

Single-parent SOS

Lessen the stress for single parents with Joanna Booth's tips on booking family breaks

We all know what a family holiday looks like. Two good-looking parents strolling hand-in-hand down the beach with their perfectly behaved little boy and girl.

It's not just the fact that no one is having a tantrum or smeared in ice cream that makes this advertising image more fantasy than reality. In 2016, the Office for National Statistics reported that of the nearly 19 million families in the UK, almost three million of them had just one parent.

Single parents are very much the norm, and let's face it, they probably need a holiday more than anyone. Here are five tips to finding them a holiday to suit.

► FIND THE RIGHT PRICE

As with solo travellers, single parents tend to be penalised when it comes to holiday costs. Research carried out by Sky News in May found that a parent travelling on their own with one child could pay up to 28% more per person for the same holiday than two adults with one child.

Deals are out there. Classic Collection Holidays' recently launched single-parent programme has more than 120 hotels offering rates or discounts, with more in the pipeline. Head of purchasing and product Gary Boyer has found that Princesa Yaiza in Lanzarote – where one adult and one child can have a week including flights for £1,898 next February half-term – and Iberostar hotels have been particularly accommodating and proactive. Park operator Eurocamp

offers discounts for one-parent families, with up to £75 off week-long trips during the school holidays. And it's not just beach holidays – ski operator Esprit Ski has stays in a number of resorts where one or two children travelling with just one adult receive the full child discount.

► SOURCE GOOD CHILDCARE

As well as family fun, many single parents will want time to themselves, so



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FAMILY HOLIDAYS SINGLE PARENTS DESTINATIONS



LEFT:
Eurocamp offers discounts for single-parent families

RIGHT:
A quarter of Intrepid's family bookings are for single parents



➔ comprehensive, good-quality childcare is key.

To help minimise costs, keep an eye out for properties where kids' clubs are included – at Mark Warner's summer resorts childcare is free for kids over two. Lone parents with pre-schoolers can take advantage of the Club Mark Warner weeks in June and September, where there is no single supplement on rooms, and hosted activities, excursions and dinners give guests the chance to mix with other solos.

▶ REDUCE TRAVEL STRESS

Even for two adults, pack-horsing everything you need for infants through the airport can be a trial. With only one pair of hands, it can seem impossible. Look for hotels that offer prebookable baby amenities to minimise luggage.

The Almyra in Paphos has such a service, with everything from sterilisers and baby baths to nappies and formula waiting in



Many single parents will also want time to themselves, so good-quality childcare is key

the room when guests arrive. The property is one of a handful in Spain, Greece and Cyprus where Sovereign offers reductions for children travelling with one parent.

The other option is a domestic break, so the car can take the strain. UK park operators such as Haven offer good deals, convenient accommodation and plenty of activities to keep the kids occupied. A four-night midweek break in the 2018 Easter holidays at The Orchards in Essex with Haven starts from £257 for a two-bedroom caravan.

▶ KEEP THEM OCCUPIED

Traditional hotel-based holidays aren't the only option available. Both Intrepid Travel and Explore report that 25% of the families on their tours are single-parent families.

Dyan Mckie, family product manager at Intrepid Travel, says: "We do not charge more for parents travelling without a spouse. Our family trips are focused on providing easy, fun-filled itineraries, making sure single parents can travel stress-free, enjoy the destination and make the most of the time away with their children."

Lone parents feel secure with a tour leader to organise practicalities, and travelling in a group lets both parents and children socialise. Explore says the most popular destinations for single-parent families in the past five years have been Morocco, India and Cuba.

▶ CUT THROUGH RED TAPE

Double-check each airline's specific rules surrounding flying with children, especially for single parents with twins or large families. Some limit the number of children able to fly with one adult to two, while others restrict the number of infants on each bank of seats.

In addition to all the usual passport and visa requirements, lone parents may need to take into account their legal relationship with their child when travelling. If they share parental responsibility for the child, they will need consent from the other parent to take them abroad. Single-parent charity Gingerbread has more information on this and other aspects of holidaying as a lone parent.

gingerbread.org.uk



Beaches