

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

Typical flight time 3 hours

With Iceland Express (www.icelandexpress.co.uk)

Why go? This is the world's most northerly capital. Skip the party scene and lose yourself in the spectacular scenery. It's cheaper—but colder and darker—out of season. Visit the Pearl, a modern structure that houses the Saga Museum, a revolving restaurant and a panoramic viewing platform.

Where to stay 101 Hotel—Nordic-chic boutique hotel.

Reykjavik

Faroe Islands

Prefer to spend more time enjoying your break than getting there? Fortunately there's an inspiring variety of international destinations just a few hours from the UK. Matthew Stibbe presents the short-haul shortlist. Illustration by Michael A Hill

5
hours

4
hours

3
hours

2
hours

1
hour

1
hour

SO NEAR YET SO FAR

MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

Typical flight time 4 hours

With British Airways (www.ba.com)

Why go? Choose between Churchillian indulgence and an authentic Moroccan experience: medieval ramparts, henna-painters in Jemaa el Fnaa square, rooftop cafés and browsing in the souk. At night the city really comes to life, with a thrillingly exotic atmosphere.

Where to stay: La Mamounia for 1920s glamour, or Riad Farnatchi, just five delightful suites in the oldest part of town.

Marrakech

FAROE ISLANDS**Typical flight time** 2 hours**With** Atlantic Airways (www.atlantic.fo)

Why go? The Faroe Islands, lying in the Gulf Stream north of Scotland and half-way between Norway and Iceland, are perfect for nature-loving escapists. No part of any of the islands is more than three miles from the sea yet the highest mountain is 882m. It's as if someone took the Alps and submerged them in the Atlantic.

Where to stay Hotel Føroyar.**TALLINN, ESTONIA****Typical flight time** 3 hours**With** Estonian Air (www.estonian-air.co.uk)

Why go? Tallinn has one of the best preserved medieval town centres in Europe, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Olde Hansa restaurant serves medieval food; but as Estonia modernises, it increasingly looks north to high-tech Finland rather than back to its medieval and Soviet past.

Where to stay Radisson SAS Hotel, more Nokia than Soviet.**RUKA, FINLAND****Typical flight time** 5 hours**With** Finnair (www.finnair.com)

Why go? As if getting to see the Northern Lights isn't reason enough to make this trip, you can expect excellent, snow-sure skiing on 28 slopes during the eight-month season as well as snowboarding on the Vuosseli Super Pipe. But it's not all winter sports—in summer, there's plenty of excellent hiking and camping.

Where to stay RukaSuites Apartment Hotel.**AMMAN, JORDAN****Typical flight time** 5 hours**With** Royal Jordanian (www.rja.com.jo)

Why go? Amman is no more than five hours' drive from anywhere in the country, so it makes an ideal base for exploration. Visit the Dead Sea, the Roman amphitheatre, Karak Crusader castle and the ancient, "rose-red", carved city of Petra (the Treasury will be familiar from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

Where to stay The Four Seasons, on top of one of Amman's seven hills.**DUBROVNIK, CROATIA****Typical flight time** 3 hours**With** British Airways (www.ba.com)

Why go? Visiting Dubrovnik now is like rediscovering the French Riviera after the war. The sun is still shining, the sea is still blue and the architecture is still beautiful. The town has been fully restored after the violence of the 1990s, and Croatia got to keep over 1,000 miles of glorious Adriatic coastline.

Where to stay Pucic Palace, a 19-room luxury boutique hotel.**ISTANBUL, TURKEY****Typical flight time** 4 hours**With** Turkish Airlines (www.turkishairlines.com)

Why go? For the blend of old and new, east and west, poverty and glamour. Daytime musts include the Hagia Sofia, the Blue Mosque and the Topkapi Palace. At night, try clubs such as Layla on the Bosphorus with its mix of western and Turkish music, or dinner with great views at Sunset restaurant in Ulus.

Where to stay Four Seasons Hotel in the heart of the old city.