

Where to go when

Summer's hottest spots

From star-studded film festivals to hotel openings, **Killian Fox** picks interesting happenings and destinations to visit in the months ahead

May

Cannes Film Festival

The world's most glamorous celebration of cinema returns from May 11 to 22 with Robert De Niro as head of the jury. The veteran actor will be passing judgement on films by Pedro Almodóvar, Terrence Malick and Woody Allen, whose *Midnight in Paris* opens the festival. Among the stars treading the red carpet and promenading on the Croisette this year will be Brad Pitt and Kirsten Dunst. The town is always jammed during the festival, as indeed is the entire Côte d'Azur. The smart way of getting around is to use the swish new Riviera Limousine boat service, which whisks guests up and down the coast – from Cannes to Nice airport and even Monaco – beating the traffic in style. Owned by the Beauvallon Sur Mer hotel in the Bay of St-Tropez, the sleek 12-metre Fjord yacht can also be hired for day trips to the Côte d'Azur's glorious islands and beaches. You may forget about cinema-going entirely.

One-day charter of Beauvallon Sur Mer Riviera Limousine boat service (www.lebeauvallon.com/boatservice; 00 33 4 94 55 78 73) costs from €2,000 (Dh10,481). A trip from St Tropez to Cannes costs €490 (Dh2,567).

Six Senses Laamu, Maldives

The first Six Senses resort in the Maldives is also the resort in the deserted Laamu Atoll in the south of the archipelago. Situated on the privately owned Olhuvelli island, the 97-villa resort opens on to blue waters, white sands and lush jungle. Care has been taken to design the resort in harmony with its surroundings and according to eco principles, but no expense has been spared on luxury in the villas. The emphasis at Laamu is on relaxation: the resort contains a spa with five treatment rooms and two treatment "nests" hidden among the vegetation. Snorkelling and diving enthusiasts are well catered for with a pristine coral reef nearby, and the surfing is excellent, too. The food is grown and caught locally, with the sea only steps away and the resort's organic garden – planted with herbs, papayas and 10 types of chillies – even closer.

Double rooms at Six Senses Laamu (www.sixsenses.com/SixSenses-Laamu; 00 960 680 0800) cost from US\$689 (Dh2,530) per night, including taxes.

Late skiing at Mammoth Mountain, California, US

The ski season in the northern hemisphere doesn't necessarily come to a close in April. At Mammoth Mountain, in California's High Sierras, the fun continues well into the summer, with lots of snow and sunshine 300 days a year. This enormous resort is a haven for snowboarders, who come to play on seven different snow parks over 36.4 hectares with three pipes and more than 50 jumps, but skiers will enjoy themselves, too. Recent investments of \$100m (Dh367m) have been made into lifts and services. The only downside is the weekend crowds: avoid them with a trip to sister resort June Mountain, where Mammoth ski passes are valid. The season continues into July, but go in May to catch the resort at its best.

Double rooms at the upscale Westin Monarche (www.westinmammoth.com; 00 1 760 934 2526) cost from US\$240 (Dh881) per night, including taxes. Daily lift passes cost from US\$72 (Dh264).

Great Wall Marathon

Forget London and New York. If you're looking for a marathon to run this year that's as spectacular as it is challenging (what other circuit

can claim to take place on one of the seven wonders of the world?), try the Great Wall Marathon on May 21. Last year, nearly 2,000 brave souls ran 40km along China's famous stone fortifications, starting and finishing at the fort in Huangyaguan, north of Tianjin. Now in its 10th year, the marathon, according to its tagline, involves "5,164 steps into history" – the number of steps runners must climb and descend. If that seems intimidating, there are less scary options – a half-marathon, a 10km run and a 5km run. Before and after the marathon, runners spend relaxing nights in Beijing and enjoy optional day trips to the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace.

The six-day itinerary, with full-board accommodation, costs from US\$1,205 (Dh4,425) per person, including taxes. Visit www.great-wall-marathon.com.

