

Play together

Bonding on bikes or scoring on the football pitch? Laura French finds the resorts that let kids and parents get active together

@laurafrench121

Mum at the spa, dad at the gym, kids in the games room, grandad at the golf course... even if you set off on a holiday together you could easily go a week without seeing the rest of the family.

Getting some space to yourself can be quite welcome, but for most of us, spending quality time together and bonding over memorable experiences is at the heart of a family escape. It might even be an opportunity for parents to introduce their offspring to a favourite sport, or for kids to persuade mum and dad to try a new activity.

That's why there's a plethora of resorts offering academies, lessons, family clubs and diverse activities - spanning diving to dolphin-swimming, waterskiing to wellness activities - for the entire clan to bond over.

▶ ITALIAN STALWARTS

Those wanting to stay close to home certainly aren't short on options. For avid sports fans, the renowned Forte Village in Sardinia should be high on the

list. Go-karting, dancing, biking, boxing, tennis and fencing academies are all available for parents and kids to do together (with a minimum age of 14 for fencing) in the company of famous sports icons, with crystal-clear ocean and tree-carpeted mountains as a backdrop.

The resort's crowning glory, though, has to be the renowned Chelsea Football Academy, led by Chelsea legends such as Dennis Wise and Carlo Cudicini. This week-long course is for those aged four to 14, but at the end of every week there's an adults v children match where kids can show off their newfound skills and parents get to perfect theirs. The academy costs €440 per child including kit, and runs from the end of May to mid-September.

Just around the corner, Chia

Laguna caters to a similarly sporty market with plenty of land and water activities open to adults and younger ones.

They include off-the-beaten-track bike rides in the countryside, horse riding trips along idyllic nature trails and golf at the nearby Molas Golf Club (with discounted green fees), plus surfing, windsurfing, kayaking and other water sports.

Over on Sicily, Verdura Resort, a Rocco Forte Hotel, offers plenty for the whole family too, not least a water sports club with kitesurfing, sailing, surfing and waterskiing, plus a tennis academy where parents and kids can battle it out on six top-quality clay courts. Away from the sporting exertions, families can also cook up a storm with Verdura's chefs - kids will love making pizza, pasta and chocolates - with prices from €70.

▶ CONTINENTAL CAPERS

Elsewhere in Europe, you'll find brands such as Robinson, Club Med, Mark Warner and Neilson Beachclubs offering water



A week's half-board at Sani Beach, Halkidiki, with **Olympic Holidays** costs from £1,262 per person based on two adults and two children in a junior suite, with taxi transfers and flights from Gatwick for departures on October 20. olympicholidays.com

Prestige Holidays offers a week at Verdura Resort in Sicily from £3,369 per adult and £768 per child based on three sharing a deluxe room with breakfast, including Ryanair flights from Stansted and car hire, departing August 7. prestigeholidays.co.uk



and land sports – from sailing to surfing, cycling to waterskiing – for the whole family to participate in (though note some have age restrictions).

Suggest Mark Warner's Levante Beach Resort in Rhodes for its purpose-built tennis centre, complete with seven AstroTurf courts and professional coaches. Or look to Neilson's newly renovated Alana Beachclub in Croatia for mountain biking, dinghy sailing and rock climbing around the soaring peaks of Paklenica National Park.

Over in Halkidiki, Sani Resort combines these sportier, family-wide pastimes with more-unusual activities – think archery, beekeeping tours and 'eco days' where guests of all ages can try clay sculpting, weaving, pasta-making and eco-friendly activities around the marina (every Sunday evening in the summer). There's also a five-a-side football pitch for families wanting a quick kick-around. In



At Sani Resort in Greece, activities include clay sculpting, pasta-making, archery, weaving and beekeeping tours

Cyprus, the Olympic Lagoon Hotel in Ayia Napa excels on the football front too, with a five-day soccer academy run by FA-qualified instructors, open to both children and adults.

If it's more golf that swings your clients, though, suggest La Manga Club in the southern region of Murcia, Spain. This iconic, star-studded resort has things down to a tee (excuse the pun), with family lessons at the Golf Training Centre available for €145, plus three award-winning 18-hole golf courses

where all ages can hone their skills.

Meanwhile, at the PGA Catalunya Resort in northeastern Spain, kids and adults can have an hour's private family tuition on the driving range from €55 for the first person then €10 for each additional player. Beyond golf, families will find a variety of other outdoor pursuits they can bond over, from horticultural lessons in the vegetable garden to biologist-led group nature walks, fishing in the lake and horse riding treks, with pony grooming on offer for the little ones.

