

of the best in the world. It's not just the pool that draws a seasoned hedonist such as myself. The hotel's aesthetic is a designer's dream, with a concept based on books (the lobby is the "Contents", rooms are "Pages" and the back is the "Index"). I'm staying in "Bookmark" (actually Page

steel white Library, stocked with all manner of Taschenesque tomes. Pre-dinner drinks are taken at the **W Retreat** (00 66 77 915 999; starwoodhotels.com), which makes quite the impression, perched on the north shore, descending down towards the beach. I opt for circular

rain moon party on neighbouring Koh Phangan can be made out in the distance. But I have more refined intentions, namely the new five-course tasting menu. Highlights include marinated black cod with soy bean paste, maitake mushrooms, sesame puree and ginger foam; tender-

in Samui the party doesn't get started until late. I begin my crawl at **Ark Bar** (00 66 77 961 333; ark-bar.com), a shabby-chic beach outfit with low tables and even lower seating on the sand. Curled up on a bed and sinking a couple of ice-cold Singha beers, I'm

game of "guess the guys" (of which there are none) amid a line-up that includes be-wigged and be-jewelled Whitney Houston and Christina Aguilera clones. Afterwards we knock back Sang Som rum and coke at **Sweet Soul Café** (thegreen-mangoclub.com), packed

Back – I couldn't think of a more appropriate way to describe Samui's particular brand of hedonism. A Hedonist's Guide to... (Hg2) is a luxury city guide series for the more decadent traveller. For more information, see hg2.com

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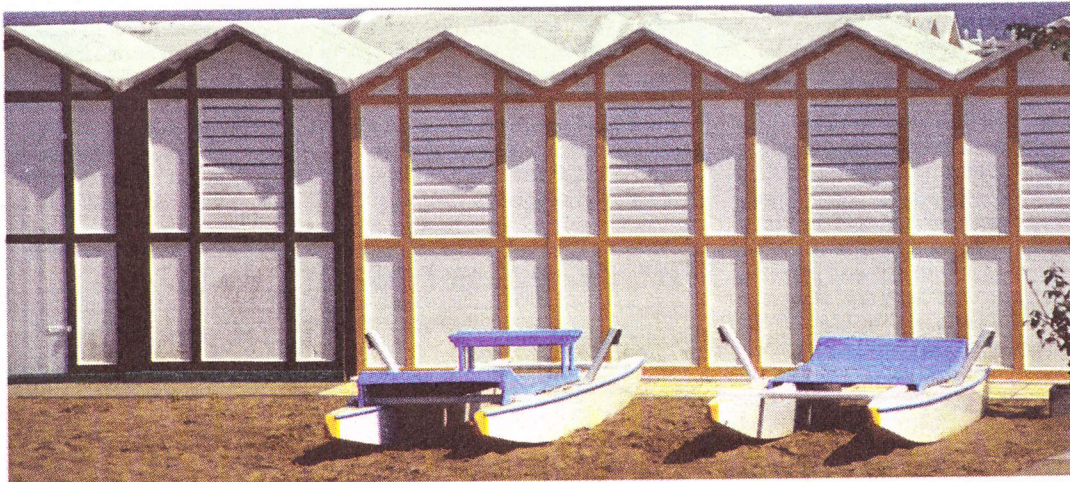
# The taste of paradise

Italy's Emilia Romagna is just *perfect* for sun, sand and meditation by the sea

**T**he sun-kissed resorts of Emilia Romagna's Adriatic coast are renowned throughout Europe as destinations that capture the very essence of an Italian beach holiday – a combination of perfect beaches, gentle sea breezes, golden sunshine that warms the soul, and a calm sea that is just perfect for a dip. No resort captures this more than world-famous Rimini, the perfect base for exploring the region and easily accessible from the UK with scheduled flights into the resort's own airport.

The vital ingredients of such longlasting

success are the warm friendliness and traditional hospitality of the people, in a setting that seamlessly integrates seaside and hills, together with culture and entertainment, creating an unbeatable holiday experience (not forgetting the food and wine of Emilia Romagna, which of course we think is the best in Italy). Accommodation choices are comprehensive – whatever you want, we're sure we've got it – hotels of every category and size, campsites, apartments, private houses and, for something completely different, try the unique experience of *agri-turismo*, where you can enjoy a stay on a working farm.



The fine sand and shallow waters make our coastline the ideal place for families with children, always under the watchful eye of the *bagnino*, the beach lifeguard. In addition to lifeguard supervision, beaches are superbly organised, equipped with parasols, sun beds and plenty of space for beach sports. Early risers can start their

day with pre-dawn meditation on the beach, and perhaps return later on for a soothing massage. If taking it easy on the beach isn't your thing, there are water sports for everyone to enjoy and for visiting sailors, the facilities at the new, very modern marina will meet every demand.

Away from the beach, explore the nearby hills and historic inland villages by bike or on foot, plus there is an impressive network of amusement parks and theme parks. After the sun sets, the action can continue well into the small hours with dancing, pubs and chic cafés galore, bringing a perfect day to a perfect end; and before long the sun will rise once more over the shimmering Adriatic with the promise of another day in paradise.

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The sixth annual Italian summer New Year's Eve. A long 'daydream' kicks off at sunset on Friday 1 July, with an exciting combination of shows, concerts, theatrical performances, art exhibitions and happenings, fireworks, cuisine and conviviality, for a uniquely unforgettable weekend.



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