June

Glamping in Bolivia

The astonishing Salar de Univi in Bolivia is the world's largest salt flat, covering 10,582 sq km near the crest of the Andes. A new holiday from the British operator Bales Worldwide allows you to visit this otherworldly landscape in style. The high point of the holiday (literally high, at an altitude of 3,656m) is a night of "glamping", or glamorous camping, in a luxurious tented camp on the edge of the flats. Dinner is served as the sun sets over the expanse of pure white, stained pink here and there by flocks of flamingos, and the following day is spent exploring those awe-inspiring lunar-like plains. The nine-day trip also includes time in Lima, the capital of Peru and a paradise for food lovers, as well as visits to La Paz and Lake Titicaca, where a hydrofoil whisks you among islands with ancient Incan temples and sacred fountains.

A nine-day glamping holiday with Bales (www.balesworldwide.com; 00 44 845 057 1819) costs from £2,145 (Dh12,824) per person, including transfers, sightseeing, the services of an English-speaking guide, accommodation, some meals and taxes.

Aman Sveti Stefan, Montenegro

In the 15th century, the island of Sveti Stefan on Montenegro's stunning Adriatic coastline was fortified by fishermen as a haven from pirates. In the 1950s, it became a haven of a more glamorous nature when movie stars such as Kirk Douglas, Sophia Loren and Marilyn Monroe stayed at the island's beautiful hotel. The resort closed during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the civil war in the 1990s but is now being reopened as a luxurious resort by Aman, a Singapore-based company. Aman's largest restoration effort to date, the project's first phase, completed in 2008, was a grand villa on the mainland. Now the hugely ambitious second phase is complete and officially opens at the end of May. In addition to 50 cottages and suites, the island also has three black-tile pools and a central piazza where you'll find a bakery and a cigar room and an *enoteca* serving tapas al fresco.

Double rooms at the Aman Sveti Stefan (www.amanresorts.com; 00 382 33 420 000) cost from €700 (Dh3668) per night, including taxes.

Yes! New Hotel, Athens

The Campana brothers, Humberto and Fernando, are acclaimed Brazilian designers renowned for transforming found objects – old wood, plastic tubes, aluminium wires – into eccentric furniture and other household goods. Their work has been shown at the Museum of Modern

Art in New York. Now, together with Dakis Joannou, a hotel owner and art lover, they are transforming an entire hotel, the old Olympic Palace in Athens, into something dazzlingly new and no less eccentric than their previous work. Opening next month, the New Hotel looks set to be a design-lover's paradise, full of weird and wonderful details, including chairs made of counting frames, plates composed of old vinyl records and guitar-shaped cutlery. There is also a "vertical garden" designed by Patrick Blanc. The hotel, situated on Filiklinon Street in the heart of Athens, will have 79 rooms. Staying here will be like spending a night or two in an art gallery.

Double rooms at the New Hotel (www.yeshotels.gr; 00 30 210 628 4565) cost from €160 (Dh838) per night, including breakfast and taxes.

Heli-skiing at Puma Lodge, Chile

Opening on June 15 to coincide with the start of Chile's ski season, Puma Lodge, situated in a remote area of the central Andes but just 90 minutes by car from Santiago, claims to be Chile's first heli-ski lodge. Nestled beneath the vast Cordillera range, amid peaks that rise up to 5,300m, the lodge has a private operating terrain encompassing more than 12,950 sq km of virgin snow, making it a very attractive alternative to crowded, queue-filled ski resorts. The helicopter trips are led by professional mountain guides who guarantee at least 10,000 vertical metres of skiing on a three-day jaunt. The lodge itself, designed with eco principles in mind, is kitted out with full spa facilities, a gym, an outdoor jacuzzi, a library and a boutique ski shop. It's worth noting that the management know their business inside-out: owner Mark H Jones is a world-record holder for vertical endurance skiing and a former ski stuntman. You'll be in excellent hands.

A three-day heli-ski package at Puma Lodge (http://chileanheliski.com), including transfers from Santiago, four nights' accommodation and full board, costs from US\$6,750 (Dh24,789), including taxes.

