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Monogram packages for top European cities, plus Trafalgar deals for Italy, Spain and Portugal

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View from the top of the Victoria Tower, the lesser known of the two towers of the Houses of Parliament, towards Big Ben, the River Thames and the London Eye, Westminster, London, London, England.

By: **Kathryn Foliott** Travel Reporter, Published on Tue Feb 19 2013

With so many grand capitals to choose from, it's no wonder Monograms, the independent travel division of group-tour specialist Globus, was able to add a few new options to its long list of city combo packages.

Although the London & Paris package is the company's perennial best-seller, there's something to be said for combining an old classic with a new favourite, such as Paris & Geneva; London & Amsterdam; or Paris, Aix-en-Provence & Nice, all new for 2013. Other combinations include Munich & Berlin, and Prague & Vienna.

All Monograms packages include hotel accommodation with breakfast, city-to-city transfers (usually by rail) and a half-day sightseeing tour, plus the option to add sightseeing tours and excursions. There's also an on-site "Local Host" in every city, ready with everything from dining suggestions to transportation tips.

Monograms' early booking bonus offers savings of up to \$200 per person off any air-inclusive [Europe vacation](#) booked by Feb. 26, or \$100 per person for land-only bookings.

See monogramstravel.ca.

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Mayor Rob Ford still asking lobbyists to

EARLY BOOKING DEAL WITH ACV

Air [Canada Vacations](#) is offering savings worth \$200 per couple on its Flight & Hotel packages to Europe, for bookings made by April 15.

Other combinations such as Flight & Cruise, Flight & Car or Flight & Rail qualify for \$150 per couple in savings, plus combining three components can cut the regular price by up to \$300 per couple.

See [aircanadavacations.com](#).

BEST OF PORTUGAL AND MORE

Several of Trafalgar's trips to Italy, France, Spain and Portugal include wine-tasting excursions, plus — and more importantly for many travellers — each itinerary includes several dining experiences featuring local vintages.

With the company's Early Payment Discount, trip prices for 2013 First Class [Europe tours](#) have been cut by 7.5 per cent, when booked and paid in full by Feb. 28. (Airtfares booked and paid by the same deadline come with the same 7.5 per cent savings).

The 12-day Best of Portugal takes in Lisbon, Vilamoura, Fatima, Evora and Oporto, highlighted by a visit to a port cellar to try some regional wines.

The two-week "Best of France" tours Lyon, Nice, Carcassonne and Bordeaux, stopping in the medieval town of Beaune for a tasting at a cellar, and featuring a "Be My Guest" dinner with local wines at a 17th-century farmhouse in Tours.

See [trafalgar.com](#).

PADDLING IN AMSTERDAM

The Pamper, Paddle & Petals package at The Dylan includes a leisurely ride along Amsterdam's scenic canals, with a travel window timed for spring getaways when the city is in full bloom.

Starting at 750 euros, double occupancy, and representing a 25 per cent savings, the deal includes two nights in a double room with daily buffet breakfast and a lunch plate for two, plus a one-time excursion in the hotel's custom paddleboat. There's also a keepsake tulip vase to take home. Rates are subject to availability for travel April 1 to June 30.

Amsterdam's canal system celebrates its 400th anniversary in 2013 and several events mark the occasion around the city. The famous tulip festival at Keukenhof Gardens starts in late March and goes until May 20.

See [dvlanamsterdam.com](#).

FINNAIR SALE

Finnair has some specially priced fares to Europe, starting at \$679 per person round trip to Helsinki, for travel booked by Feb. 26. Other cities include St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Tallinn and Riga.

The travel window is May 23 to June 20 and Aug. 21 to Sept. 5. See [finnair.com](#) and click on "Canada" under the language menu at the top of the home page.

DUBLIN & THE CLIFFS OF MOHER

Hotel rates on the Emerald Isle are among the lowest in Europe, says Tourism Ireland. That's no doubt contributing to some great prices on tours and packages, such as Transat Holidays' \$1,319 per person lead-in for late April and early May departures of its "Dublin & The Cliffs of Moher" trip, including airfare, transfers and seven nights accommodation with breakfast, plus a three-day "Freedom Ticket" for touring Dublin at your own pace. The trip wraps up with a full-day tour to the stunning Cliffs of Moher.

For a complete list of Ireland travel deals, see [discoverireland.com](#).

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CALABRIA WITH ALBATOURS

AlbaTours' "Vendemmia in Calabria" tour, with one departure only on Sept. 17, comes with a special price of \$1,999 per person, plus tax, double occupancy for bookings made by Feb. 28.

This is the ninth year for the popular nine-day trip, which flies Alitalia to Lamezia and visits Catanzaro, Crotone, Reggio Calabria, Taormina and Vibo Valentia, before heading to Tropea and Pizzo, then on to Consenza in the foothills of the Sila Mountains before returning to Lamezia. English-speaking guided sightseeing is featured throughout, plus four-star hotel accommodation and 16 meals.

See albatours.com.

Kathryn Foliott is a Toronto-based freelance writer. Prices quoted are subject to change and availability.

TOP EUROPICKS

Sunquest: Nine-night Western Med cruise, air, cruise & hotel, \$2,009 (+\$647 taxes & fees) (April 18). sunquest.ca

Air Canada Vacations: Eight-night London, air & hotel, \$871 (+\$627 taxes & fees) (March 17). aircanadavacations.com

Transat Holidays: Paris, air & hotel, \$989 (+\$511 taxes & fees) (May 16). transatholidays.com

Bel Air Travel: Eight-night Madrid, air & hotel, \$1,039 (+\$479 taxes & fees) (June 27). belairtravel.com

Sunwing Vacations: Amsterdam, air only, \$909 (includes taxes & fees) (June 24). sunwing.ca

Sell Off Vacations: Frankfurt, air & hotel, \$844 (+\$620 taxes & fees) (April 10). selloffvacations.com

itravel2000: Brussels, air & hotel, \$1,444 (+\$546 taxes & fees) (April 12). itravel2000.com



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