

DESTINATIONS

GREECE & CYPRUS | VILLA HOLIDAYS



BEVERLEY CHADWICK, OPERATIONS MANAGER, SIMPSON TRAVEL

INTERVIEW BY Lina Molloholi

Q. What areas does Simpson Travel cover?

A. We cover Greece, including the Ionian Islands, Crete and the mainland – namely Sivota, Epirus, Evia and our new destination, the Peloponnese. We also cover Turkey, France, Italy and Majorca. We've got villas and boutique hotels tailored for couples, families and small parties. The villas are contemporary and cater for between two to 14 people, and we've got neighbouring villas that are private and can be booked together for clients travelling as a group.

Q. Which areas are proving popular this year?

A. Corfu is always a favourite, but we have found east Crete is doing well this year. Soft, sandy beaches and the best Greek food at exceptionally good prices have made it popular with couples and families.

Q. What is day-to-day life like in your role?

A. I've been based in Corfu since 1988 and have worked at Simpson Travel for 23 years. It's a varied role that involves problem-solving and liaising with staff, so no two days are the same, which is exciting. I always make sure to visit all the properties as often as I can – every time an on-site team needs me, I pack a bag and travel to meet them in person and find a solution.

Q. What's your favourite part about your job?

A. I'm a people person, so whenever I'm visiting properties, I

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Katergo Villas, the Peloponnese

want to make time to meet the guests, even grab a coffee with them or visit a local landmark. I want to engage in why they're visiting us, what we get right and what we don't. It's important to understand clients' needs.

Q. What tips do you have for guests who are keen to get out and explore?

A. We've added an 'Experience More' section on our website to encourage guests to get the best from their destination, whether boating, drives or walks. The resort team are all local so can tailor a stay. My choice would be to get out on the water with a little boat, potter along the coast and swim in the clear waters. You can't beat it!

Q. What's been the strangest request from a client?

A. Although we get excellent feedback most of the time, you can never please everyone. Once a guest called and asked me to go to his villa as he was disappointed. He led me to the balcony and pointed out a bird's nest, then complained that the birds would tweet and disturb him, so he asked me to knock it down. I kindly explained that in Greece, you can't take a swallows' nest down as it's part of nature. Another called to complain about a car horn blasting all night, but as our properties are in remote, quiet areas, I stayed to investigate – the noise turned out to be a scops owl. These stories

GOOD CAUSES

Three years ago, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and a colleague in Turkey passed away from bowel cancer. A colleague and I did a parachute jump in her memory and raised €11,000 for a children's leukaemia charity. Now, every year I make sure all our overseas teams raise money for local charities.

make me chuckle – you can never satisfy everyone.

Q. What do you do if things go wrong?

A. We had a call on our emergency phone last summer

when a client's flight to Corsica was cancelled, so we jumped in and switched them to Corfu – and within the hour, they were rebooked and on their way. We turned the disappointment around and got them settled in with a nice glass of prosecco, so they were happy.

Q. What advice would you have for agents selling a villa holiday in Greece?

A. I've worked in retail so I understand the importance of our relationships with agents. Getting to know your clients is key – every detail matters to create the perfect tailored holiday. Ask them why they're travelling, if they are celebrating any special occasions and have they been in the property or area before. And make sure you communicate every detail when booking. It's the little touches that make all the difference, whether it's a welcome glass of fizz or some fresh lemons and spices from a local market. **TW**



PICTURES: Simpson Travel