

Modern family

Putting together a holiday for the 21st-century family? **Cathy Toogood** offers some tips



In 2021 there were 19.3 million families in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). And while glossy adverts may still depict them as comprising a family of four with two parents and two children, the findings reveal a very different picture when it comes to real-world modern families.

For a start, according to the ONS, three million families in the UK have one parent – that's 15% of UK families. Plus, research by the ONS in 2019 showed that there were 212,000 same-sex families in the UK, with numbers having increased by 40% since 2015. Similarly, Happy Steps, the UK's research-based stepfamily resource centre, estimates that one in three of all UK families is a stepfamily or blended family.

As such, modern families will have a range of varying requirements when it comes to travelling, meaning a variety of things for agents to think about when selling family holidays.

SINGLE-PARENT TRAVEL

■ Tap discount offers

As with solo travellers, it can cost significantly more per person for single parents to take their children on holiday, but there are deals available to help with this.

EasyJet holidays currently has a single-parent discount of up to £100, which is made up of £50 off for the adult travelling and £25 off per child for up to two children up to the age of 12. This deal can be used on a range of holidays worldwide and ➤

DESTINATIONS

FAMILY HOLIDAYS | DIVERSE GROUPS



top tip

Involve the children. Whatever the family type, encourage clients to ask the kids what they'd like to do on a holiday and build from there. That way every member of the group will feel more invested in the trip



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Visiting Abu Simbel, Egypt; mother and son scuba diving; Ait Benhaddou, Morocco

PICTURES: Intrepid Travel; Shutterstock/JonMilnes

includes flights, accommodation and 23kg of luggage, plus transfers with beach breaks and lakes holidays.

Adventure travel company Explore says it will never charge lone parents for single-room occupancy when they are travelling as a family.

■ Find entertainment for all

Nothing quite shatters the feeling of relaxation on a family holiday than "I'm bored" on repeat, and, when one adult is in sole charge of keeping everyone entertained, this can feel draining.

One solution is to suggest a family tour. Hazel McGuire, Intrepid Travel's general manager for the UK and Ireland, says that having a local guide and set itinerary can take the stress out of negotiating and planning every day. She also says that group tours have the added bonus of "giving parents and children alike the chance to make new friends and connect on common ground and shared experiences".

■ Make it relaxing for everyone

When finding family holidays, it can be tempting to focus on entertainment for the children, but

“Group tours give parents and children alike a chance to make new friends and connect on common ground and shared experiences

parents should come back from a trip feeling like they've had a break too. Kids' clubs can give single parents time to themselves and, as a bonus, some are included in the overall holiday price. Club Med includes use of kids' clubs in its holiday prices for children aged four to 17. Nicolas Bresch, managing director for the UK and Nordics, says: "Our resorts are a great environment for those looking to unwind both physically and mentally. Our kids' clubs offer children the opportunity to make new friends, taking that additional strain off parents, and

provide valuable opportunities for single parents to socialise in a relaxed environment.”

■ Double-check the rules

Check any rules your clients may have to adhere to when travelling. Destination-specific entry rules might apply for single parents. In Mexico, single parents could be asked to show evidence of their relationship with their child if they have a different surname – through a birth or adoption certificate, divorce or marriage certificates, or a Parental Responsibility Order.

Some countries may require a letter of consent from the child's other parent if anyone under 18 is travelling without both parents – check what information is needed for this. And some airlines may have rules around how many children single parents can travel with. Jet2.com says there must be at least one adult per infant on the same booking.

SAME-SEX PARENTS

■ Research destinations

Laws and customs vary around the world and, unfortunately, in some countries it is still ➤

ASK THE expert

“Don't be afraid to try something different. All-inclusive isn't always the easiest option. Sightseeing and experiencing things as a family will give you lasting memories. As long as you factor in a few rest or beach days, touring holidays work really well with all types of families because no two days are identical. Variety is key when you're travelling as a blended family, especially if there is a big age range.”

Sarah Jennings,
Travel Counsellors



expert TIP

“When booking your client’s trip, it’s worth asking what the accommodation is like so you can prepare the whole family ahead of time about the sleeping arrangements they can expect. Sometimes it’s possible to request an extra room to get more space, but this often depends on the trip you’re taking.”

Hazel McGuire, general manager UK & Ireland, Intrepid Travel



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Relaxing on the beach; same-sex travel; home cooking in the Atlas Mountains, Morocco; snorkelling on a coral reef PICTURES: Intrepid Travel; Shutterstock/BalanceFormCreative, Reshetnikov_art, Denis Moskvinov

illegal to be in a same-sex relationship. So research destinations where LGBTQ+ families will be welcomed and will feel comfortable. The Foreign Office’s destination-specific pages are a useful resource.

Tui recommends Gran Canaria and Mykonos as good beach destinations for LGBTQ+ customers, along with Barcelona and New York for memorable city breaks.

■ Prepare the paperwork

As with solo parents, same-sex couples may need to carry certain documents with them when travelling, such as adoption papers, birth certificates and a permission-to-travel letter for journeying abroad, especially if children don’t share a parent’s surname or are too young to answer questions from officials.

■ Book with inclusive brands

It’s important that same-sex families feel welcome in their accommodation, so do research on customers’ experiences in properties you’re recommending. Some brands, such as Kimpton, Accor and Hilton, have pledges and policies in place on diversity and inclusion, so could be a good place to start. On its website, Hilton says: “We open our doors to every traveller to experience the joy of a welcoming stay. Accept our inclusive invitation to come as your authentic self and stay proud, wherever the destination.”

“Seeing animals in the wild is an experience that is appreciated and loved by children, teenagers and adults of all ages

BLENDED FAMILIES

■ Activities for all ages

Extended blended families may have children with a wide age range, which can make it trickier to keep everyone entertained, so an activity holiday or an action-packed tour could be a good option to ensure all ages are happy.

Intrepid Travel’s McGuire suggests a safari, saying: “Seeing animals in the wild is an extraordinary experience that’s appreciated and loved by children, teenagers and adults of all ages.” Closer to home, Explore has a seven-night Croatian Islands Adventure that is suitable for children aged seven and above and includes snorkelling, swimming, stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and sightseeing (from £1,335 per adult and £1,005 per child based on a July 15 departure).

■ Consider bedtime

All parents will have different ideals about sleeping arrangements. Some will want to stay in the same room as the kids, others will want to give older children more freedom with connecting rooms, and many will want an area where they can chat once smaller children are asleep. Talk over requirements with clients early and look for hotels with spacious rooms, so families aren’t tripping over each other. Balkan Holidays’ website lists hotels that accommodate larger families of five or six, such as the Sol Nessebar Resort in Bulgaria.

Alternatively, villas or apartments might be a better bet for larger groups. Family-friendly brand Martinhal is about to launch Martinhal Residences in Lisbon, with apartments sleeping up to six, plus kitchens to self-cater, childcare facilities and a range of pools, including a kids’ pool.

■ Keep it simple

Family holidays are about spending time together away from the daily routine, and don’t need to involve travelling long distances. So for active families, suggest simpler UK breaks too, such as walking holidays. Exodus offers a six-night self-guided Jewels of the Jurassic Coast Walk trip suitable for children aged eight and above, during which all the family may spot dolphins, find fossils and can admire castles and Iron Age forts (from £979 per person based on June departures). TW