

# Easter WAYS

Get ahead of the crowds with a  
springtime escape to Greece or Cyprus

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**C**ompared with Christmas, Easter gets a raw deal. Instead of carol singing, gift-giving, turkey with all the trimmings, and a holiday mood that lasts until New Year, at Easter, all we get are chocolate eggs and a long weekend.

Not that those are anything to be sniffed at, but set against weeks of holiday cheer in

December, they don't quite stack up. So why not suggest your clients do something special next spring, with a short-haul escape to Greece or Cyprus?

It might seem too early to be planning Easter holidays while Christmas is in full swing, but now is the ideal time to plot a springtime getaway, giving them some sunshine to look forward ➔

## ADVENTURE



## BEACH



## CULTURE



PICTURES: INNTRAVEL; LOUIS HOTELS; ISTOCK; JET2HOLIDAYS/CHRISTOPHER WILLAN



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→ to when January 2 rolls around. Most schools break up on Thursday, March 24, just in time for Good Friday, and return on Monday, April 11

The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates Easter at a different time from the Church of England, but many hotels still offer activities to cater for British guests, and the pleasant spring weather is ideal for active visitors.

## ADVENTURE: ON THE MOVE

**Greece:** Easter falls early this year, on Sunday, March 27, before the proper Greece and Cyprus season gets underway. That's a bonus for guests who can't stand crowds, as long as they are aware some shops and tavernas might still be closed.

But don't let that put them off: families in need of an action-packed stay will find Thomson's 5T-rated Sensatori Resort Crete up and running, with loads of excitement to fill a week. Even if the sea is a tad chilly for snorkelling, try tennis, volleyball, mini-football, archery and daily activities. Its family rooms and swim-up family suites are a good base to cool off afterwards, plus there are two adult-only pools, a spa and comedy evenings if parents want some time to themselves.

**Cyprus:** "Our clients love the wild flowers in Cyprus over Easter," says

Inntravel product manager Alison Hall. "In March, the trees are covered in pink and white blossom, and the landscape is awash with wild flowers of every colour. If the weather is unpredictable, the vibrancy of the landscape makes up for it, and because Cyprus doesn't share our Easter, it's quieter and a fantastic time for walkers to visit."

Inntravel's self-guided walking trip Island of Surprises runs over Easter, touring the gentle trails of the lower Troodos Mountains and Akamas Peninsula from villages Lofou and Neo Chorio. The price (£575 land-only) includes car hire so visitors can venture out for their favourite walks.

Classic Collection Holidays also finds its villas in Miliou and Latchi perfectly placed for springtime cycling and hiking around the scenic Akamas Peninsula, with a chance of spotting the mouflon – a wilder relative of the sheep.

Those villas make a good base to explore the Troodos Cycling Network, a 35-mile circuit linking up roads and dirt tracks criss-crossing the forest, or to tackle sections of the E4 European long-distance hiking path, which cuts across the island from the northwest to its southeastern tip at Larnaca.

## BEACH: SUN AND FUN

**Greece:** You'd be forgiven for thinking spring too chilly for a beach break, but



parents of very young children or those with sensitive skin, who would struggle in the hotter summer months, might appreciate being able to get their beach holiday fix without spending the whole time chasing their offspring around with a bottle of factor 50.

Luxury Cretan resort Domes of



FAR LEFT: Sensatori Crete and Milos Villa, Miliou

LEFT: Paphos

ABOVE: Meteora monastery



Elounda has great fun in store this Easter, with egg-painting, an Easter egg hunt around the resort (look out for panoramic views over neighbouring island Spinalonga while on the Easter Bunny's trail), and even an egg-and-spoon race for kids to compete in.

**Cyprus:** Classic beachfront fun is also on tap at Louis Phaethon Beach Club in Paphos, where the family entertainment programme covers live music, games and child-friendly shows. The kids' club opens in April (although the waterpark is usually off-limits until the start of May), but there's an adventure playground, basketball, tennis courts, table tennis and a games room for families to play together.

