

# All-inclusive holidays By Season

Enjoy a hassle-free holiday at any time of year

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**TOP TIP**  
AMResorts' Sunscape Puerto Plata is set to open in the Dominican Republic on February 15



SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



WINTER

**J**etting to the Caribbean for winter? Enjoying short-haul sunshine in summer? Some of the hottest spots for all-inclusive holidays are clearly at their best at certain times of the year that booking them then is a no-brainer.

But as our love of all things all-inclusive continues to spread across the globe, it's worth brushing up on when our favourite destinations are in season. If clients have booked an all-inclusive package because it covers all their favourite water sports, there's no point sending them when wind conditions are at their worst. Or if they want to do nothing but sunbathe and drink cocktails by the pool all day, they won't be too impressed to arrive in the rainy season.

Here, we take a look at when some of the most-popular all-inclusive destinations come into their own, so clients will know what to expect.

#### ► SPRING

**Maldives:** "April is the last month of the dry season in the Maldives, and a great time to visit," says Original Diving travel consultant Louisa Fisher. "The weather is still perfect for lying on the beach and soaking up the sunshine, while divers in the South Ari Atoll are in with a good chance of seeing manta rays as well as whale sharks on the very southern tip of the atoll."

Spring makes an ideal compromise for couples who want sunbathing weather and

prime diving conditions. The northeast monsoon season from December to April is the driest time of year and means divers on the eastern sides of the atolls get excellent visibility, then from May to December, the currents change to mean west is best.

**Cape Verde:** Weather is also the key in Cape Verde. Windsurfers and kitesurfers flock to these Atlantic islands for the optimal wind conditions between January and May. Even if clients aren't especially sporty, the breeze off the ocean is a welcome relief for sunbathers, and February to May is also the prime time to go whale-watching off Boa Vista island. This is handy for guests of the all-inclusive Iberostar Club Boa Vista, which is The Cape Verde Experience's best-selling hotel on the island, overlooking one of the prettiest beaches in the archipelago.

**Dubai:** The all-inclusive market is still growing in Dubai, appealing to families and aspirational travellers who want all the glamour of the emirate without a hefty bill at the end. That's why spring – the sweet spot between the peak prices of winter and peak temperatures of summer – is a great time to go all-inclusive, maximising value-for-money without compromising on fun. Time it right, and the trip might also coincide with the Dubai Food Festival or Dubai World Cup horse-racing, both in March.

"A top choice for an all-inclusive holiday in Dubai would be JA Jebel Ali Golf Resort," says

Gold Medal assistant product manager Melanie Burton. "Just 20 minutes from Dubai Marina, this award-winning resort features two hotels, 16 restaurants and bars, an 800-metre private beach and lots of included activities such as tennis, camel rides and non-motorised water sports. It really is all-inclusive at its finest."

#### ► SUMMER

**Cyprus:** Families are a significant target market for all-inclusive stays, giving parents peace of mind on price and taking the pressure off having to find restaurants or entertainment every night. Cyprus's sandy beaches and comfortable climate have always been a family favourite, so the growing number of all-inclusive hotels – particularly at the four and five-star end – make it even more compelling.

Olympic Holidays' top-selling all-inclusives range from Olympic Lagoon Resort Paphos, which has themed buffets and entertainment aplenty; to the five-star St Raphael Resort Hotel in Limassol, where the 'ultra all-inclusive' package allows access to six restaurants and a wider activity programme; and the recently-renovated Tsokkos Beach Hotel in Protaras.

Louis Hotels' new St Elias Resort has also introduced an enhanced all-inclusive package, featuring new speciality restaurant Meze by Elliniko, a renovated pool and water slides, and a new spa and gym.

**Turkey:** Once a mainstay of the budget-friendly family market, Turkey's fortunes have faltered over the past year as consumer confidence has dipped. But that could be about to reverse itself, with a boost from operators such as Red Sea Holidays, which launched its first Greece and Turkey brochure this year. The programme is predominantly all-inclusive, with 26 out of 35 Turkish properties offered on this basis. Travellers can choose from eight resorts via either Dalaman or Antalya, including family favourites such as Marmaris, Belek and Lara Beach.

**Barbados:** The Caribbean? In summer? While it's off-season for the islanders, the chance of a few more downpours – usually over as soon as they've begun – isn't a reason to swear off the region entirely. In fact, July and August are when the locals come out to play, with the Crop Over festival taking centre stage in Barbados, carnival in Antigua and Spicemas in Grenada. Airfares are on the pricy side, but with significantly reduced hotel rates, it's worth exploring. Travel 2 recommends a family-orientated property such as Turtle Beach Resort, where the all-inclusive package covers water sports, kids' club and dining at its sister resorts.

