

# Feel the heat

Leading operators offer tips on how to boost late winter-sun bookings. Adam Shaw reports



**A**fter two pandemic-hit winters, buoyant booking figures this January are proof that many people are – as expected – keen to make up for lost time, despite cost-of-living concerns. But while advance bookings are strengthening, there are still many people who are booking last-minute – with operators reporting strong winter-sun demand for February and March.

So, with plenty of opportunities still out there for winter-sun bookings, we ask three expert operators for their advice on how to find them.

Where should you suggest to clients in search of a last-minute beach break? The Canary Islands are a strong choice. Where's the best place to bag a deal? Look to the Far East for heavy discounting and free extras at beach resorts. And how can clients maximise their winter-sun breaks? Multi-

centre South Africa itineraries are a great way to make some savings on a longer break. Read on for more top tips.



**ALAN CROSS**  
head of trade sales,  
Jet2holidays

“Customers are jumping at the chance to book a last-minute holiday to soak up some winter sun, with our latest sales data showing strong demand for February and March.

With bookings consistent across these months, it's clear that customers simply want to enjoy some winter sun – and a good deal, of course.

The Canaries remain a popular winter-sun destination and they continue to sell well. As the UK's leading operator

# DESTINATIONS

## WINTER SUN | ASK THE EXPERT



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Ayia Napa, Cyprus; Alanya, Turkey; Temple of Poseidon, Greece; Railay Beach, Krabi, Thailand

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to the Canary Islands, we offer unrivalled choice and flexibility for independent agents. As the Canaries guarantees year-round sunshine, I always urge agents to push this destination as a winter-sun hotspot for customers wanting to escape the cold and gloomy UK weather.

Mainland Spain, Turkey, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta are also performing very well too. Antalya in particular is an ideal pick for a winter holiday, as the climate remains warm and sunny, while resorts are less crowded.

Customers are looking for value, quality and assurance right now, so independent agents should be confident in communicating how they can provide this through their expertise and knowledge, as well as all the other benefits they offer.

Agents should be proactive too and go out to find the customer. As always, we are here to support agents. Our award-winning Partners2Success strategy will help you secure sales and capitalise on the demand for last-minute winter-sun holidays.



**JOHN PARKER**  
product manager,  
Premier Holidays

“ Now more than ever we are seeing a strong trend for clients booking within two months of travel, so the market is very geared up for this.

Hotels are offering some outstanding tactical offers over the next few months as they focus on driving business post-pandemic. In the Far East in particular, we have beach resorts offering up to 50% off the room rate, as well as additional benefits such as free meals, spa treatments and room upgrades.

It's well worth asking operators which hotels they have late deals for as some of these can make a significant difference to prices.

It's worth highlighting to clients as well that many of these deals are being offered in resorts that are currently in their high seasons. This is not a scenario that we are likely to

see in future years when the market is expected to have fully recovered.

In South Africa, we have hotel groups offering reductions across their properties when clients book a stay at two or more of their hotels or lodges across a multi-centre itinerary.

If clients are open to suggestions on where they stay, it's worth asking operators for more information on these multi-centre deals as they can also offer great savings and additional benefits.



**CHRIS WRIGHT**  
managing director,  
Sunvil

“ Winter holidays are back with a bang, and, what's more, there is still time to capture further sales, with last-minute demand strong.

With winter-sun holidays, it is important to understand what this break looks like in your client's

mind. Are they looking to lounge on the beach and sunbathe or do they wish to feel some warmth and have a pleasant climate for exploration and activities? This vision guides destination recommendations – long-haul or southern Europe.

At Sunvil, we have noticed how media coverage of the milder than normal temperatures across the continent has led to demand for winter-sun breaks to a greater number of European destinations. Temperatures are currently in the mid-teens in Rome, Athens, Seville and Lisbon – perfect for sightseeing.

We've also seen an increase in clients wishing to combine city breaks in Europe with a stay at a luxury coastal hotel – a trip that offers the best of both worlds.

Wellness and spa breaks have been popular, as have holidays offering fine-dining or gastronomic experiences. What's more, the Post Office Barometer has named Cyprus as Europe's best-value winter-sun destination and Madeira has seen a 22% fall in prices post-pandemic. **TW**