"Few hotels will be operating kids' clubs or special activities," according to Olympic Holidays commercial director Photis Lambrianides, who warns agents to manage families' expectations at this time of year. "But if uncrowded beaches, quality accommodation, good food and first-class infrastructure are what matters, then Cyprus is an obvious recommendation for agents."

Bigger towns such as Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos have a greater choice of cafes, bars and restaurants at this time of year, and Olympic Holidays' use of 'flexi-flights' with

carriers such as easyJet (the charter flight season won't start until May), mean these can be tailored to shorter breaks as well as a standard week.

## CULTURE: TOURS AND TIPPLES

**Greece:** There's never a quiet time to climb the Acropolis or walk the Sacred Way at Delphi, but clients can take comfort in knowing these top tourist attractions are slightly less crowded than summer, and at least they won't be queuing in the scorching heat.

Insight Vacations packs the best of the country's cultural spots – and there are a lot of them – into its week-long Glories of Greece itinerary, which has a Tuesday, March 22, departure that takes in Easter weekend. Highlights include the Acropolis in Athens, Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros,

ruins dedicated to Zeus at Olympia, the Athenian treasury and Temple of Apollo at Delphi, and the centuries-old monasteries teetering atop the rocky towers of Meteora.

Sister brand Trafalgar's eight-day Best of Greece tour also has a Good Friday departure, taking in some of the same historic spots, along with Be My Guest dining at the Karambelas family's olive farm and vineyard. Prices start at £1,085 with Insight Vacations and £995 with Trafalgar, both B&B with some extra meals, excluding flights.

**Cyprus:** Those who don't fancy a full tour can still get a slice of Cypriot culture with shorter sightseeing excursions just introduced by Do Something Different. The attraction provider has added cultural tours to Famagusta, Kykkos Monastery and Petra tou Romiou, where Aphrodite is said to have emerged from the waves.

Just as central to understanding Cypriot identity, however, is its food and wine – the locals are quite rightly proud of their produce – which is why Jet2holidays recommends its Paphos holidaymakers squeeze in a visit to Tsangarides Winery in Lemona village, which holds regular tours and tastings for anyone keen to see Cypriot wine-makers at work. **TW**



Thomson offers a week at Louis Phaethon Beach Club staying all-inclusive from £665 per adult and £280 per child, based on four sharing and flying from Gatwick on April 3, with transfers. [thomson.co.uk](http://thomson.co.uk)

Olympic Holidays offers a week half-board at Elias Beach Hotel, Limassol, from £555 per person based on two adults and a child under 12, flying from Gatwick on March 26. [olympicholidays.com](http://olympicholidays.com)

## Greek Orthodox Easter

MAY 1, 2016

"Easter is bigger than Christmas as far as the Cypriots are concerned," says Olympic Holidays' Photis Lambrianides. "There will be church processions on Friday evening, and churches will be full on Saturday night – in much the same way as the UK starts Christmas with midnight mass, the celebrations on Cyprus start at midnight on Easter Saturday and just keep going. Expect lots of noise, fireworks and on Sunday the smell of roast lamb – most villages have a big open-air barbecue that you can join in."

The most authentic way to enjoy the Orthodox Easter, which is on May 1, 2016, is to stay in a village – Olympic Holidays has village houses in Kalavassos, Tochni or Omodhos – and

join in with the locals. Alternatively, some hotels embrace the Orthodox Easter. Marbella Corfu will hold a cracking of the red eggs (an Easter tradition) at La Terrazza restaurant on Saturday, followed by Easter dinner with live music, then a lamb barbecue with dancing and ouzo on Easter Sunday.

Meanwhile, Thanos Hotels in Cyprus are still finalising their plans, but last Easter they included midnight soup and flaounes pastries at Annabelle on Easter Saturday, then a Cypriot barbecue with music and dancing on Easter Sunday; while sister hotel Almyra hosted an Easter mezze (pictured, left) on Sunday and Cypriot lunch with live piano and guitar on Easter Monday.