#### ► AUTUMN

**Greece:** Anyone who has braved Greece in summer knows that, although ideal for sunbathing and long, lazy lunches by the sea, anything more strenuous is



LEFT: Cape Verde

RIGHT: Sentido Port Royal Villas & Spa



→ out of the question until it cools down. That's why active types are better off in autumn, when they can get out and appreciate the islands at their best.

Thomas Cook recommends Rhodes, where low-20s temperatures are comfortable for hiking or biking through the mountainous landscapes of the west and interior, discovering deserted beaches, or climbing up to admire the views from the Monastery of Tsambika.

Thomas Cook's adult-only Sentido Port Royal Villas & Spa is on the edge of a sweeping Blue Flag beach, with an outdoor

lagoon, sun terrace and tranquil spa meriting its five-star rating. For families travelling in half-term, the Lindos Princess has Lollo and Bernie kids' club, two children's pools and a beach a short bus ride away.

**Spain:** With many of the same factors in their favour as Greece, the Spanish mainland and islands are perfectly pleasant in autumn. Not only can sun-seekers still catch the last of the warm weather – temperatures stay in the 20s until late September on the mainland and through October in the Canaries – but it's also a better time to see these resorts when they're not overrun with other tourists. Many towns along the Costa del Sol have their



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local fiestas in October – Nerja, Fuengirola, Cadiz and Pedro de Alcantara among them – plus movie buffs can look out for a few familiar faces at the Marbella Film Festival in October.

Over in Tenerife, it's a good opportunity to hike across the lunar landscapes of Mount Teide

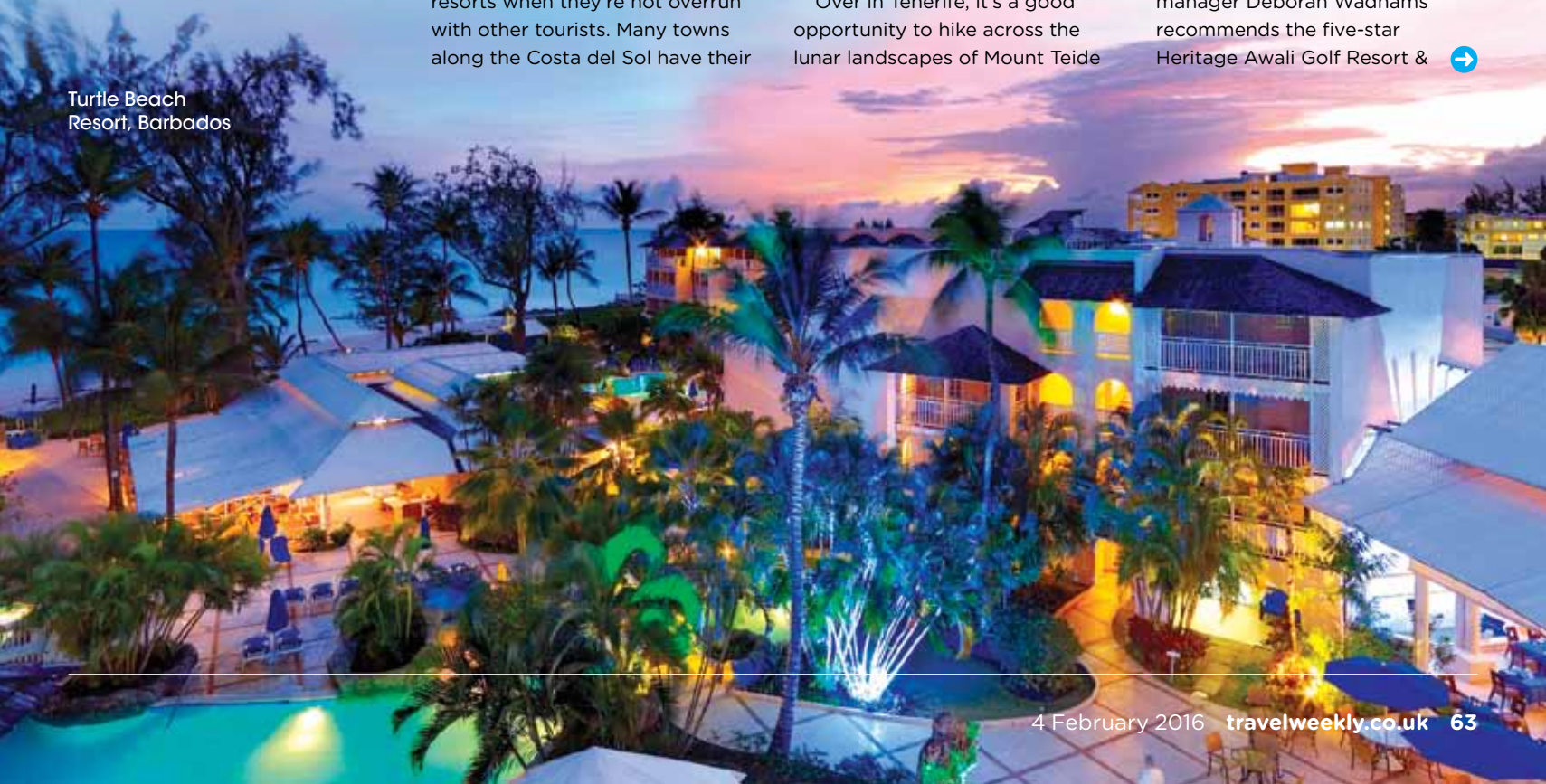
or go kayaking and surfing – don't forget sea temperatures stay warm long after the air has cooled – plus shorter daylight hours give stargazers more time to observe Tenerife's clear skies.

