

# Out of the way grandma, Malta is for clubbers

Where can you find the most exciting nightspots in 2010? From techno to dubstep, **Sarah Barrell** has got it covered

**F**ix up, look sharp! It's almost a month into 2010; high time you started thinking about that VIP guest list in the sun. This year clubland serves up some surprises when it comes to hotspots and the biggest comes from a small Mediterranean island.

Forget Ibiza, **Malta**, traditional favourite of OAP package holiday-makers is now a magnet for Europe's young and restless. Characterised by superb value, Malta's huge open-air clubs, including Gianpula (gianpula.com) and Numero Uno (club-numero-uno.com), have lately been attracting big-name DJs such as Tiësto and Deadmau5, which in turn has brought in established dance music brands including Creamfields, Ministry of Sound and MTV for the busy summer festival months.

The "season" goes year-round, and a whopping 12,000 local clubbers are said to hit the dance floors at weekends (that's about three per cent of the population - double the UK's figures) with most of the clubs and bars concentrated in the aptly named Paceville, in the island's north-east.

"And it's not all about raving," says *Mixmag* news editor, Nick Stevenson. "Malta is also a great place to chill out with new resorts like Fortina [hotelfortina.com] offering five-star spa treatments and quality food, ideal for detoxing and refuelling between punishing bouts on the dancefloor. And on the neighbouring island of **Gozo**, La Grotta has to be one of the most beautiful clubs around, carved right into a cliff face."

Those with a bigger budget should head for **Brazil**. According to *DJ Magazine's* editor, Ben Murphy, it's an emerging club destination for both the growing Brazilian middle class and international clubbers. "Brazil has some extraordinary clubs, already firmly established on the underground scene but beginning to draw much wider attention." Top of the exotic spots is Green Valley (greenvalley.art.br), a vast, outdoor venue that opened in 2008 but is already a place of pilgrimage for long-haul clubbers. Set an hour south of Sao Paulo, this mega venue holds 6,000 revellers and comes with its own hair salon. "It's more of a community than a club,"

says Murphy. Another rising star in the same region, is Warung (warungclub.com.br) an Indonesian-themed beach-front club which is getting so popular that some are worried about it becoming overrun. "Brazil is where Ibiza was a couple of decades ago," says Murphy. "Only a bit cooler."

Back in Europe, **Berlin** continues to be a massive draw for underground clubbers, led by Berghain (berghain.de), an imposing warehouse in a bleak

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industrial estate on the city's outskirts. "This place is still incredibly underground," says Murphy. "No photographers are allowed inside and the door policy is a mysterious law unto itself. They have the world's best DJs from the underground scene, everything from techno to dubstep, and a very mixed, international gay/straight crowd. It's truly bacchanalian." Watergate (watergate.de) on the banks of the River Spree is another Berlin hub, complete with an outdoor sunrise deck and LED lights that dance a Technicolor rainbow in time to the music.

As a European Capital of Culture that comes without the euro, **Istanbul** (istanbul2010.org) offers decent value for money and, this year, has everything from urban arts gatherings, to rooftop bars and underground clubs. New bars such as Faces (facesistanbul.com) look set to draw locals and Capital of Culture-vultures alike, while established venues such as Indigo (livingindigo.com) are now pulling international DJ names.

But if you like your club culture to come with plenty of bling, there's



In da club: Night bathing in Budapest, top; the Garden Festival, in Petrcane, Croatia, above; and DJ Calvin Harris, inset left LASZLO BELICZAY/EPA; DAVE HOGAN/GETTY; DAVID BOWEN

nowhere like **Las Vegas**. America's Sin City is trying to shake off its theme-park image, building stylish hotels and top-notch restaurants. The clubs are also getting a make-over, no more populated by lounge crooners but DJs such as Paul Oakenfold. In Elvis-style, Oakenfold has residency at The Palms hotel, at the Rain nightclub (palms.com), with trapeze acts and million-dollar light shows alongside.

But what of **Ibiza**? The prototype clubber's isle is still going strong but with high door charges, it's not credit-crunch friendly. "But it's still a great all-round holiday destination," says Murphy. "And there are some alternative/cheaper nights, such as Ibiza Rocks and Reclaim the Dancefloor, which brings in a more indie crowd."

If you want your pounds to stretch right around the clock, it's either Malta, Berlin (such good-value producers and DJs are relocating there in droves, breeding a creative hub for dance music) or further east to **Budapest**. Here, clubs sell drinks for as little as a pound and events such as the Sziget festival (sziget.hu) attract the likes of Prodigy and Armin van Buuren, with half the ticket costs of equivalent central European festivals. **Croatia**, with the Garden Festival (thegardenfestival.eu) and Electric Elephant (electricelephant.co.uk) are other notables, while venues in **Romania**, along the Black Sea coast, score top marks from club cognoscenti for energy and affordability.

Equally cheap and cheerful, mainstream brands including Club 18-30 (club18-30.com) are cashing in on the big-name DJ act, securing partnerships with the likes of Ministry of Sound, Judge Jules and Hed Kandi at their club resorts in the **Med**, **Greece** and **Turkey**. And the **Alps** are big this year with new events aimed at clubbers who want to squeeze in a bit of mountain sports between parties.

New for 2010 is The Big Snow Festival (thebigsnowfestival.com) in **Andorra**. Hosting acts including Pendulum, Eddie Halliwell and Calvin Harris, it looks set to compete with established events such as **Austria's** Snow Bombing (snowbombing.com). This year, Snowbombing welcomes back Fatboy Slim, who will headline after stepping down in 2009 to check into rehab. Take heed clubbers!

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