Top clues

Want to live next door to Sherlock Holmes? page 9
Sun, sea and city chic, all year round

Cosmopolitan coast: Liz Rowlinson finds the most beautiful urban beach spots that offer second-home owners the best of both worlds

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COVER STORY

It's a well-known dilemma: do you go for the cultural fix and retail therapy of a city break, or chill out on a lounge and enjoy cocktails at a beach bar? Why not do both by visiting a coastal city with a decent beach? The appeal of this best-of-both-lifestyle has driven the demand for second homes near urban seaside. After all, they make much better year-round homes than those in seasonal beach resorts that close down every winter.

"City-beach destinations are growing in popularity," says Paul Tsentin, associate director of world research for Savills. "They are vibrant, hybrid centres of business and tourism, and residential property benefits from year-round rental demand. They are usually accessible via large international airports, served by affordable and frequent flights that make regular weekend visits viable."

Research by Savills found that investors looking for year-round income should focus on cosmopolitan cities on the coast: Barcelona and Lisbon topped the table of destinations.

So where are the best places to buy if you are both a city slicker and sunworshipper? Coastal cities oozing history are not hard to find, but their beaches are not always particularly tempting.

In recent years, Palma, Majorca's capital, has cleaned up and become a fashionable place to live for many northern Europeans. With the third-busiest airport in Spain, it is easy to reach, and it is full of upmarket restaurants and designer shops. Property transactions have increased by 31 per cent since 2013.

Its beach area is also undergoing a transformation. The opposite side of the bay of Palma from Magalat, Playa de Palma is a three-mile stretch of wide sandy beach with a long promenade dotted with palm trees and open-air bars. Backed by holiday apartment blocks, it sprang up in the Seventies but disappeared off the radar of British tourists. Yet it offers superb fundamentals: a family-friendly Blue Flag beach with smart loungers for hire, proximity to the old town and the

SEA VIEWS

A huge penthouse in Miami, cover, is $25 million through Sotheby's; a flat in Barcelona's Diagonal Mar, above, is £980,000 with Lucas Fox.

Airport (fewer than 10 minutes' drive), and now an increasing complement of five-star hotels with new restaurants. There are also waterparks: Olympic sailing champion Ben Ainslie has trained at Playa de Palma's Club Náutico de El Arenal.

A private consortium of hotels, restaurants and services set up in 2014 is behind the area's upgrade. Mike Ferrer, who was born and bred in Palma, has been spearheading the €550 million ($627 million) upgrade, which includes the five-star hotels Pure Salt Granada, Llubisty and Llubisi Palace and a newly opened Starbucks. "I left Palma in 1987 to work in Miami and when I came back I didn't like what I saw," he says. "The tourism had gone downhill, driven by offers of free beer and all-inclusive hotel deals, yet I saw how Playa d'en Bossa in nearby Ibiza had moved away from this. There is no reason why Palma Beach cannot be like Miami or Venice Beach or Barcelona - a glorious lifestyle beach." Ferrer suggests it will take five to 10 years, but now is the ideal time to buy a home there, with prices still affordable for south-west Majorca.

Recognising the potential of the area, the upmarket agency Engel & Volkers opened an office there in May and is selling resale properties in need of an update from €75,000 for a studio, €279,000 for a two-bedroom flat and €500,000 for a villa.

This period of change is set to trigger a real boom on Palma Beach," says Terence Fenton, managing partner of the local Engel & Volkers. "We expect that prices will rise significantly in the next three years." Prices for flats in need of renovation start at around €230 per sq ft, with

B E A C H B E A U T Y S

A one-bedroom flat in Palma with a sea-facing terrace, main, is €495,000; a nearby four-bedroom beach house with yellow shutters, below, is €353,000, both with Sotheby's.