Port Eliot Festival, Cornwall, England

Port Eliot started out in 2003 as a tiny literary festival on a beautiful estate in Cornwall, in south-west England, owned for centuries by the St Germans family. Since then it has branched out to include music, art, food, fashion, comedy and even a flower show. Now the little festival is expanding to cinema and has landed a very big name indeed, the director Martin Scorsese, who programmes a four-night season of outdoor films between July 21 to 24. Showing on a giant screen next to a river, with a train bridge looming in the distance, his film choices include *Murder on the Orient Express*, Jean Renoir's *The River* and Scorsese's personal favourite, *The Red Shoes*. It has not yet been confirmed whether Scorsese will be there in person, but the author Hanif Kureishi, the singer Caitlin Rose and the Oscar-winning costume designer Sandy Powell, among many others, will attend. Luxury camping in airstream caravans and yurts on the Port Eliot grounds can be booked through the website.

Tickets for the Port Eliot Festival (www.portelifestival.com; 00 01 503 232783) cost from £140 (Dh537), including booking fees and taxes.

July

Mandarin Oriental Paris and Manet exhibition

It's one of the most eagerly anticipated hotel openings of the year. On

July 1, the long-awaited Mandarin Oriental Paris will open its doors on the fashionable rue Saint Honoré, a short walk from the Louvre. The hotel has 99 rooms and 39 suites, including a presidential suite with private dining and terraces overlooking the city. For foodies, the most exciting element is the involvement of the celebrated chef Thierry Marx, who, as culinary director, oversees not just the two restaurants, Sur Mesure and Camelia, but also the hotel's cake shop. The signature spa has seven private treatment suites, a hammam and a swimming pool. If you're in the city around the time of the opening, don't miss the extraordinary survey of Manet's work – "The Inventor of Modernity" – at the Musée d'Orsay, featuring 200 of the Impressionist master's paintings. It closes on July 3.

Double rooms at the Mandarin Oriental (www.mandarinoriental.com/paris; 00 33 1 5504 8021) cost from €765 (Dh4,122), including taxes. Tickets for the Manet show cost €8 (Dh42) and are available at www.musee-orsay.fr/en/home.html.

Saadani River Lodge, Tanzania

Two-and-a-half hours by road north of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, the Wami River winds through Saadani, the only coastal national park in East Africa, and flows into the Indian Ocean. On the banks of the Wami, three kilometres from the sea, a new eco lodge opens on June 15. Tucked away in riverbank forest along the southern border of the park, Saadani River Lodge consists of 18 luxury suites and one private villa. Conservation is of great importance to the owners of the lodge, who seek to protect local wildlife from poaching and are replanting indigenous flora in areas affected by charcoal production. Nature lovers will definitely feel at home here, with game drives, walking safaris and sailing trips on offer. A dhow takes guests snorkelling off sandbanks in the ocean and tag-and-release sport fishing can be arranged. Visit in July, when the landscape is still green from the rainy season. *Double rooms at the Saadani River Lodge (http://saadaniriverlodge.com; 00 255 713 555 678) cost from US\$210 (Dh771), including full board and taxes.*

Sanctuary Zebra Plains, Zambia

Rumour has it that Zambia is the next great African travel destination, with its unspoilt, rugged landscapes and excellent safari opportunities. If you're planning a wildlife-spotting trip here, don't expect opulent game lodges and highly developed infrastructure. This country is for true lovers of the bush, although the new Sanctuary Zebra Plains retreat in South Luangwa National Park doesn't exactly entail slumming it. Opening on June 1, the riverside camp contains only four tents – two doubles and two twins – allowing for a maximum of eight guests, but the tents are as luxurious as you could hope for, with real beds, flush toilets en suite and plenty of old-world charm. Spotting game is the main focus here – the area is populated by giraffes, zebras, buffaloes, elephants and the occasional leopard, as well as more than 400 species of birds. Walking safaris, pioneered in South Luangwa, are the best way to enjoy the local wildlife.

A three-night stay at Sanctuary Zebra Plains (www.sanctuaryretreats.com; 00 20 7190 7728) costs from US\$1,650 (Dh6,060) per person, including taxes. There is a special opening offer this year, valid for the entire season (from June until October), where the second guest stays for half price.



Above, a water villa deck at Six Senses Laamu, Maldives. Below, left to right, Saadani River Lodge in Tanzania; skiing on Mammoth Mountain in California; Beauvallon III, a limousine boat on the French Riviera; the bathroom in a deluxe cottage at Aman Sveti Stefan, Montenegro. Six Senses



Six Senses Resorts & Spas



D'Arcy Leck



Photo by James Reeve



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