

Villas WAYS

Villa holidays can be an easy sell for families looking for some privacy, says Laura French

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Family holidays can be a tricky one to master, with the challenge of trying to satisfy multiple expectations and divergent tastes. And if you've got a family seeking privacy - without the age-old, pre-dawn battle for a sunbed by the pool - a villa holiday can be an appealing alternative to a hotel.

Luckily there are plenty of options, and they span the whole spectrum, from self-catered apartments to five-star mansions complete with personal butler. Offering privacy without the need for interconnecting family rooms, ample cooking space (an advantage for those on a budget) and alone-time for



SAVE

Villa Biocrystal, Croatia



SPEND

Championsgate Florida



SPLURGE

Round Hill Hotel and Villas, Jamaica

RIGHT: Villa Biocrystal, Croatia

FAR RIGHT: Odyssey Villa, Corfu

BELOW: Marbella Club Golf Resort & Spa



PICTURE: RINO GROPUZZO



ASK THE EXPERT



Malcolm Davies, product destination manager, Funway Holidays

“When selling a villa holiday, it’s important to consider the whole family’s needs. With hotels often unable to guarantee connecting or adjoining rooms, villas prove popular for multi-generational families, with the added benefits of the communal areas and self-catering facilities. They are particularly popular with grandparents who live far from their families, as a holiday is a great way to spend time together. For larger groups, a villa usually works out far cheaper than staying in a hotel, and booking an entire property can be a great way to share relaxed times with friends or family.”

➔ parents, there are many selling points working in their favour.

“Rather than tiptoeing around the children when they have gone to bed, parents can put kids in their own bedrooms and reclaim their evenings, just like they do at home,” says Kelly Walker, trade and partnerships manager for James Villas.

Villas can also be a lot more practical, says Becci Aldridge, brand manager at Villa Select. “They seem more manageable – there’s no need to pack the beach bag every time you’re ready to leave the hotel room and head to the pool,” she says. “At a villa, you’re only steps away from whatever you need.”

Add that to the fact they can work out more affordable than a hotel, and it’s little wonder they’re selling so well, especially among multi-generational groups, according to Funway Holidays. So capitalise on the trend with our guide to the best options for clients on every budget.



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▶ SAVE

If you’ve got clients looking to bag a bargain villa in the Med, Interhome recommends Greece. “This year, it offers a price-competitive edge over Spain, where prices will continue to rise as a result of increased demand and weakened sterling,” says Adam Walsh, commercial manager for UK and Ireland.

For an especially family-friendly option, look to Corfu: sandy beaches, family activities and cultural sights aplenty mean it has a diverse appeal, and villas are reasonably priced.

Olympic Holidays recommends the two-bedroom Odyssey for a good-value, standalone all-rounder. Set in a peaceful area near the resort of Dassia – home to a long and tranquil stretch of beach – it has a private pool overlooking the sea and is only a 20-minute drive from Corfu Town, so it makes a good base from which to explore the rest of the island.

Elsewhere James Villas – which recently began selling through the trade – reports the Algarve, Cyprus and Menorca as the top-three destinations for bookings in the sector. On the Spanish island, recommend the Binibeca resort, which stretches from Cala Torret (home to excellent scuba diving) to Binibeca Vell, a quaint fishing village in the west known for its whitewashed houses.

Among the cluster of villas in the area is the newly built, three-bedroom Bini Mari. A private pool, shaded terrace and lawn area make it ideal for families looking for some peace ➔



3 WAYS

and privacy, but it's not too far from the action with restaurants, bars and a sandy beach – complete with kayaks, pedalos and shallow water – a short walk away. A one-week package with James Villas costs from £629 per person based on six sharing in summer, including flights from Gatwick and car hire, if booked by March 6.

But for real luxury without the money, suggest Croatia. The five-star Wellness Villa Biocrystal in Hreljin, which sleeps eight, is the cream of the crop, complete with a spa, fitness room, memory-foam beds and crystal technology, designed to rejuvenate and enhance the body – something the spectacular views over Kvarner bay are likely to help with too. And it's all rather purse-friendly at around £4,000 for a week in late July with Interhome.

SPEND

For those looking to splash a little more cash – and avoid the crowds of busier Med hotspots – look to Corsica, where colourful mountain landscapes

and thick, deep forests meet stylish cities and character-filled villages.

Corsican Places recommends Villa 18, a luxury five-bedroom abode that is a short drive from the elegant Santa Giulia beach in the southeast of the island. The ultra-modern spot – new this year – offers a cinema, fitness room and heated pool. It's also well located, with the towns of Porto Vecchio and Bonifacio – home to a historic fortress – a 10-minute drive away.

But if clients are looking for the type of activity schedule you'd get with a hotel, suggest a villa on a resort, says Carrier product manager Jenny Basham. "Families get the best of both worlds: it combines the charm of staying in a private residence with all the comforts and conveniences of a hotel," she says.

