

Summer on a shoestring

Family fun in the sun need not mean breaking the bank, writes Laura French

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“We’re all going on a summer holiday” might be the tune your clients sing as they stroll in and approach you for a family booking, but what happens when they follow it up with a budget that would make Ebenezer Scrooge look like a spendthrift?

Well, it doesn’t necessarily have to mean you start looking up the nearest B&B. From summer deals in the Caribbean to camping parks on the Côte d’Azur, there’s a host of options out there that can have the entire family entertained without a hint of a hole in the wallet.

To help in the mission, we’ve compiled a guide on where to

recommend, with expert tips on how families can keep the costs down in a Brexit-conscious, wallet-watching world.

► BEACH

For beach-seekers looking to get a solid dose of Vitamin D without stretching the purse strings, Jet2holidays suggests Spain or Portugal – both of which came in the top three on the Post Office’s annual Holiday Costs Barometer – while Cyplon says Malta, Croatia and Greece are selling well with budget-conscious holidaymakers.

For classic Greek

beach breaks, Rhodes, Crete and Corfu provide especially good value for money, and they’re an excellent option for families, according to Olympic Holidays. Among Crete’s smattering of

bargain properties is the three-star Orion, set opposite the beach near the resort of Platanos and the historic town of Rethymno. It has two pools, comfortable rooms and decent facilities, ➔



➔ and is available for £1,993 all-inclusive for a family of four, departing on August 15 (the price includes an early-booking discount of £427).

Booking early to get those offers is key. In addition to early-payment discounts, Olympic Holidays offers free child places for up to two kids at certain hotels, while Monarch offers a 20% discount on some of its properties alongside free places for the first child. Thomas Cook and Thomson both offer kids-go-free slots too, alongside various money-off deals, all valid during the UK summer holidays.

Discounts aside, it helps if clients can be flexible with destination, says Alan Cross, head of trade at Jet2holidays.

"Destinations such as Costa de Almeria [where Jet2.com is launching flights this summer] and Costa Brava have all the selling-points of more popular

destinations such as Costa del Sol but can be cheaper in resort," he says.

For even better value, it's worth looking outside the eurozone towards the likes of Bulgaria. Balkan Holidays offers a week's B&B at the four-star Hotel Fenix in Sunny Beach, for example, from £1,969 for a family of four, departing on July 27. It's set within metres of a white-sand stretch alongside shops and nightclubs, and repeat clients who booked in 2015 or 2016 can get an additional 5% off.

HOLIDAY PARKS

For a bargain break closer to home, look to the UK's holiday parks. They offer accommodation types to suit a range of budgets, from coast-side caravans to luxury lodges, alongside comprehensive activity programmes that will keep kids entertained while parents slot in some down-time.



ABOVE: Sunny Beach, Bulgaria

Suggest one of Hoseasons' Go Active parks for outdoorsy types: Sandymouth Holiday Resort in Cornwall has added tree climbing, body zorbing, archery, fencing and more for this year, with activities starting from £5, and families can get up to £200

off breaks across various parks when booked by February 28. Haven, meanwhile, is offering up to 20% off all of its parks this year for breaks booked before the end of February (for travel on selected dates). New high-ropes courses have been introduced



Spain's Costa de Almeria and Costa Brava can be cheaper in resort than the likes of the Costa del Sol

at Primrose Valley in Yorkshire and Lakeland in Cumbria, which means second-timers have a reason to go back, and prices are hard to beat: three nights in a caravan at Yorkshire's Thornwick Bay costs £315 for up to four people, arriving on July 28.

Outside the UK, Al Fresco Holidays and Eurocamp are both excellent, wallet-friendly options with sites across Spain, Italy, France, Holland and beyond. They offer a selection of mobile homes (Eurocamp also offers traditional camping) and are worth suggesting to families wanting to stay in iconic locations without busting the budget.

Activities cater for toddlers up to teens: Eurocamp's kids' clubs span performing arts to paintballing, while Al Fresco offers waterparks with slides, plumes and baby areas across several of its sites.

Al Fresco also has a collection of 'Authentic and Value' parks where the pounds will stretch even further. Among the most popular sites in the range is La Palmeraie, located in Roussillon in the south of France, complete with a waterpark alongside direct access to the beach; mobile homes start from £751 for seven nights, sleeping up to four.

And there's a bonus when it comes to getting bargains. John Escott, sales and partnerships manager for Al Fresco, says: "With the flexibility on arrival days and durations, customers are able to take advantage of cheaper midweek fares."

ADVENTURE

Active and adventure breaks are naturally a little more costly than the holiday parks, but they're not out of the picture entirely. Take Trafalgar's Costsaver brand, whose 16-day Highlights of Spain, Morocco and Portugal trip – passing through Madrid, Marrakech, Lisbon and beyond – costs from £82 per day or £1,325 per person in total land-only, including breakfasts, six three-course dinners, airport transfers and sightseeing.

Then there are the all-inclusive activity resorts such as those offered by Mark Warner, Neilson and Club Med, which are ➔



ABOVE: Costa Dorada, Spain

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FAMILY HOLIDAYS SUMMER VALUE DESTINATIONS

It's worth suggesting to families who might end up forking out for these activities while away anyway. It's worth emphasising to customers that there aren't any hidden charges on arrival, while you can boost your commission with a higher-value booking in the process.

Club Med has various offers, including free stays for children under six, and its resorts are a good option for those looking to go farther afield with properties in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and the US all available for around £1,000 per adult in the summer holidays. A week at Sandpiper Bay in Florida costs £966, based on an August 28 departure from Edinburgh.

LONG-HAUL

On that note, bargain hunting for a holiday needn't mean restricting clients' horizons. Orlando can be done on a relatively tight budget if it's arranged carefully, so encourage families to take advantage of offers at the parks. Walt Disney



LEFT: Lisbon

RIGHT: Walt Disney World Resort

BELOW: Club Med's Sandpiper Bay, Florida



Most hotels in Dubai offer free half-board during the summer months, which makes it more affordable

World is offering two free nights on a 14-night summer stay at the All-Star Sports Resort and a 14-day Ultimate Ticket for the price of seven days, when booked by March 29 (from £1,454 including flights from Gatwick).

Meanwhile at SeaWorld, visitors can get entry to three parks for the price of two for any booking before December 31, 2018. Do Something Different offers a 14-day ticket from £118 per adult

or £113 per child, plus free parking.

Elsewhere, the Caribbean is the suggestion of Malcolm Davies, product destination manager for Funway Holidays, especially outside the December to February peak season. "It's a good option for families as many hotels offer free child places where the first child stays free with two paying adults," he says.

Prices plunge in the summer months, so look out for deals: the Hard Rock Punta Cana offers a free child place (aged 12 and under) for every paying adult travelling between July 1 and August 31 (in addition to resort credit available year-round). Funway offers seven nights there from £1,535 (excluding the offer) for travel on August 1, including return BA flights from Gatwick.

The Middle East offers similar deals during the summer. For

those who don't mind a bit of heat, it can be a good time to head to the likes of Dubai to try new family attractions such as the theme parks of Dubai Parks and Resorts and IMG Worlds of Adventure.

"The majority of hotels offer free half-board during the summer months, which makes it a much more affordable destination for families," says Deborah Wadhams, Travel 2's senior product manager for the Middle East and Indian Ocean.

Sister brand Gold Medal offers a week at the five-star Jumeirah Beach Hotel from £519 for travel on August 12 (based on a family of four). It includes BA flights from Heathrow, half-board in an Ocean Deluxe Room and unlimited access to Wild Wadi water park – proof glamour and family fun can be done without breaking the bank. **TV**



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