**Mauritius:** There's no such thing as a bad time to visit Mauritius. As one of few truly year-round destinations, the island's warmer, more humid summer runs from October to April, while the July-September winter is drier and cooler (and cheaper). These shoulder-season months, therefore, are a good compromise.

Travel 2 senior product manager Deborah Wadhams recommends the five-star Heritage Awali Golf Resort &



Turtle Beach Resort, Barbados





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LEFT: Heritage Awali Golf & Spa Resort Infinity Blue Restaurant



RIGHT: Beaches Negril

→ Spa. She says: "The hotel has a very comprehensive all-inclusive package, which includes meals at up to five restaurants, afternoon tea, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, one green fee per stay, a spa treatment, non-motorised water sports, and a free baby, kids' and teens' club.

"The hotel is great for couples, and the children's facilities are fantastic. I have been and spent time with my son in the kids' club, and would highly recommend it to families with children of all ages."

► WINTER

**Jamaica:** Nothing says relaxation like a winter-sun escape to the home of all-inclusive, whether it's families keen to try Christmas on a beach, or couples who want something to look forward to come January.

Karl Thompson, managing director of Unique Vacations UK, says: "Christmas is a great time to visit the Caribbean, as the

atmosphere and enthusiasm that surrounds the festive season is completely different to anywhere else in the world. Resorts including Sandals and Beaches deck the halls and host activities such as carol services and Christmas parades to help guests get into the festive spirit."

As well as all the usual kids' entertainment - the Scratch DJ Academy, Xbox play lounge, Pirates' Island water park and Sesame Street activities among them - Beaches Negril Resort & Spa holds festive parties, a Christmas fire show and gift-giving from Santa on the big day.

**The Gambia:** It might be just six hours away and in the same time zone as the UK, but The Gambia's 30C temperatures and days of unbroken sunshine are a far cry from a British winter. This is a good time to go bird-watching -



**Heritage Awali Golf & Spa resort is great for couples, and the children's facilities are fantastic**

The Gambia is one of the best destinations in the world for this niche sector - with migrating birds from Europe arriving in December and birds of prey in January and February.

But if clients just want to sit back and relax, a multitude of beach-front hotels can oblige.

The Gambia Experience recommends the 'all-inclusive light' option at Ocean Bay, which includes meals, snacks, afternoon tea, soft drinks and five vouchers a day

for alcoholic drinks including beer, house wine, local spirits and selected cocktails.

**Sri Lanka:** For a small island, Sri Lanka has a complex weather pattern, with two separate monsoons to consider. Generally speaking, the west and south coasts are best from December to March, and the east from May to September. Visitors who want to stay in the more established beach resorts around Colombo and the south would do better to visit now. The hilly tea country gets drier as the months move on, so if clients are planning to visit the plantations, it's probably best to wait until February.

Sri Lanka is definitely enjoying a surge in the luxury sector, with high-end resorts springing up all over the island, but there are still some bargains to be had. Mercury Holidays, for example, recommends Royal Palms Beach Hotel in Kalutara, 25 miles south of Colombo, which has a second-week-free offer for selected 2016 departures and some remarkably good-value rates.

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