

Half-term haunts

Sell a half-term break with our guide to the hottest spots, writes Laura French

@laurafrench121

The summer holiday has become something of an institution, but what about all the other school breaks?

Half-terms, Christmas, Easter – clients heading off on their holi-bobs outside the main season will find some pretty impressive deals as well as fewer crowds, milder climes and the chance to escape the chilly British autumn in search of some sun.

Not that you necessarily need to leave the country to have a good time. Whether it's a long weekend in the UK or a week somewhere far, far away, there's a deal, event or other selling hook to suit. We've put together a guide to some of the best to look out for this October half-term.

▶ TRICK OR TREAT

October is officially Halloween season, and there's a plethora of family resorts going all-out to celebrate. Legoland Windsor will be putting on 'Brick or Treat' from October 18 to November 1 with spooky themed activities and costumes. Across the Channel, Disneyland Paris will be hosting a Halloween

extravaganza (October 1 to November 4) featuring Disney Villains, a themed parade, spooky shows and parties to celebrate Mickey's 90th anniversary.

Super Break is offering packages to both resorts. A three-night trip to Disneyland Paris starts at £985 for a family of four, including a two-day park pass, staying at the Kyriad Hotel from October 21.

Back in the UK, holiday parks are getting in on the act too. Haven will be offering themed activities including a Halloween fancy dress competition, shows, games and crafts. And Butlin's is putting on a firework show, night-time fairground and Little Monsters Ball – expect an army of redcoats in flamboyant costumes.

Further afield, Al Fresco Holidays' Sangueli park on the Costa Dorada in Spain will be playing host to its own array of fright-fest activities. They accompany the usual host of other draws for families – swimming pools, sports facilities, a new Africa-themed complex and easy access to the nearby PortAventura World theme



THIS PAGE:
Disneyland
Paris Halloween
parade

RIGHT:
Halloween fun
at Sanguli park,
Costa Dorada

FAR RIGHT:
Fenicia Prestige
Suites & Spa,
Ibiza

BELOW:
Atmosphere
Kanifushi,
the Maldives



ASK THE EXPERT

Nicky Shafe,
marketing manager,
Prestige Holidays

“Our pick for families during October half-term are Sicily and the Canaries. This year, we’ve introduced Fuerteventura, and if the fact the latest *Star Wars* was filmed there isn’t enough, it has huge appeal as a winter-sun destination for families, with an impressive 152 white-sand beaches and exceptional water sports. We have two great, beachfront family options: Gran Hotel Atlantis Bahia Real and Sheraton Fuerteventura, both with kids’ clubs, multiple swimming pools and family rooms.”

➔ park, to name a few, plus you can nab discounts of up to 40% at all Al Fresco parks for September and October.

But if you’ve got a family wanting to push the boat out and go a little more exotic, look to Elegant Hotels’ five-star Tamarind property in Barbados. The resort will be hosting a Marvels v Villains programme of activities over the half-term with spooky t-shirt design sessions, a Dracula-themed baking session and an outdoor scary movie night among its highlights.

▶ THAT’S A DEAL

School holidays might be busier than term time but there are still bargains to be had. Close to home, active specialist HF Holidays is offering an under-18s-go-free deal on its Exmoor Family Walking Adventure. It includes four nights at the scenic, National Trust property Holnicote House from £558 per person full-board starting October 22, including guided walks



The Maldives take longer to get to, but there’s guaranteed sun, sea the colour of blue curacao, and good-value deals

and optional excursions to the likes of picturesque Lynmouth.

For those after slightly sunnier skies, look to Ibiza. Classic Collection Holidays is offering a complimentary upgrade to half-board, free child place and reduced room rates at the five-star Inotel Fenicia Prestige Suites & Spa. Prices start from £5,430 for four sharing a junior suite from October 21.

“Children can enjoy their own pool and seasonal mini club, while adults can indulge in a fabulous thermal area

at the prestige spa,” says Gary Boyer, head of purchasing for the operator. “And the resort of Santa Eulalia is one of the most family-friendly in Ibiza.”

