

Blue-sky thinking

Turkey is having a challenging time, but it's still worth selling, writes Laura French

@laurafrench121

Incredible scenery, a rich cultural heritage, world-class beaches and welcoming people to boot – look at Turkey on paper and all seems fine and dandy.

Indeed it is, in some respects; several operators have added product for this year, new hotels have opened in the region and attractions such as theme park Land of Legends have injected a wave of fresh excitement into the country.

According to low-cost Turkish carrier Pegasus Airlines, two million international visitors landed in April 2017 – up 18% year on year – with the UK among its top three markets.

All are promising signs, but obstacles remain. “Sales have been challenging,” says Gary

Boyer, head of purchasing for Classic Collection Holidays. “Concerns over perceived security issues seem difficult to overcome, even when explaining that the coastal resorts are a long way from any trouble.”

Fortunately value for money, an excellent family offering, a host of luxury all-inclusive resorts and exciting activities continue to give Turkey an edge for those willing to break through the noise. And if you direct them to the right places, you'll help support a country in need of tourism now more than ever.

▶ SELLING TIPS

When it comes to allaying potential concerns, underline the fact the main beach resorts

“Those who have been to Kalkan will know what a beautiful, safe hamlet it is

are located a considerable distance from any areas with security issues, says Andrew Lee, managing director of Fairlight Jones, a new luxury tour operator that offers boutique hotels and private villas in the country. “I don't believe it is an unsafe destination,” he says. “The regions we sell, on the Lycian Coast, lie thousands of miles from any areas of concern – the same

distance as London to Rome.”

Abbey Simkiss, national sales manager for Visions Holiday Group, echoes this sentiment. “Agents are missing a trick by being afraid to sell Turkey,” she says. “Those who have been to Kalkan [in the south] will know what a beautiful, safe hamlet it is. And the current exchange rate means clients can eat like a king.” Good flight availability is worth highlighting too, with Thomas Cook, easyJet, Monarch and more all operating in the region. “Hotels are also adding value to incentivise customers,” says Boyer of Classic Collection.

All of this should be emphasised to families – the market where sales are remaining buoyant, at least

RIGHT: Regnum Carya Golf & Spa Resort



FAR RIGHT: Land of Legends theme park

BELOW: Deniz Feneri Lighthouse, Kas Peninsula, featured by Fairlight Jones

RIGHT: Papillon Ayscha, Belek



FAR RIGHT: D-Resort Grand Azur, Marmaris



ASK THE EXPERT

Andrew Lee, managing director, Fairlight Jones
 “By definition Turkey has something to offer all: luxurious villas with private waterfronts are perfect for families or friends travelling together; boutique hotels for couples who are seeking a chic and stylish waterfront retreat; and exclusive, chartered and fully crewed gulets are ideal for special occasions from honeymoons to anniversaries and big birthdays. I fervently believe in this beautiful country and its magnificently hospitable people, who are the most welcoming I have experienced anywhere on my travels.”

for Jet2holidays, which has increased its capacity by 60% for summer 2018 in response to demand. New Jet2.com flight routes to Antalya, Bodrum and Dalaman from various airports across the UK are part of the deal.

“Agents should take great confidence from the fact that bookings to Turkey are on the rise,” says Alan Cross, head of trade. For families heading here, he suggests Olu Deniz, a village on the Turquoise Coast in the south, set around the shimmering Blue Lagoon and Dalyan River, where protected loggerhead sea turtles can be spotted in the waters.

Recommend the four-star Liberty Hotel for an especially good-value, child-friendly stay with a lively kids’ club, adult-only pool and handy location slap bang in the centre of the action.

For those after something slightly higher-end look to Belek, specifically

Land of Legends brings a water park with slides, coasters, penguins, dolphins and more to the south coast

the Regnum Carya Golf & Spa Resort. Not only does it boast Europe’s only floodlit golf course – ideal for dads wanting to escape of an evening – but there’s another new selling point this year: free access to the nearby Aquapark and Land of Legends theme park for those going all-inclusive.

