



Clients looking to fly and flop on exotic shores they can have to themselves? **Laura French** looks into the lesser-known options for winter sun

There's something quite novel about taking off in the heart of the cold, dark British winter and landing a few hours later in the height of a warm, bright summer, sun streaming down on your skin, locals gleeful with the type of energy a radiant blue sky seems to encourage.

Fortunately there's a host of places where you can do exactly that, with beach destinations whose temperatures are at their most pleasant when our climate is at its most volatile.

Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean all offer their fair share, – and while the better-known spots can attract the crowds, there's plenty of off-the-radar options for those wanting more secluded getaways.

We've done our research to find some of the best, so read on to see where to send clients who've already been there, done that and got the (slightly touristy) T-shirt – and now want a beach break where they'll have the turquoise seas and swaying palms to themselves. ➤



LIKE THIS?

KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

Bath-warm waters coloured electric blue, white-sand beaches brushed with coconut groves, emerald-green rainforests carpeting the mountains; they might sound like clichés, but Koh Samui is about as close to the vision of a paradise island as you can get – if you take away the crowds. In reality, it's not shy of tourists and big-name resorts, so if clients want a more remote spot it might be worth looking to a lesser-known option.

KOH YAO YAI, THAILAND

WHY: Located between Phuket and Krabi, Koh Yao Yai has fewer visitors and only a handful of lodgings to its name, with kayaking through mangroves, trekking through coconut plantations and bumping around on tuk-tuks the main activities. For an extra-peaceful trip suggest pairing it with the nearby isle of Koh Lanta, where barefooted, carefree types amble along deserted sands and limestone formations float above aqua-coloured water.

EXPERTS SAY: "These islands remain fairly quiet to tourists and have avoided an influx of hotels," says John Parker, Premier Holidays product manager for Africa and Thailand. "Visitors coming in winter will see minimal rainfall with hot, sunny days."

BOOK IT: A week's B&B at Layana Resort & Spa, Koh Lanta, costs from £1,999, including flights and transfers, for travel January 1-March 26, 2020. premierholidays.co.uk

TRY THIS



PICTURES: Shutterstock; Dafna Tal



LIKE THIS?

CRANE BEACH, BARBADOS

From buzzy local hangouts such as Enterprise Beach to brochure-worthy spots like Crane Beach – a long stretch of soft pink-tinged sand, fringed with palm groves – it's not hard to see what lures beach-seekers to Barbados. Averages of 26C from December to February make it excellent for winter, and there's a world-class culinary scene, combining authentic Caribbean street food shacks with elegant high-end restaurants.

GRAND ANSE, GRENADA

WHY: Just as bountiful on the beach front is Grenada. At its heart is Grand Anse, a two-mile curve of white, powdery sand that's archetypal of a Caribbean getaway – all swaying palms and Powerade-blue ocean, shaded by an age-old almond tree. It's not just about the beaches; like Barbados it has a vibrant food scene, with exotic, fragrant markets paying testament to its reputation as the 'spice island', and verdant cocoa plantations producing some of the Caribbean's best chocolate.

EXPERTS SAY: "Grenada is an excellent option for travellers who want to explore as well as relax," says Jenny Peart, head of product at Caribtours. "There's so much to do, from tree-to-bar chocolate experiences to diving around the eerie underwater sculpture park."

BOOK IT: Seven nights' half-board at Calabash hotel costs from £2,379 per person, based on two sharing a Junior Suite from May 1-October 31, 2020 and including flights, private transfers and UK airport lounge passes. caribtours.co.uk



TRY THIS



LIKE THIS?

HURGHADA, EGYPT

Pristine coral reefs inviting world-class diving, white-sand private beaches shelving cerulean sea, a historic old town complete with atmospheric bazaar, and the rolling sands of the Sahara only a stone's throw away; it's easy to see why Hurghada, the second-biggest town on the Red Sea, is a hit with holidaymakers who want adventure with their sun, sea and sand.

EILAT, ISRAEL

WHY: It's not just Egypt that offers dive-friendly Red Sea resorts; over in Israel you'll find Eilat, which rose to prominence as a hippie hotspot in the 1970s. Today, it's a favourite with locals for its excellent diving and crystal-clear waters, with year-round warm temperatures thanks to its location on the southern tip of Israel. Alongside a plethora of dive centres there's snorkelling at Coral Beach Nature Reserve – where a protected reef hosts glowing coral in mustard, lime and fuschia – and Dolphin Reef, where visitors can swim with dolphins.

EXPERTS SAY: "Eilat is ideal for families, couples and solo travellers thanks to its abundance of activities," says Elena Ahmadian, marketing executive for Cyplon Holidays. "It's in an extraordinary desert landscape, with stunning bays bathed by an endless summer sun."

BOOK IT: A week's B&B at Dan Panorama Eilat costs from £1,229, based on two sharing, including flights and transfers. cyplon.co.uk



TRY THIS