**AITO inspiration – City and Short Breaks**

**Here are some of the best City and Short Break ideas available with members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO,** [**www.aito.com**](http://www.aito.com)**).**

**Want to squeeze in a city break or short trip before Christmas, or to plan something for 2015 to look forward to? Choose from a range of ideas, from Christmas shopping in Turin, celebrating New Year in medieval Lucca or the Alentejo, or perhaps discovering Dresden, to mountain climbing in Poland, driving a classic car around Scotland, and much, much more . . .**

**Celebrate the New Year in medieval Lucca – from £475 pp with Inntravel**

See in the [New Year in the walled city of Lucca](http://www.aito.com/italy/new-year-the-delights-of-lucca), staying at the four-star Hotel Ilaria, elegantly converted from the old stables of Villa Bottini, located by the wall’s medieval gates. Use Inntravel’s detailed notes to enjoy a leisurely walk in a city that remains one of Tuscany’s best-kept secrets: ascend the Torre Guinigi - a 130-foot tower topped by ancient oak trees - visit the birthplace of composer Giacomo Puccini or discover the Botanical Gardens. Alternatively, make the most of the hotel’s free bikes to explore the streets and piazzas like a local. On New Year’s Eve, guests are treated to a gastronomic four-course dinner with wine in a nearby restaurant and later can join the local celebrations of live music and fireworks. Departing 29 December, three nights’ B&B costs £475 pp (two sharing) including one dinner, walking notes and taxi transfers from Pisa Airport. Flights extra.  Call AITO\* member Inntravel on 01653 617000 ([www.inntravel.co.uk](http://www.inntravel.co.uk/)).

**Kasbah Du Toubkal and magical Marrakech – from £415 pp with Discover Travel Ltd**

After a private airport transfer, be whisked across the plain to the Gorge of Moulay Brahim, before being greeted by staff in traditional Berber fashion at the award-winning [Kasbah Du Toubkal](http://www.aito.com/discover-ltd/trekking-in-style-and-marrakech/1). Enjoy a three-night stay, before returning to the magical city of Marrakech for two nights in a riad. Five nights’ accommodation costs from £415 pp (two sharing), including half-board at the Kasbah and B&B at the riad, and transfers. Flights extra. Call AITO\* member Discover Travel Ltd on 01959 577394 ([www.disc over.ltd.uk](http://www.discover.ltd.uk/)).

**Climb Poland’s highest peak and sightsee in Krakow – from £375 pp with KE Adventure**

This [new walking holiday](http://www.aito.com/poland/rysy-weekend-classic-short-bre) combines an ascent of Rysy (2,499m), the crowning glory of the High Tatra, and a beautiful walk through the mountains with sightseeing in the mountain resort of Zakopane and the walled city of Krakow. From Krakow, transfer to Zakopane and hike to the charming Roztoka hut situated deep in the forest below Ryse. Summiting Rysy by lunchtime on the second day, walk out of the mountains through the lovely Rusinowa Polana Meadow. After checking out the vibrant sporting resort of Zakopane, return to Krakow for a city tour and dinner in one of its excellent restaurants. This three-day trip costs from £375 pp (two sharing) and includes all meals, a local guide, transfers and a guided tour of Krakow. Flights extra. Departures from 18 June 2015. Call AITO\* member KE Adventure Travel on 017687 73966. ([www.keadventure.com](http://www.keadventure.com/)).

**Exciting city break to Dresden – from £1,885 pp with Ciceorni Travel**

[Dresden](http://www.aito.com/germany/dresden-and-the-saxon-court) has been transformed over the last 20 years, and its 18th century glories have been returned to their original splendour – the city now looks much as it did when painted by the great Venetian view painter, Bellotto. This six-day guided tour will focus on Dresden’s cultural riches, particularly its architecture, art and music, including visits to Meissen and three country palaces. Departing 14 April 2015, the five-night stay at the city’s finest hotel - the five-star Kempinski Taschenberg Palace - costs from £1,885 pp (two sharing) including B&B, some meals with wine, flights (Heathrow) and guided tours by art historian, Tom Duncan. Tickets to the Semper Opera can also be arranged. Call AITO\* member Ciceroni Travel on 01869 811167 ([www.ciceroni.co.uk](http://www.ciceroni.co.uk/)).

**See Scotland differently – Classic British car touring from £519 pp with McKinlay Kidd**

Want to see what an MGB, E-type Jaguar, Triumph TR6 or Lotus Elise can do? Discover some of the [best driving in Scotland](http://www.aito.com/scotland/classic-british-car-touring) and combine the thrill of the open road and some jaw-droppingly beautiful scenery. It's a heady combination, adding glamour and excitement to a remarkable journey to the highlands, taking you from Glendevon to Speyside and on to the stunning West Highlands. Three nights’ B&B costs from £519 pp (two sharing), including four days’ hire of your choice of classic car on an unlimited mileage basis. Call AITO\* member McKinlay Kidd on 0844 873 6110 ([www.seescotlanddifferently.co.uk](http://www.seescotlanddifferently.co.uk/)).