If that’s not quite far enough, suggest Dubai, says Gold Medal. Family favourite Atlantis the Palm is letting under-12s stay free in half-term, and there’s plenty on hand to keep them occupied, including the nearby Aquaventure Waterpark and Lost Chambers Aquarium, which guests get complimentary access to.

Looking to get more exotic still? The Maldives might take longer to get to, but there’s a comprehensive family offering once you’re there, plus guaranteed sun, sea the colour of blue curacao, and some good-value deals to bag in October. Caribtours recommends Atmosphere Kanifushi on the Lhaviyana Atoll for one of the best-value options this half-term. Alongside the usual array of extras under its all-inclusive package ➔



PICTURE: SAKIS PAPADOPOULOS

→ - non-motorised water sports, sunset cruises, daily snorkelling trips, minibar, kids' club activities and one excursion of their choice - the resort is offering a 60% saving on rates, plus a free room upgrade and a stay-and-eat-free deal for up to two under-14s.

But for the ultimate October savings, look to Thailand, says David Carlaw, head of faraway at Premier Holidays. "It's a great winter sun option. October is still low season so there'll be bargains at many hotels, and although you'll likely experience a few showers, the rain clears almost as soon as it appears," he says.

Recommend The Front Village, a recently refurbished resort in Phuket for free-night deals and exclusive family offers, including a kids-stay-free deal for under-12s when they share a room with two adults.

► WINTER SUN

Back in Europe there's been a swathe of new openings this year, so push them to families after some shorter-haul winter sun. In Tenerife - where October temperatures rest at a comfortable 22C - the new GF Victoria opened in March.

A splash park, specialised pool zones and family section at the spa make it an excellent bet for

“ For fewer crowds, cooler temperatures and a wallet-friendly price tag, suggest Montenegro

RIGHT: Ikos Dassia, Corfu

BELOW: Melia Hotel Sol Katmandu Park & Resort, Majorca

families after an upscale option. Jet2holidays has added it to its programme for this year, with a week's B&B starting at £829 per person, based on a family of four sharing from October 21, with flights from Stansted.

Meanwhile in Corfu the much anticipated Ikos Dassia opened its doors in spring. The five-star, all-inclusive sibling of Ikos Oceania and Ikos Olivia will be offering a range of complimentary kids' and teens' clubs in half-term and beyond - think mini discos, Olympic games, treasure hunts, cookie-making classes, beach volleyball and plenty more - plus a creche for under-fours.



Elsewhere in Greece, Sunvil recommends Kefalonia. "Families will love the milder climate in October as well as the variety of beaches - from long stretches of the finest golden sand to tiny white-pebble coves and turtle-nesting spots," says director Dudley Der Parthog. He suggests the Anemona Apartments for family-friendly self-catering in a peaceful location, a 10-minute walk from Katelios village.

As with the Canaries and Greece, plenty of sunshine is pretty much guaranteed in Turkey, which enjoys an average of 26C in October. Suggest Thomas Cook's four-star SunConnect Liberty Hisaronu hotel in Dalaman for a centrally located, good-value option with plenty of children's activities, including the brand's signature Lollo & Bernie's Kids' Clubs, waterslides, two pools and a good choice of dining spots.

But don't just limit possibilities to the obvious options. The Balkans are growing in popularity, so for somewhere with fewer crowds, cooler temperatures (averages of 16C) and a wallet-friendly price tag, suggest Montenegro, says Alex Stuart, general manager at Novasol.

The operator offers a week in a four-star apartment in Herceg Novi from £629 for the whole two-bedroom apartment, sleeping up to seven, from October 20. That makes it a good option for larger families

or multigenerational groups wanting some valuable time together. So that's half-term sorted, and without raiding the piggy bank. TW

New family offerings

Columbia Beach Resort, Cyprus: A revamped kids' club and new teens' club offer archery, badminton, paddleboarding, waterskiing, mocktail-making classes and art sessions.

Melia Hotel Sol Katmandu Park & Resort, Majorca: This hotel meets theme park combination has a new kids' entertainment programme featuring games based on the fictional legend of Katmandu.

Efteling, the Netherlands: The Dutch theme park has launched Caro, an international show featuring dancers, music and acrobats at its on-site theatre.

