

news HOME to 334 stunning provincial parks, six national parks and Niagara Falls, Ontario is spectacular in the autumn.

To see its leafy splendour in all its glory, the best time to visit is from mid-September to mid-October. Muskoka, consistently voted one of the best fall foliage destinations in the world, is a peaceful haven just two hours north of Toronto and home to 1,600 picturesque lakes.

Haliburton and Kawartha are 90 minutes' drive from Toronto and packed full of lakes and forests ablaze with golden, red and orange hues. Try a canopy tour in Haliburton Forest. It's over 500m long and between 10 and 20m above the forest floor.

See ontariotravel.net for more information.



GO GREEK IN VILLA

JAMES Villa Holidays has expanded into the Greek region of Halkidiki and is offering nine unique properties on the beautiful Kassandra Peninsula.

With historical and archaeological attractions, inviting sandy beaches and striking pine forests, Halkidiki's mix of culture and natural beauty make it an ideal location for a Greek villa break.

The villas, which will expand James Villa Holidays' portfolio of Greek properties to 374, will initially be based in Hanioti and Paliouri.

They will have four properties at the friendly family run villa complex in Hanioti, a charming village with white sandy beaches and traditional tavernas.

The boutique resort features a gym, mini-spa, indoor heated pool and sauna.

Villa Kassandra, from James Villas' Classic collection, is one of the four properties available there.

Located on a small hillside, the villa has great views over the resort and across the sea, and allows guests to be near the hustle and bustle of Hanioti yet in a tranquil location. The property is modern and spacious, with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a private swimming pool and free Wi-Fi.

A further five villas will be in the Kappa Resort only kilometres from Paliouri, a lovely village that's tucked away at the foot of the Kassandra Peninsula. The villas on offer in Paliouri include Electra Villa from James Villas' Simply Collection and Iliachtis from the Classic Collection.

See jamesvillas.co.uk or call 0800 074 0122.



TIME FOR MARITIM

IT'S not every day you can stay in a hotel which has history at its heart — but the 5★ Maritim Resort Spa Mauritius has the Historical Ruins of Balacava in its grounds for those looking for something more than just an idyllic holiday in paradise.

The well-preserved ruins include a flower mill, distillery and dam (declared a national monument) and nearby there is an animal farm and giant tortoise park.

But relaxation is also high on the agenda here with the Maritim Tropical Flower Spa, which recently scooped the World Luxury Spa Award. There is even a romantic waterfall and five restaurants to enjoy Mauritian specialties and food from around the globe. See maritim.com

news **FEATUREING** world-class facilities, La Manga Club is a firm favourite with golfers across Europe and players can end the 2017 season in style by heading to Spainto compete in the popular La Manga Club Golf Open from December 5-8.

Tournament packages feature four nights' accommodation in the 5★ Hotel Principe Felipe from £425pp or 4★ Las Lomas Village from £355pp, including breakfast and a welcome pack, a cocktail reception, a gala dinner and prize-giving ceremony, as well as discounts of 15 per cent when eating at any of the resort's Amapola, Asia, Luigi's and La Bodega restaurants. See lamangaclub.com

FAMOUS FOOTIE STADIUM IS TOP OF TO-DO LIST IN SPANISH CITY



PITCH PERFECT . . . our Jim loved being the Madrid gaffer and visiting the incredible Bernabeu. Below, city's beautiful skyline



ONLY PLACE TO STAY . . . Only You Hotel, above and left, is a perfect base to explore city



Madrid is Real deal

AS I sat in the dugout waving instructions to Ronaldo and Ramos and Bale, I swear I could hear those 80,000 fans roaring us on . . . honest.

OK, OK, nobody else could, but it was easy to imagine as I got caught up in the atmosphere and surroundings of the biggest football club in the world — Real Madrid.

Sure, Spain's capital city is loaded with culture. There are art museums, historic monuments and squares and churches everywhere.

But they weren't top of my list. On a two-day break there was one place I just had to visit — Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Home to the European champions, the undisputed glamour side of Europe (sorry Killie), even if you're only remotely interested in football, the stadium tour is a must-do on a trip there.

We had flown into the city on an early-morning flight from Edinburgh and after a

GO: MADRID

GETTING THERE: For the best flights and prices to Madrid see Skyscanner.net or cheap-flights.co.uk

STAYING THERE: Double rooms at Only YOU Hotel Atocha hotel in Madrid start from approx £132.50 a night, two sharing. See onlyyouhotels.com

20-minute bus ride into the city centre we found our hotel — the Only You Hotel Atocha — straight across from the main train/bus station. Good start.

And it got even better. The Only You Hotel is listed as a 4★ but it got ten out of ten from us during our short stay.

It's quirky, not at all stuffy. The reception is set back from the main entrance and you might think you're in a really cool restaurant or bar when you come in off the street.