The latter, which opened last July in partnership with Rixos Hotels, brings a water park with slides, coasters,

penguins, dolphins and more to the south coast, together with a host of other attractions, shops, shows and festivals. There’s an on-site luxury hotel for those wanting to stay in the heart of it, and a kids’ club that claims to be the biggest in Turkey – all well worth mentioning to those swayed by the idea of a theme park break that’s a bit different from the usual.

WHAT’S NEW?

There are plenty of other updates to give you an added hook, too. Saga has reintroduced Turkey to its programme for this year, adding the Akka Antedon hotel in Kemer and Sentido Perissia in Side to its brochure.

Simply Luxury by Travel 2 has added the five-star Nirvana Lagoon Villas, Suites and Spa, a family-friendly all-inclusive in Kemer that has a junior buffet, play areas, water slides and

more, all set near a lively marina.

Meanwhile in Belek, Papillon Ayscha, a five-star set right on the beach, recently underwent a full refurbishment and now boasts a renovated spa, six restaurants – spanning teppanyaki to traditional Turkish – and seven bars, alongside activities for four to 18-year-olds. There’s even a Papy Spa for children aged from three to 16.

The biggest and latest news, though, is Lux Bodrum, which opened on June 17 on a private peninsula in Turkey’s glamorous Aegean Riviera. Home to its own exclusive bay and beach club (think beds by day and DJs by night) alongside 91 rooms and 19 private residences, it could prove a key draw for new and repeat Turkey customers.

Especially novel are the artist-led workshops that include water marbling, stained glass window painting and Sri Sri yoga, and the open-air cinema that faces the ocean.

Nearby the Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum, now a seasonal property, has introduced new fitness and wellness facilities alongside a butler service for all room categories and Stay and Dine packages, worth drawing out for those considering a second visit.

With cheap flights and decent room rates, these higher-end resorts are worth pushing to those who might not normally opt for something quite so luxe. That’s at least the case for D-Resorts, which has three five-star properties, including Grand Azur in Marmaris, which combines gourmet dining with a private beach, spa, tennis, windsurfing and more.

We are predominantly targeting those who want to get more for their money within the luxury market

Sales coordinator Korhan Kelebek says: “We are predominantly targeting those who want to get more for their

money within the luxury market.”

Turkey isn’t only about the beaches of course; the Lycian Coast is home to an array of ancient sites and undeveloped, peaceful hamlets and villages surrounded by jaw-dropping mountain scenery. History lovers will find something to please in the sunken city of Simena, set in the idyllic Kekova region, or at Arycanda, an ancient Lycian city on the same coast, so highlight Turkey’s quieter side to attract clients keen on getting beyond the surface of this fascinating, heritage-filled country. **tw**

Life in the coastal resorts

What’s life really like in Turkey’s coastal resorts? To help you answer your clients’ questions, Lucy McGuire reports from Dalaman

I was a bit apprehensive when I flew to Dalaman earlier this year, yet once I’d arrived at my hotel it took me no time to relax. I’d forgotten how pretty the Mugla province was. Fields of pomegranate trees and green countryside make for some scenic drives, while towering mountain ranges create a dramatic backdrop and a boat tour of the famous 12 Göcek Islands is a must.

Local business owners have clearly suffered from the lack of visitors and the markets can seem a little ‘hassly’. On the upside, the drop in tourism means you’ll get a warm welcome wherever you go. The mezzes and fresh fish are delicious

and boat trips along the Dalyan River will take guests to riverfront restaurants that offer incredible views of the Lycian rock ruins.

The Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa is a good all-inclusive choice with a water park, spa, luxury and family room options. It also has a variety of restaurants and is just 20 minutes from Dalaman airport.

Set expectations for clients by letting them know that airport security may be heightened and laptops and large cameras will need to go in the hold. Dalaman airport is expensive, so eat before you arrive for your return flight.

This part of Turkey has so much going for it – great beaches, stunning scenery and a rich heritage – so make the most of the great-value holidays here. I wouldn’t hesitate to go back!



Seven nights’ B&B at the four-star Liberty Hotel in Olu Deniz, Dalaman, costs from £539 with Jet2holidays, based on two adults sharing, with flights from Stansted on July 18. jet2holidays.com

Monarch offers a week’s all-inclusive at Papillon Ayscha, Belek, from £799 based on two adults sharing a twin room, departing Gatwick on September 20. monarchagents.co.uk