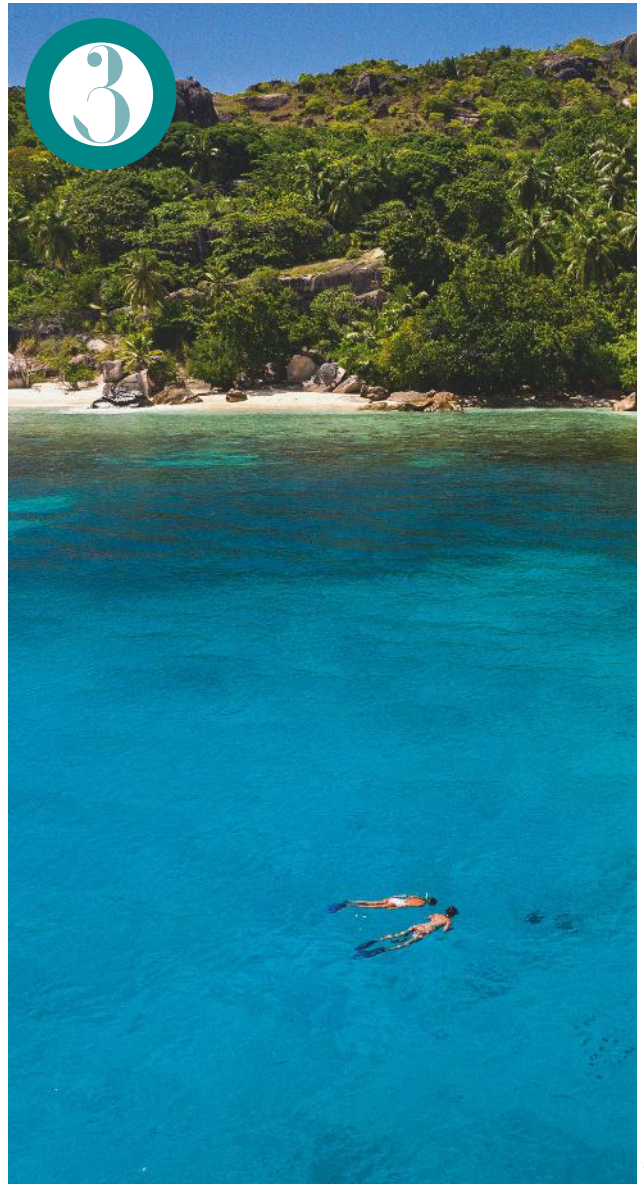


# ASK THE operator

Winter is the ideal time to head to the Indian Ocean – but where should your clients go? **Alice Barnes-Brown** asks three specialists



PICTURES: Inspiring Travel; Experience Travel Group; Kuoni

# DESTINATIONS

## WINTER SUN | INDIAN OCEAN

### 1 MALDIVES

#### WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

A young couple are looking for a getaway in the Maldives. They'd like somewhere with plenty of watersports, soft adventure and some cultural experiences, with some quiet spots to chill out and enjoy low-key nightlife after dark.



**Kelsey Froggett**  
travel specialist,  
Inspiring Travel



#### WE SUGGEST

A lot of clients are overwhelmed by how many islands the Maldives has, but [for this couple] I'd recommend Baros. Clients fly into Malé, where they'll be met by a representative for their transfer. It's about a 25-minute ride on a luxury speedboat – they might catch sight of dolphins too.

Baros has a fantastic reef, so it's perfect for snorkelling, diving, kayaking and parasailing. The island also has a lot of lush vegetation so it feels like a hideaway, but if they want to get off-resort, clients could go to a local island. These aren't like pristine postcards – clients walk the streets with a guide, visit shops and have opportunities to give back to the community. For nightlife at the resort, guests congregate by the main bar, where they have jazz singers, a DJ or pianist.

It's all about making sure you get the right island for the right client – so questions are crucial. Speedboat or seaplane? Beach or overwater? Baros has both beach and overwater villas, so you could split the stay with four nights on the beach and three overwater.

**Book it:** Seven nights' half-board in a Deluxe Villa costs from £3,859 per person, including return flights and speedboat transfers, departing on November 14 (when booked by September 30). [inspiringtravel.co.uk](http://inspiringtravel.co.uk)

### 2 SRI LANKA

#### WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

A family with two young children want to visit Sri Lanka in the Christmas holidays. They'd like to combine relaxed beach time with some sightseeing. They want a road trip, but don't feel confident about driving in the country.



**Chione Armstrong**  
travel consultant,  
Experience Travel Group



#### WE SUGGEST

Sri Lanka has a certain magic that makes it a special place at Christmas, and it's very welcoming for families. All our trips have a private driver/guide, which adds a lot of value and makes the trip seamless.

I'd suggest two nights on arrival in the Sri Lankan countryside near Colombo at Horathapola Estate, a heritage bungalow with lots of child-friendly activities. The next stop should be the cultural triangle – Roo Mansala hotel has views of the Unesco World Heritage-listed fortress of Sigiriya, or near Kandy, there's Ellerton Bungalow where staff make s'mores over the fire with kids. Clients can take the tea train through the most scenic part of the hills to Amba Estate, a hotel and working tea plantation where kids can explore, with Yala National Park an easy drive away. They can end their trip on the coast – Mawella is a good option with a sheltered coastline where it's possible to swim.

**Book it:** A 16-night holiday costs from £6,200 per adult and £5,300 per child, including return flights, a private chauffeur guide, tips, all accommodation, select activities and most meals. Based on a December 19 departure. [experiencetravelgroup.com](http://experiencetravelgroup.com)

### 3 SEYCHELLES

#### WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

A retired couple are looking for a two-week getaway to the Seychelles. They want to island-hop, staying a few days in each place to soak up as much scenery, local culture and food as they can, while spending ample time on the beach.



**Sarah Ashmore**  
trade partnerships manager,  
Kuoni



#### WE SUGGEST

In the Seychelles, you can have such a different experience from one island to the next. After flying into Mahé, we'd suggest checking into the Constance Ephelia for five nights. It's only 40 minutes from the airport and it has five restaurants including Cyann, which offers an eight-course tasting menu of Creole dishes. There are also lots of walking trails, water activities, even a zipline near the hotel, if they're feeling energetic. If not, Ephelia has two large beaches on site.

Then suggest clients get a ferry across to remote and secluded La Digue for a three-night stay. It only has one road! Once they arrive by ferry, they can cycle to their hotel and their baggage will be taken for them.

After La Digue, we'd end the trip with five nights at the Raffles Seychelles on Praslin, the most glam and polished of the islands. It offers pool rooms, cooking classes with local chefs, snorkelling and more. Clients also have the option to explore the Vallée de Mai nature reserve or vanilla and coconut plantations.

**Book it:** An 11-night Seychelles multi-centre holiday costs from £4,099, including five nights' half-board, six nights' B&B, flights and transfers, based on a March 10, 2025, departure. [kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)

PICTURE: Toyin Dawudu