We thought the contemporary décor and mix 'n' match furniture was great. And our room? Wow. It was really a small apartment with smart,

comfortable furniture, an exposed brickwork wall and a comfy king-sized bed. There was also a beautifully tiled bathroom with great walk-in shower. Nothing seemed cramped in, it was a great place to relax.

And that seemed to be the theme running through the hotel. The staff were keen to help with any inquiries and always with a smile.

As I said, I had the Bernabeu at the top of my list — but it could wait until we got our bearings. The city bus tour, with its old and new routes covers all the main tourist spots and after buying a two-day pass at the hotel, pretty soon we were checking out the history of this great city.

The Spanish have a tradition of eating a grape for every one of the clock's 12 chimes as it counts down to midnight — so the clock in Puerta del Sol is probably the mostly famous in the country.

And with that all ticked off, we decided to stop for lunch. We found a small café/restaurant in a back street ten minutes' walk from the hotel and tucked into local wine and delicious toasted bread with a variety of toppings.

I'd done a little bit of research before we wandered in and it paid off — the food was

terrific, reasonably priced and served up by a friendly owner who was happy to chat even though it was a busy lunchtime.

We were so impressed we went back for an evening meal before we left.

We wandered up to the famous Prado Museum, only ten minutes from the hotel and Spain's main art museum, considered one of the best in the world.

A good 20-minute walk will also get you to the Plaza Mayor while the magnificent monument to King Alfonso XII in Buen Retiro Parque is even closer. All these places are also on the city bus tour's historic route.

and it's worth a visit. From there, we wandered over to the Plaza Mayor, a large impressive square and another tourist hotspot.

The Plaza saw a few public executions during the Spanish Inquisition but these days it's an exclusive residential area with a ring of old and traditional shops.

A short walk from there is Puerta del Sol, one of the busiest places in Madrid. Surrounded by all the big shop names, it's a large square featured every year on Spanish TV for the New Year celebrations.

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But there was only one place I wanted to see on the modern route though — the Bernabeu.

You can opt for the guided tour but we felt the 25 euro do-as-you-like deal was the best idea.

You start from near the top of the breathtaking stands and work your way down through the stadium to pitchside and the dugouts and on down into the dressing rooms where some of the most expensive players in the world have been.

There's a stunning display of those 12 European Cup and Champions League trophies they've won and there's plenty of stuff in there about the club's star players, past and present.

After all that we were ready for a quick lunch then we headed back to our favourite hotel for a coffee in the ground floor bakery before taking a well-earned siesta.

We left Madrid feeling we hadn't quite seen it all but when we return there's only one place for us — Only You.

JIM PATRICK

What costs what?

A two-course lunch for two with drinks costs between 30 and 50 euros

Do use the bus service from the airport terminal into Madrid

Don't forget to drink plenty of water — it's hot in summer!

AUTUMN DAYS OUT

AUTUMN is such a magical time to get out and about in Scotland as the leaves turn rich red, gold and warm orange in the Perthshire forests, the glens of the Highlands and the coastal trail of Aberdeenshire.

There are lots of events on throughout the country this autumn, including the **ENCHANTED FOREST** at Faskally Wood in Perthshire until October 29. The outdoor sound and light show takes place at Forestry Commission wood near Pitlochry. Tickets cost from £10 (free for children under 3). See enchantedforest.org.uk

Or head to Cowal in Argyll for **COWAL-FEST**, the annual walking and arts festival from October 6-15. The ten-day programme offers various walks, arts and crafts, dancing and music and much more. See cowal-fest.org

Or head to Rosemarkie on the Black Isle where you can spot dolphins at Channory Point as well as indulge in the magic of autumn colours on a walk at Fairy Glen. The walk follows a clear footpath throughout, with steps, and is free of charge. See rspb.org.uk

ABERDEENSHIRE COASTAL TRAIL is brand new for this year and covers 165 miles from St Cyrus Stonehaven, heading north towards Balmiedie and Cruden Bay, and then on to Fraserburgh and MacDuff. See visitscotland.com/aberdeenshire

A drive on the B8019 road is ideal for seeing Perthshire in its autumn glory at **QUEEN'S VIEW**. Its location on the north shore of Loch Tummel in Highland Perthshire has everything — lochs, mountains and forests. The view, below, was named after Queen Victoria visited there in 1866 and loved it.

Covering 85 miles, the **FIFE COASTAL ROUTE** starts from Kincardine and goes to Newport on Tay.

From Fife's famous bridges, passing through historic towns and the picturesque fishing villages of the East Neuk with their distinctive pantiled roofs and unspoilt beaches, the Coastal Tourist Route gives a taste of all that Fife has to offer.

Fuelled by the autumn rain, the **FALLS OF DOCHART** at Killin in The Trossachs National Park make for a sound and sight spectacular as the water cascades over the rocks and under the bridge.

Follow part of the 12-mile route from Killin to Ardtalnaig, along the famous Rob Roy Way, for views over the head of Loch Tay towards the Tarmachan Ridge and Ben Lawers range.

For more info on places to this autumn, see visitscotland.com



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