'Miami is a real lifestyle city oozing glamour, but it is also a gateway to Latin American trade'
FOR SALE

Homes that combine the best of coast and city

SPAIN
PALMA

This townhouse has 3,120 sq ft spread over two floors. The four-bedroom home has a garage with space for three cars, and a 645 sq ft roof terrace.

Guide Price: £1.3 million
Agent: Engel & Völkers (0304 971 24 40, engel-welkeys.com)

UNITED STATES
MIAMI

Glosshaus is a new building in Coconut Grove with 23 homes. It has a rooftop pool with cabanas, a ground-floor Zen garden and full-height windows.

Guide Price: From $1.99 million
Agent: Sotheby's (305) 362 4025, sothebys.com

PORTUGAL
LISBON

This five-bedroom villa in Estoril was designed by the architect Raul Lino in 1989. It covers 10,040 sq ft and has a large terrace with outdoor dining.

Guide Price: £5.5 million
Agent: Five and Country (020) 7214 6926, fiveandcountry.co.uk

EATING OUT OF THE PALM OF HIS HAND
Mika Farrow, right, is working to make Palm Beach the Miami or Barcelona

the affluent international community,” says Alexander Vaughan of estate agency Lucy Fox. “Its many upmarket restaurants and bars include the latest Café del Mar at Port Forum, which opened this summer.” You can get to Passeig de Gràcia (the famous shopping street) in just 10 minutes by metro or tram, or you can walk, jog or rollerblade along the beach promenade to the city centre. Property prices

in Diagonal Mar average €550 to €600 per sq m, Vaughan says.

If it’s the Miami look that calls you, you could always go for the real thing. The Floridian seaside city offers a year-round sun escape for Europeans and north Americans from chiller climes. It has become a stylish city that appeals both to modern art connoisseurs and sports fans, and bars some flooding in the downtown financial district of Brickell – managed to avoid the worst ravages of Hurricane Irma.

“Miami is now a real lifestyle city with its own glamour and a party atmosphere, yet it continues to develop, especially as the gateway to Latin American trade,” says Hugo Thistlethwayte, head of Savills’ international residential department. “A big change has been the development of Brickell, but Sunny Isles is another new area north of North Beach.” There, next to the white sand beaches of the barrier island and buzzy Collins Avenue, luxurious two-bedroom beachfront condos cost around $1 million (£670,000).

If the United States is too far from London, the only western European capital close to sunny, sandy beaches. The Portuguese city is a tourism and cultural hotspot, and also a start-up hub and a magnet for foreign investors. The waterfront has had a facelift, there’s a new museum of art, architecture and technology, and a change in tenant laws has fuelled the regeneration of old and run-down areas of the city.

Many of the good beaches are on the train line out to Cascais, the former fishing village turned beach resort. You’ll get change from £200,000 for a one-bedroom apartment but there are plenty of luxury offerings too, including apartments at the new Sheraton Cascais resort.

Next-door Estoril is a chic enclave with grand old hotels and casinos that inspired James Bond creator Ian Fleming, while Madeira has recently bought a home in Sintra. That tells you this area is now right in vogue.

THE WEEKLY ROUND UP

Selected snippets from the world of property

Winner: Dame June Whitfield

NOMINATE YOUR SILVER SCREEN STAR THIS YEAR

Previous winners include Dame June Whitfield, Dame Helen Mirren, Dame Judi Dench and Sir Roger Moore. Who would you add to the list? The Churchill Awards, now in their 10th year, celebrate the achievements of people aged 65 and above across all walks of British life, from superstars to local heroes.

Telegraph readers are invited to nominate their favourite performer for the Stage and Screen category by sending a short paragraphs to telegraph readerswards@churchill-retirement.co.uk by October 5.

Theatre: Show of Hands

The incredible show is at the Royal Festival Hall from March 14 to 16.

Theatre: The Night of the Iguana

A new adaptation of Tennessee Williams’ play is at the Donmar Warehouse from January 26.

Theatre: The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

A brand new production of Wes Anderson’s film is at the Barbican from February 3.