monastery in Altındere valley in Trabzon province

There's no two ways around it: the world is getting hotter. It's not as new of a phenomenon as some might think, either – temperatures have been rising since 1850, by 0.06°C per decade. That rate has since increased, and according to climate scientists, it seems to be doing so exponentially. Since 1982, it's been crawling up three times as

fast, with the heat soaring by 0.20°C per decade, and 2014-2023 were reported as 10 of the hottest years on record. According to scientists from Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), March 2024 was the warmest March ever recorded on a global level, and May 2024 was the most scorching May in history.

Amidst the many changes in temperatures and weather patterns

stemming from climate change – from extreme weather events and air pollution to issues surrounding everything from health to food growth and production – a trend has risen: coolcationing. Much like the portmanteaus daycationing and staycationing, this trend, as the name suggests, involves an increasing amount of people being attracted to destinations based on the weather. Or

## TRAVEL TRENDS

to be specific, places that offer a cool escape from the boiling seasonal heat.

While the Middle East has long been known for its hot summers, the increased focus on temperatures has made room for more people to learn that not everywhere in the region is as hot as one might think. To the uninitiated, the difference between the heat of the desert by day and how much cooler it tends to get by nightfall is already a surprise – yet even fewer have realised how much of the region is actually as refreshing as places like Europe, the US, or Asia, even in the summer months. Here are some to note.

### TRABZON, TÜRKIYE

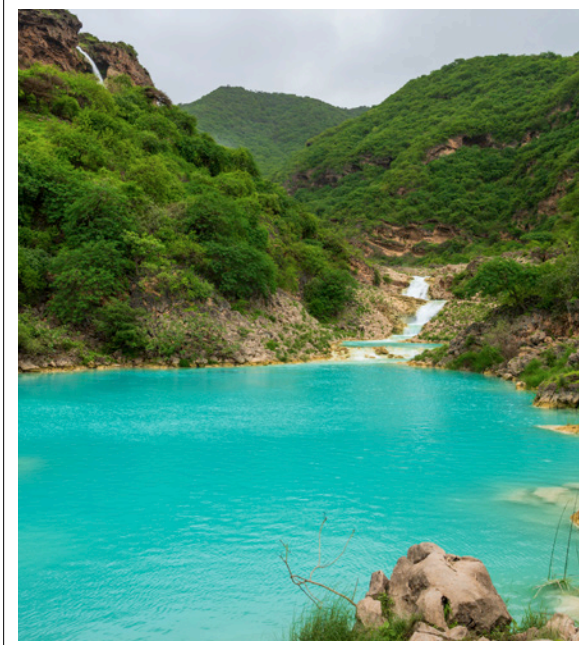
Located on the Black Sea coast in the northeast of Türkiye, this beautiful city is surrounded by both mountain and sea. During the summers, daytime temperatures go up to 24-26°C by day and fall to 17-21°C at night. This culturally-rich destination makes for a delightfully peaceful escape. It has a fascinating heritage rife with ancient ruins, mansions, and monasteries, alongside stunning landscapes in which to enjoy outdoor activities such as mountain hiking and camping, as well as beaches that can be enjoyed with a serving of delicious seafood. The city is also famous for its tea, as one of Türkiye's largest tea-growing regions.

### JABAL AKHDAR, OMAN

While average temperatures in Oman's capital can reach up to 40°C or more in the summer, at Jabal Akhdar, it drops to around 24-32°C. There are a number of properties right in the heart of the range, including the Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar and the Alila Jabal Akhdar, both of which make for a serene and rather romantic escape from not only the summer heat, but the hustle and bustle of city life, too. Here, you can go hiking, explore the local villages, partake in some via ferrata, or even do some zip-lining. The area is also famous for its Damask roses, which bloom around the green mountain in the season just before – so it's well worth trying a spa treatment incorporating some local rosewater.