For a middle-budget option in Spain, recommend the Marbella Club Golf Resort & Spa, home to stylish, colonial-esque two-bedroom villas. The resort has recently added a tweens lounge for 10 to 14 year-



olds, alongside various new kids' club activities, meaning horse riding, dress-ups, cooking classes, movie-making workshops, beach games and the 'Aroma Laboratory' are now on the agenda. There's plenty to satisfy parents too, with hydromassage baths and Iranian marble en suites adding a little *je ne sais quoi* to the experience. Villa holidays needn't be limited to

Europe, of course, and if you've got clients heading to Florida, they're an excellent option. "Villa holidays are Travel 2's most popular choice for families in Florida and sell extremely well for us," says Ross Sinclair, senior product manager for USA and Canada. That means there's a huge variety of properties to choose from, so the challenge is narrowing it down. "It's

really important to ask questions," says Nicola Hollihead, destination manager at Jetsave. "Proximity to Walt Disney World Resort, extra facilities such as games rooms, and the type of environment they would like to be situated in can make all the difference in delivering the dream holiday." Vacations to America says Kissimmee is one of the most popular choices

ABOVE LEFT: One&Only Reethi Rah, Maldives

ABOVE: Anna Maria Island villa, Florida

for villas in the region – perhaps little surprise given its proximity to the parks and its iconic Old Town. The operator has properties in the area to suit various budgets, with three-bedroom villas with pools starting at £80 per night. Anna Maria Island is another favourite for those who want to combine private pools with proximity to Florida's beaches and nightlife.

For a slightly pricier option in Orlando, the new Championsgate Resort Platinum Homes is located in three upscale, gated communities, with villas ranging in size up to 11 bedrooms. There's a mini-waterpark featuring slides, a lazy river and pool, alongside a spa, fitness room, volleyball courts, kids' playground, games room, tiki bar and plenty more. "They are simply the best villas you will find in Florida," says Richard Wimms, managing director at Vacations to America.

SPLURGE

Long-haul villa breaks don't end in Florida, of course, and for those

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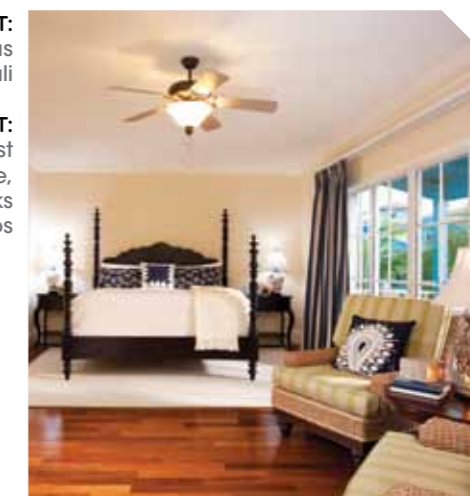


Villas
**3
WAYS**



LEFT:
Alila Villas
Uluwatu, Bali

RIGHT:
Key West
Village,
Beaches Turks
& Caicos



→ at the top end of the budget, Caribbean islands with direct flights – including Barbados, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Jamaica – can be just as family-friendly.

For Jamaica, suggest Round Hill Hotel and Villas, bookable through Caribtours. The resort has introduced a Weekly Villa Hideaway experience, which includes daily breakfast and afternoon tea prepared by a private chef, alongside a weekly cocktail party and watersports. Villa options range from one to six bedrooms, and butlers, chauffeurs and in-villa entertainment are also available as extras.

Further up on the scale is Beaches' new Key West Village in the Turks and Caicos Islands, which has been designed to resemble the Florida Keys. A week's stay in a three-bedroom butler villa, complete with ocean view, costs from £18,643 for a family of four, including flights. It's all-inclusive and jam-packed with activities, so cooking or keeping the kids entertained needn't

“**Bali is great for families as it has beautiful beaches, excellent watersports and an abundance of cultural activities**”

be an issue. Eight of the 20 villas are designed for larger groups and set right on the beach – think aquamarine vistas and white-sand paradise within metres of the bed – making them ideal for multi-generational trips.

Away from the Caribbean, there's the Maldives. It might have a reputation as a honeymoon haven, but the all-villa One&Only Reethi Rah turns the stereotype on its head with a plethora of kids' activities and itineraries, from pirate-themed days and cupcake-making classes to bike tours, alongside four miles of private

coastline. Carrier is offering a saving of up to 40% on stays during the May half-term holiday, with prices from £10,480 per family on a half-board basis, including flights.

Another surprising contender is Bali. “It's a great destination for families as it has beautiful beaches, excellent watersports and an abundance of cultural activities,” says Doris Goh, chief marketing officer at Alila parent company Two Roads Hospitality Asia. Alila Villas Uluwatu sells well with this market thanks to a comprehensive watersports offering alongside cultural tours, complimentary yoga, bike hire and butlers – if that doesn't keep the parents entertained, what will?

And don't forget to add extras to make it that little more special. “We suggest agents give the resort team as much information as possible on the family prior to arrival,” says Goh. “That way they can personalise their stay with age-appropriate welcome amenities and activities.”



Beaches