

No-fly families

A family escape without a flight? No problem, says Natalie Marsh

@NatalieMarsh_TW

Boarding a plane and jetting off into the sunset isn't everyone's idea of the perfect start to a family holiday. Luggage restrictions, excess baggage charges and the logistics of getting the whole family through the airport are just some of the reasons why air travel might not appeal to every customer – not to mention the guilt of leaving the family dog behind!

However, there are plenty of options both at home and within easy reach of British shores. The UK has its fair share of family-friendly holiday parks and campsites for those who want to feel worlds away without travelling too far afield. And with more routes available by rail and sea – including the new Eurostar service from London to Amsterdam – customers don't

need to take to the skies to leave the borders of the UK.

We check out a few of the easiest options for those who want all the fun of a family holiday without setting foot on a plane.

► FUN BY FERRY

Before low-cost flights and cross-Channel rail links were the norm, there was the ferry, and it can still be the easiest way to transport the kids, car and a boot full of luggage to your destination. While France may be the first place that comes to mind, other places accessible by ferry, such as the Channel Islands, are on the rise.

Premier Holidays' short-haul general manager, Beverley Scarr, says there has been a 6% to date rise this year for travel to Jersey by sea with a car.

"These increases have been driven by family travel in school holidays, with more families looking to visit the Channel Islands by sea as it offers so many benefits," she says. "All clients have to do is pack their car and go. There's no airport hassle and people can even take their family dog – the list is endless."

Jersey's proximity to the mainland, along with its unspoilt sandy beaches and historical sights, make it a safe, easy-to-explore island for families.

Book it: Premier Holidays has seven nights' half-board at the Mayfair Hotel from £555,

from July 14-August 17, including ferry crossings from Poole to Jersey. trade.premierholidays.co.uk

Or try: Ireland is



PICTURE: DANNY EVANS/VISIT JERSEY

→ just a short ferry ride from the UK and boasts stunning landscapes and picturesque coastlines. Families who wish to explore the Emerald Isle with their own car can transport it across with Irish Ferries, with routes from Holyhead to Dublin and Pembroke to Rosslare running up to six times a day.

THE UK HOLIDAY PARK

A school holiday getaway doesn't need to involve travelling far from home – families might be surprised by what they can find on their doorstep. With parks dotted across England from Cumbria to Cornwall (and more in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland besides), Hoseasons offers families a rural getaway with a taste of luxury.

Parks with indoor pools and plenty of activities are in high demand, along with the operator's high-end Evermore Holiday Lodges, which guarantee spacious family accommodation with hot tubs at every location.

National account manager Sarah Smith says: "Our Go Active and Evermore collections are extremely popular with families, both for last-minute bookings and those planning their summer holidays with the whole family.

"Customers will generally travel up to two-and-a-half hours for a short break, so pick locations that are within these driving times to advertise in your windows or on social media."

Book it: A four-night stay at Aysgarth Lodges in the Yorkshire Dales, part of the Evermore collection, costs from



For those who want to escape the UK but keep their spending in check, a mobile home in Europe is an attractive option

RIGHT:
Al Fresco Holidays

BELOW:
Diversity at Butlin's

£481 in total, based on four sharing.

hoseasons.co.uk/agents

Or try: Home of the iconic Redcoats, Butlin's is well known for its entertainment, attracting the likes of dance troupe Diversity and the Big Top Circus to its parks this year. The three seaside resorts are also bursting with creative and sporting activities – go-karting, archery and adventure golf to name just a few.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY CAMPING

For those who want to escape the UK but still keep their spending in check, staying in a mobile home in Europe is an attractive option. Parks across France and the Netherlands are particularly popular with UK customers due to the relatively short driving distances.

They're affordable too, according



PICTURE: ZACHELLISON

to Al Fresco Holidays sales and partnership manager John Escott, who says more agents are offering Al Fresco to customers as a great-value option. There has also been an increase in group bookings of two or more mobile homes, for large families or friends travelling together.

"Kids will love the freedom that the parks offer and the chance to make new friends from all over Europe," he adds.

Book it: Al Fresco Holidays offers seven nights in a two-bedroom mobile home, sleeping up to six, at Duinrell Park in Wassenaar, the Netherlands, for £1,241, departing August 1.

alfresco-holidays.com/agents/login

Or try: Scattered around the coast, Haven parks are a popular option for customers wanting to stay on British soil. Shelter building, pond dipping and bug hunts are among the operator's Nature Rockz activities that are proving popular this year.

THEME PARK THRILLS

For thrill seekers, nothing beats a family holiday to a theme park, and Europe has plenty of attractions offering that adrenaline rush.

To escape into the realm of fairytales, Dutch theme park Efteling has storybook scenes and shows that will wow younger children, as well as bigger rollercoasters to keep teens happy. The park added an indoor ride along with more family accommodation last year, plus it has seasonal events that offer a good excuse to book a break.

Claire Hancer, UK country manager for Efteling, says: "Winter Efteling, which takes places for 11 weeks from December to January, offers





PICTURE: JAN-WILLEM SCHRAM

LEFT:
Efteling

RIGHT:
Shearings
Holidays

BELOW:
A-Rosa



→ holidaymakers an alternative experience to Lapland and Winter Wonderland.”

Book it: DFDS offers a five-night Efteling Theme Park Break for eight people travelling in two cars by ferry from Newcastle to Amsterdam, with entry to the park and self-catering accommodation, from £1,792.

dfds.co.uk

Or try: If theme parks top the wish list, it's hard to ignore Europe's most visited. Disneyland Paris is just three hours from London by Eurostar, and 30 minutes from the centre of the French capital. This year's Marvel Summer of Super Heroes, from June 10-September 30, offers even more incentive to visit in the summer holidays for a chance to spot Spider-Man, Iron Man and



Going by coach can be the perfect solution – everyone travels together, yet no one is driving

Black Widow, along with a new parade and shows celebrating the park's 25th anniversary season.

▶ MULTIGENERATIONAL TRIPS

Family holidays are not limited to just the parents and children, as grandparents might not want to miss out on all the fun.

“We are seeing a trend towards

grandparents taking short breaks with grandchildren, leaving parents at home to enjoy a few days off,” says Jane Atkins, managing director at Shearings Holidays, which has launched a family brochure to help cater to this demand.

Travelling by coach – without the stress of finding their way or keeping the kids from arguing in the back seat – can suit this multigenerational demographic, and being with a familiar company allows grandparents to feel in control, according to Atkins.

“They can be the perfect solution – everyone travels together, yet no one is driving and, in some instances, especially with attractions such as theme parks, this is one of the easiest ways to reach them,” she says.

Book it: Shearings offers a one-night trip to Warner Bros. Studio Tour London – The Making of Harry Potter, from £129 for adults and £119 for children. The price includes coach travel, a night's B&B, studio tour entry and time to explore London.

shearingsagent.com

Or try: River cruising – once the preserve of the older generation – is a real boom area for multigenerational travel, with 2,000 children sailing onboard A-Rosa ships in 2017, marking a 25% increase on the previous year. The Rhine cruise is A-Rosa's best-seller, departing from Cologne and docking at several cities en route, plus under-15s can travel free with a full-paying adult on the premium all-inclusive rate. **TV**