IMAGES: AYHAN ALTUN, RICHARD SHARROCKS/GETTY IMAGES; DUDLAIZOV, SONIA BIRKELBACH, GRAFVISON/ADOBE STOCKS



### SALALAH, OMAN

Another cooler part of Oman, Salalah is a lush area in its southern Dhofar province for which the peak season to visit is actually the summertime. The birthplace of the former Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, Salalah is famous for its Khareef – an annual monsoon season that transforms the dry desert terrain into a verdant landscape filled with flourishing trees, seasonal waterfalls, and lush valleys. The season takes place from June to September, with temperatures running between 24-32°C. When you're not enjoying the scenery (where you can even go kayaking!) you can visit the nearby Frankincense Land Museum to learn more about the country's mystical, fragrant resin that is exported across the world as a luxury item. →

TOP: Small rural villages situated on the Saiq Plateau at Jabal Akhdar mountain in Oman

ABOVE: Wadi Dharbat, Salalah, Oman

LEFT FROM TOP: Frankincense and Damask roses are two of Oman's best exports; Trabzon's hills are known for its plantations of Türkiye's famous tea



## CHILLY THRILLS

LOOKING TO GO SOMEWHERE COOL OUTSIDE OF THE MIDDLE EAST? YOU CAN'T GO WRONG WITH THESE PICKS



### Graubünden, Switzerland

Known for its alpine grandeur, this canton offers chances to explore the Swiss National Park,

explore Jacobshorn Mountain, take a cable car up Piz Nair, look over tranquil mountain lakes in the picturesque Engadine Valley, and even go hiking with llamas. You can go horse-riding, paragliding, fly-fishing, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, or kick back in one of its spa towns and healing thermal baths – then refuel at Michelin-starred dining venues in St. Moritz. Summer climes run from 22-23°C by day, and 10-11°C by night.



### South Coast, Iceland

Iceland's Midnight Sun never fully sets, and average summer temperatures run between 10-13°C. It's

a great time to visit the glacial Jökulsárlón lake, or Diamond Beach and Reynisfiara Black Sand Beach. The former's gleaming shards of ice sparkle like diamonds, while the latter boasts dramatic vistas of volcanic ash, jagged rock formations, and curious sea caves that look otherworldly when lit up with its glowing painted sunsets. Want more? Explore The Golden Circle, a route that covers three of the country's most famous natural attractions.



### Scottish Highlands, the British Isles

This part of Scotland can get blisteringly cold during the winter, but in summer, temperatures can

reach a comfortable 17°C. This vast area runs over more than 11,000 sq mi abundant with natural beauty. Some famous spots include Loch Ness, the Isle of Skye, Inverness, Glen Coe, and the Jacobite Steam Train – recognisable to many as the Hogwarts Express from the film series based off of J.K. Rowling's seminal *Harry Potter* series. Visit a castle or two, enjoy a pint, and take in the magnificent panoramas for a holiday to remember.

### MZAAR, LEBANON

In the winter, Mzaar Kfardebian – formerly known as Faraya Mzaar – is beloved as the country's largest ski resort. But in the summer, the area transforms into a nature-lover's haven just one hour away from Beirut. The snow melts and gives way to green mountains wonderful for hiking and mountain biking on, ATV and 4x4 drives, paragliding, and plenty more, with the crisp air warming up to 25-28°C by day and still keeping guests snuggling up cozily at night with lows of 9-12°C.



FROM TOP: Scenic view of the pass in the mountainous region of Mzaar Kfardebian; Rijal Almaa village in Aseer, Saudi Arabia



### ASEER, SAUDI ARABIA

During summer, temperatures in Jeddah and Riyadh can rise to 37-43°C, but the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is so vast that in the southwest of the country, summer climes can feel considerably different. In addition to boasting the highest peaks in the country, the Aseer province receives more rainfall than the rest of the country, and in the summer, this area generally reports a comparative 26-29°C. While it can get quite warm in the midday hours, early mornings and late nights can be foggy and even feel somewhat frosty. The province extends all the way to the Red Sea coast, where a number of the high-end properties are already

open – and visitors can snorkel, dive, and enjoy a wide range of refreshing motorised and non-motorised watersports (not to mention thriving marine and coral life). If mountains are more your speed, there are plenty of craggy nooks to explore. In Abha, the Aseer National Park and Shada Castle are popular haunts, while in Al Habala and Al Namas, you'll find waterfalls, mountain trails, small local villages with hand-made art and tribal handicrafts to peruse, and even a museum and palace. Known as "The Arabian Highlands", more than US\$13 million has been invested into the development of the area, with the mega-project to be a major draw in the country's Vision 2030 plans. **BT**