

## Late summer holidays are a bargain hunter's dream



Umbrellas out: You'll pay less to head to the sun in September and October

Summer's over. A fact not only signalled by the new school term but the inevitable early arrival of gloomy autumnal weather. But it's not all bad news – at least if you haven't yet taken your summer holiday. For the sound of the school bell also heralds the plummeting of holiday prices.

A quick whizz around the late offers on travel websites reveals some rock-bottom deals are available during term-time in September and October as the travel companies race to clear their shelves. For example, Lowcostholidays.com is offering a week on the Spanish island of Majorca from £97. Travelsupermarket.com has seven nights in the Algarve, Portugal, for £102. And Lastminute.com is doing a week on the Greek island of Crete from £189.

The word on the street is that prices are particularly low this autumn because it has been hard to shift holidays during the peak summer period. Maria Whiteman, chief executive officer of directline holidays, explains. "Events such as the volcano, strike action, the demise of Sun4U, Kiss and Goldtrail this summer have resulted in many Brits carefully considering their foreign holidays. As a result, we are seeing unprecedented prices this September as tour operators attempt to outbid each other in order to capture a slice of the market," she says.

"A quick glance at directline- holidays.co.uk today shows a week in Ibiza retailing at just £195 – unheard of in peak season," she adds. "Holiday firms are slashing prices to entice customers to book and these price wars are likely to continue until they have recouped some of the losses from earlier this year. It's a great time for holiday makers to bag a bargain."

But as we all know, it's not just the price of the holiday package that matters, the cost of daily life in your chosen destination also needs totting up. Take it from me, I have just returned from Normandy in France, where our family soon realised that we should have brought the week's self-catering shop with us on the ferry, and restaurant visits were tempered by London prices.

So where should you go for a late summer break? One interesting winner was Croatia due to the fact that the kuna offered British holidaymakers six per cent more spending power this summer. Sweden and Denmark performed well, too, with kroner sales revealing that we have taken a fancy to Scandinavia this year. Though you may find them a little on the chilly side if you're searching for late sun.

Currency-exchange company Travelex concurs that Croatia offers good value at the moment, and suggests other autumn destinations to consider include Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland. Forget the financial crisis, this might be the year you can afford that exotic holiday.

