

Winter warmers

Sell a winter-sun break to families with Laura French's guide from those in the know

@laurafrench121

Is there anything more satisfying than lying on a beach under a sheer blue sky, sun warming your newly bronzed skin, fully aware that friends back in Blighty are battling through torrential rain and cold, gloomy evenings?

Probably not, if you're anything like me, which might be why couples are flocking in droves to winter-sun hotspots including the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean and beyond.

And there's no reason families can't capitalise either. Off-peak deals, fewer visitors and out-of-season upgrades make winter an excellent time to pack up and take off with the kids in tow -

but for those not so easily convinced, we've put together an expert guide to help you sell.

► HIGHLIGHT THE SAVINGS

There's nothing as powerful as a bargain-bucket deal and the winter season is chock full of them, so highlight these to families umming and ahing over when to go.

"Hotels in the best winter-sun destinations are still often quieter during the winter months compared with June to September," says Malcolm Davies, product destination manager for Funway Holidays. "This means you're more likely to bag an upgrade to a

premium room or even a suite."

Dates and times of travel can also make a huge difference, with November and early December offering some of the best winter rates, he adds. "Flights and hotels in these months tend not to sell out, meaning prices drop and you can find excellent value - especially if you're flexible both in terms of the destination and

the exact dates you travel on."

Several hotels offer specific promotions at this time of year: Hard Rock Hotels in Punta Cana and Riviera Maya have occasional 'kids stay, eat and play free' deals, while Dubai's Atlantis The Palm is free for under-12s from October all the way through to July.

Jet2holidays, meanwhile, offers free child places and special [→](#)



PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK; STEVE SANACORE

FAST FACT

Olympic Holidays has added two weekly flights from Heathrow to Larnaca to its winter programme for this year

RIGHT:
The St Regis
Mauritius

FAR RIGHT:
Barut Lara,
Antalya,
Turkey



Carrier offers seven nights' half-board at the St Regis Mauritius Resort from £7,880 per family based on two adults and two under-12s sharing a Junior Suite, including British Airways flights from Gatwick and private transfers. Price based on a February 16, 2019, departure. carrier.co.uk

First Choice offers a week's all-inclusive at Villa Mandi and Siam Park in Tenerife from £3,148 per family, based on two adults and two children sharing, and including transfers and flights from Gatwick on February 19, 2019. firstchoice.co.uk

→ deals for single parents throughout the year, so shout about them, says Craig Davidson, general manager for trade sales for the operator. "Posters, spotlights and social media are great ways to make clients aware of great winter-sun offers. Our partnership approach to working with independent agents means we'll help with marketing support, so get in touch," he says. "And book early to get the best choice. School holiday dates will be available far in advance, so recommend clients get organised to bag the best deals."

► FIND OUT THEIR PRIORITIES

When it comes to working out where exactly to suggest, finding out your clients' motivations is key, says Leah Marshall, director of sales at Beaches. "Think about what is important to them. Do they want a family-friendly winter-sun beach break where they can unwind? Are they celebrating a special occasion such as Christmas



School holiday dates will be available far in advance, so recommend clients get organised to bag the best deals

or New Year? Or are they looking for action-packed activities?"

In terms of destination, it's worth thinking about the age of the kids and climate they're looking for – Tenerife averages 22C-25C in winter but a constant light breeze keeps it relatively cool, says Mark Hall, director of product at Tui, so parents don't have to worry about children getting too hot.

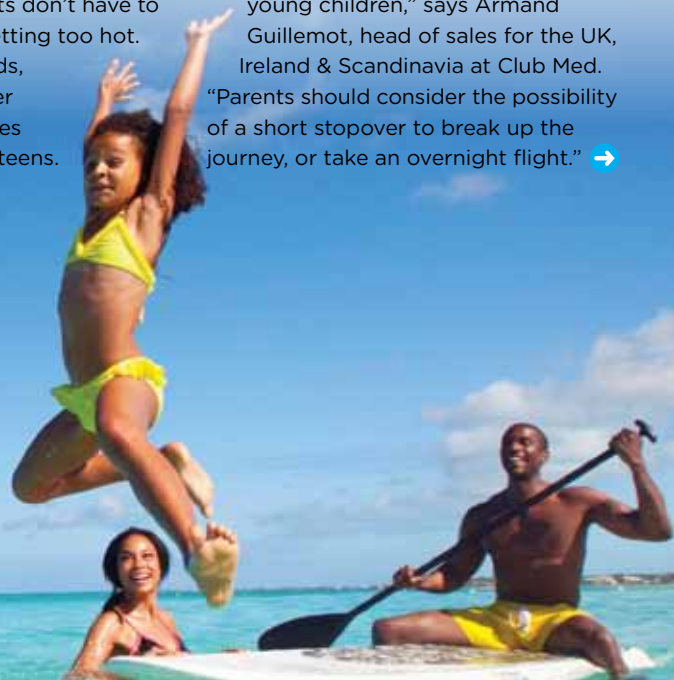
But for very young kids, Cyprus might be a better option, with temperatures resting around the mid-teens.