**Turin, Ballet, chocolate & Christmas lights** **– from £1,540 pp with Kudu Travel**

Turin at Christmastime epitomises the style for which Italy is so admired, with special exhibitions, sophisticated lights illuminating the *palazzi* in the city centre, and historic *caffés*serving *bicerin*, a delicious mixture of chocolate, cream and coffee. Enjoy this [pre-Christmas break](http://www.aito.com/italy/turin-ballet-chocolate-and-art), featuring a performance of ‘Giselle’ by the celebrated Cuban National Ballet and a concert by the Italian National Symphony Orchestra, plus visits to the Royal collections, the amazing National Museum of Cinema and the newly-restored Egyptian Museum. Departing 10 December, this four-night trip costs £1,540 pp (two sharing), including four-star accommodation, all meals and wine, private transport, entrance fees, top-category ballet and concert tickets, plus a specialist tour guide. Call AITO\* member Kudu Travel on 01225 436 115 ([www.kudutravel.com](http://www.kudutravel.com/)).

**New Year in the Alentejo *–* from £1,695pp with Arblaster & Clarke**

Travel to the UNESCO-listed city of Evora and explore the Alentejo region of Portugal, which is developing a reputation for its local wines. Visiting both the rising stars and those that still maintain the traditional method of wine-making in the region, with cellars lined with huge ‘Ali Baba’ style pots called *talhas,* enjoy an array of tastings at specially-selected wine estates. Staying at a four-star hotel just outside the walls of Evora, New Year will be a lively affair, with a four-course dinner and plenty of canapés and cocktails, plus a late night/early morning buffet of traditional dishes - including roast suckling pig. Departing 29 December, this [four-night break](http://www.aito.com/portugal/alentejo-new-year-wine-holiday) costs from £1,695 pp (two sharing) including most meals, flights (Heathrow) and winery visits and tastings. Call AITO\* member Arblaster & Clarke on 01730 263111 ([www.winetours.co.uk](http://www.winetours.co.uk)).

**Four-star value in Venice – from £749 pp with Kirker Holidays**

For a sublime stay in the heart of [Venice](http://www.aito.com/italy/ca-dei-conti) that’s kind on the pocket as well as good for the soul, the four-star superior Ca’ dei Conti hotel ticks all the boxes. Just a short stroll from St. Mark’s Square, this former patrician Venetian palace offers a delightful boutique hotel experience in a superb setting. Enjoy four nights for the price of three from £749 pp (two sharing) - saving £120 pp - on year-round departures (subject to availability). The price includes flights (London), water taxi transfers (a very special way to arrive), accommodation with breakfast, guaranteed entrance tickets to a choice of either the Doge’s Palace, Guggenheim or Accademia, Kirker’s guide notes to restaurants, museums and sightseeing and the services of the Kirker Concierge to book opera tickets, expert local guides or a table for dinner. Call AITO\* member Kirker Holidays on 020 7593 2283 ([www.kirkerholidays.com](http://www.kirkerholidays.com/)).

**Charm-filled city break – Coimbra from £603 pp with Sunvil Discovery**

Portugal’s former capital city, little-known Coimbra, has attractions aplenty to enjoy on a city break. The University of Coimbra is the country’s oldest: pay a visit to the splendid Baroque library, where a resident colony of bats protects the ancient tomes by eating all the harmful insects. The narrow streets which wind down the city’s hillside are dotted with lively bars and cute cafés and, come evening, the melancholy voices of *fado*singers waft through the air. A [three-night trip](http://www.aito.com/portugal/charm-filled-coimbra-city-break) staying at Quinta das Lagrimas, a striking and palatial lemon-yellow building, set within 20 acres of botanical gardens, costs from £603 pp (two sharing) including B&B, flights (Gatwick) and car hire. Call AITO\* Sunvil Discovery on 020 8758 4722 ([www.sunvil.co.uk](http://www.sunvil.co.uk/)).

**Learn the art of French cookery near Bordeaux – from £980 pp with Expressions Holidays**

Spend three or four nights at [Le Saint James](http://www.aito.com/france/cookery-in-aquitaine), a Relais & Chateaux hotel with a Michelin-starred restaurant on the edge of Bordeaux, overlooking its own vineyards. Two cookery lessons are included and more can be added in the hotel’s purpose-built cookery school kitchen, where you’ll learn themed, bistro or regional world cooking. There’s time to explore nearby Bordeaux, St Emilion or the Médoc vineyards, too (car hire can be arranged). This holiday operates without a minimum number of participants and you simply join in with classes that the hotel’s cookery school is running on a weekly basis. Three nights’ B&B costs from £980 pp including flights, private car transfers, one five-course dinner on the first evening and two cookery lessons. Call AITO\* member Expressions Holidays on 01752 878040 ([www.expressionsholidays.co.uk](http://www.expressionsholidays.co.uk/)).

**\*AITO is a highly-respected travel organisation that provides an unrivalled collection of exciting, specialist holidays from award-winning tour operators.  Its 120-plus members are all focused on quality of customer experience and personal service, and aim to offer sustainable travel options.**

**Ends – 2 September 2014**

**Press:** For more information about AITO ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)) please contact Sue Ockwell, Rebecca Milne or Laura Manning at Travel PR (020 8891 4440, [s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk), [r.milne@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:r.milne@travelpr.co.uk) or [l.manning@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:l.manning@travelpr.co.uk)).