But if these resorts don't quite fall within the budget, fear not – there are plenty of more affordable alternatives, including Al Fresco's camping parks in France, Italy and beyond. Suggest the brand's five-star La Croix du Vieux Pont park in Champagne for family-wide activities spanning mini golf, bowling, climbing and canoeing, alongside a roster of outdoor games, challenges, 'families v reps' activities →

FAR LEFT:
Verdura
Golf & Spa
Resort, Sicily

LEFT:
La Manga
Club, Spain

BELOW:
La Croix du
Vieux Pont,
France



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LEFT:
WreckTangle
obstacle
course at
Hard Rock
Riviera Maya

RIGHT:
Atlantis
Paradise
Island, the
Bahamas



PICTURES: KOVAH DUNCUMBE, LA MANGA CLUB, RORI PALAZZO

and more, organised as part of its Family Activities Plus programme – imagine a kids' club that's open to adults too (no 'fomo' here!).

CARIBBEAN QUEENS

For those after a farther-flung family escape, the Caribbean region rules the roost. In Mexico, the Hard Rock Riviera Maya boasts the activity-focused Woodward complex, which opened last year, offering indoor snowboarding and skiing, trampolining, free-running, tumbling, dancing and more for the whole family. New this year, there's also WreckTangle, a 'ninja obstacle course' filled with rope swings, punch bags and other challenges, and open to anyone over 3ft tall. It's priced €100 for guests, including all-day access to the huge Woodward facility.

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WreckTangle is a 'ninja obstacle course' filled with rope swings, punch bags and other challenges

Elsewhere in Mexico, Dreams Playa Mujeres offers something to suit all ages, with cycling, zip-lining and more, plus family-friendly cooking classes three times a week. But most exciting is the 'nature connection' package, which gives families the chance to swim, kayak and snorkel with dolphins as one happy family (\$199 per person for up to four).

Atlantis Paradise Island in the Bahamas ups that further with its 'ultimate trainer for a day' package, which lets families paddleboard, kayak or snorkel with dolphins rescued during Hurricane Katrina (\$490 per person), or try various other activities, ranging from snorkelling to pottery-painting, glass-fusing to jewellery-making.

And it's not the only Caribbean resort that puts hobbies at the forefront. Beaches resorts in Jamaica and Turks & Caicos offer family-wide activities such as baking, puppet-making and other workshops with Sesame Street characters, plus Amazing Art classes and plenty of land and water sports to get everyone involved. Most unusual is the brand's snuba offering, which lets both adults and children

aged over eight experience the feeling of diving without the commitment (there's also 'snuba doo' for four to seven-year-olds).

But if none of that is quite intense enough, there's only one place to go – Saint Lucia's BodyHoliday. This fitness-loving stalwart is normally reserved for over-16s, but every July and August it offers a families' WellFit retreat open to anyone over the age of 12, featuring everything from bike rides to beach volleyball, lifeguard training to yoga and cooking, plus a teen spa menu and mother-daughter sessions at the wellness centre for added family bonding. It's closed from July 1 to September 1 this year for refurbishment, but families can expect it to be back up and running with some shiny new facilities come 2019. ➔



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BEST OF THE REST

After more family inspiration? We've rounded up four of the best alternative experiences for those wanting to burn off some extra energy

MUSIC

Family-friendly beachfront resort La Pirogue in Mauritius has launched a digital recording studio, where guests of all ages can try their hand at various stages of the production process – from singing to producing, DJing to sound engineering – under the supervision of a professional.



BOWLING

Families can hit the bowling alley at Now Larimar Punta Cana, with four lanes offering adults and kids the chance to pit themselves against one another (if they can drag themselves away from the beach). They'll also find floating water trampolines, horse riding and plenty more.



ROCK CLIMBING

Direct adventurous parents and kids (over eight) to Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort in Oman, where the Jabal Activity Wall has just been extended and now offers nearly 200 metres of via ferrata, plus the country's first mountain zip-line. The new climbing route is one of the highest in the Middle East.

DIVING

Malta's Corinthia Hotel St George's Bay will be offering free trial dives to anyone aged eight and over from mid-June onwards, meaning parents and younger ones can try it out before committing to more. The weekly morning session will be held at a sister hotel next door and can be booked on site.



PICTURE: CARLOS BOLANOS; SHUTTERSTOCK

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