Turkey offers a similar climate plus excellent value, and clients are responding, with UK bookings having grown 66% year on year according to research by ForwardKeys and GfK.

Family-friendly offerings in the country are ample. Highlights include the five-star Gloria Golf Resort, Belek – home to a water park, jungle play area and nearby farm – and Barut Lara, Antalya, which boasts four outdoor pools and water slides, as well as an indoor pool that's ideal for providing some respite from the sun.

► SELL LONG-HAUL

For those after even hotter winter climes, the further-flung destinations can provide – even with the little 'uns. "Don't be afraid to go long haul with young children," says Armand Guillemot, head of sales for the UK, Ireland & Scandinavia at Club Med. "Parents should consider the possibility of a short stopover to break up the journey, or take an overnight flight." →



Sandals

THE BIG Autumn Sale

UNRIVALLED LUXURY
BOOK BY 18TH SEPTEMBER

SAVE UP TO 45%
PLUS UP TO
AN EXTRA
£325

LIMITED TIME ONLY
AN ADDITIONAL
£100 OFF



VALID FOR BOOKINGS:
31 AUG – 18 SEP '18



VALID FOR TRAVEL:
UP TO AUG '20



MINIMUM STAY:
7 NIGHTS



PROMO CODE:
ADD100

WINTER SUN FAMILIES DESTINATIONS

RIGHT:
St James's
Club, Saint
Lucia



FAR RIGHT:
Almyra
Hotel,
Cyprus



Paula Whitehead, European managing director for Elite Island Resorts Group, suggests Saint Lucia and Antigua for those tempted by the Caribbean, while Carrier recommends Mauritius for those wanting to go further. Both offer direct flights and a comprehensive kids' offering, with standouts including Saint Lucia's St James's Club Morgan Bay - boasting everything from movie nights to singing workshops - and Mauritius's St Regis Resort, whose lures include complimentary glass-bottom boat tours, sailing trips, dolphin swims and an excellent kids' club.

LOOK OUT FOR EXTRAS

Wherever you choose, make sure the resort's children's offerings extend to the winter season, says Ricky Wason, head of product and purchasing at Olympic Holidays. "In Cyprus, for example, the Almyra Hotel in Paphos is one of the few hotels to offer a kids' club in the winter months," he says. "It also has a crèche on request, and shaded areas that are ideal for keeping

little ones out of direct sun."

It's also worth keeping an eye out for anything that will make your clients' lives easier, such as interconnecting rooms, pre-bookable baby provisions and dedicated family sections, or the special family check-in area at Sunscape Resorts & Spas, where kids get welcome treats and special resort passports.

Club Med Cancun Yucatan leads the way with Aguamarina, a newly expanded area that now houses 120 family rooms plus a pool area and family bar (with a dedicated children's food and mocktail menu) and a new Bread & Co culinary concept, which lets children cook for their parents.

Cabana Bay in Orlando has adaptable family suites sleeping up to six, with two queen beds and a pull-out sofa, plus a sliding privacy partition and compartmentalised bathroom so three people can get ready at once. Beaches Resorts, meanwhile, has plenty of suites with connecting rooms, plus butler service for the higher categories, making

things that bit simpler for those willing to splash a little more cash.

WHAT TO PACK

Tricia Birmingham, product and commercial director, Travel 2 and Gold Medal, suggests:

- ▶ High-factor sun lotion
- ▶ Cooling mist spray
- ▶ Goggles
- ▶ Travel-sized board games
- ▶ Sun hat
- ▶ Snacks

SAVE AIRPORT STRESS

Once you've got the basics sorted, all that remains are the extras. Navigating flights to long-haul, winter-sun destinations with kids in tow can be a challenge, so suggest some add-ons to smooth out the process - and plump up your commission at the same time.

Travel 2 recommends airport fast-track passes and a meet-and-greet on arrival to stop the youngsters getting restless, while Funway suggests booking bulkhead seats for more legroom.

For families really wanting to cut the hassle, look to Jet2holidays' free resort flight check-in service. Available at select hotels in the portfolio, clients can drop their bags in reception on the last day, from where they're taken directly to the aircraft, meaning families can breeze through to security without a care in the world. That's at least some compensation to help soften the blow as they return to cold, blustery Blighty.

Sandals
- SUITE STAY -

TRAVEL AGENT INCENTIVE

To reward you for your commitment to the World's Leading All-Inclusive Resorts, we're giving away a suite per week in our Big Autumn Sale. Visit sellingsandals.co.uk for full details.



Sandals



BOOK THE WORLD'S LEADING ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS FOR TRAVEL UP TO AUGUST 2020

Call 0808 164 3459 • Visit sandals.co.uk/agents



*Additional £100 off valid in addition to our current savings (up to 45% plus up to an extra £325) using promo code ADD100. Minimum stay - 7 nights. Valid for new bookings made between 31 Aug - 18 Sep '18. Further terms and conditions apply - visit sellingsandals.co.uk for full details.