

Winter Wonderland

Stuck on where to send families over the festive period? **Katie McGonagle** has the answers

Christmas is a time for families – young and old gathering around the tree, eating mince pies, sipping mulled wine, singing carols and leaving carrots out for Santa's reindeer. Or so every Hallmark Christmas movie would have you believe. In reality, it's more likely to be about who got the biggest toy, who's nabbed the remote control or who's carving the Christmas turkey.

If your clients want to leave all that Christmas Day drama behind, suggest jetting away for the festive season. We've rounded up a few of the best options for a festive family getaway, whether your customers want snow or sunshine, Santa's grotto or sandy beaches – but all with plenty of festive flair.

BEST FOR...SNOW

Lapland: Where else to start than with Santa, on a Christmas holiday the kids will never forget? This trip doesn't start as you arrive at your hotel, or even as you board the plane – it starts as the little ones write their letters to Father Christmas at home, which are then brought out by the 'real' Santa on arrival in Finland. Just picture their faces as they ➤

DESTINATIONS

FAMILY HOLIDAYS | CHRISTMAS WITH KIDS



FROM LEFT: Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife; reindeer sleigh ride with Santa's Lapland; Club Med Alpe d'Huez PICTURE: Sergio Villalba Morales; Jorma Luhta



HOW TO SELL FESTIVE FAMILY HOLIDAYS

🌀 Always book early for Christmas and New Year, so if clients have missed the boat for this year, offer to book for 2020 – it'll give them more time to save and something to look forward to next year.

🌀 Check whether festive extras are included in the price – Christmas Day dinners and special activities often come at a supplement on top of the usual rate.

🌀 Suggest packing a stocking or small gift to unwrap on Christmas Day, or picking up a present in duty free – even if the holiday is the kids' main present, nothing beats having something to open on Christmas morning.

🌀 Embrace the idea of a local Christmas dinner – while many resorts will serve turkey, there might also be the option to try fish dishes in Scandinavia, curried goat in the Caribbean or an assortment of traditional pastries.

see the man in red bringing out their handwritten letters at a private family meeting.

Melvin Westlake, senior product manager at Santa's Lapland, says: "The excitement begins the moment you board the Santa Express flight, with songs and entertainment along the way. After being greeted on arrival by a gaggle of Santa's elves, step outside in your thermal suits to enjoy magical, family-friendly winter activities such as husky sledding or a reindeer sleigh ride – all included in the price of a holiday." A four-day Northern Lights Adventure with Santa's Lapland, including private meeting with Santa, starts at £4,058 per family of four, including flights, transfers, accommodation, thermal suits and excursions.

Finland: Activities Abroad, the family brand of The Artisan Travel Company, finds its bestseller for winter is a cottage in northern Finland. Sales manager Dawn Kiison says: "We don't go to the mass resorts, we like to seek out destinations that offer real family experiences and help to create magical Christmas memories. Our holiday at Jeris is the most longstanding of our Christmas holidays. You can expect all the festive favourites – from meeting Father Christmas at his home and husky sledding to seeing Rudolf's furry friends and enjoying a snowmobile safari. It has something all the family will love."

Prices start at £2,495 per adult and £1,395 per child aged five to 12, departing December 22, including flights, transfers, full-board accommodation, cold-weather clothing and guided activities such as a husky safari, cross-country skiing or a treasure hunt.

France: If you prefer skis to snowshoes, why not get kids on the slopes early with a trip to French resort Club Med Alpe d'Huez, where ski-in ski-out facilities come with direct access to more than 150 miles of slopes. There are four kids' clubs on site, for children from four months to

“After being greeted by a gaggle of Santa's elves, step outside in your thermal suits to enjoy family-friendly activities

17 years, plus new kids' playgrounds, climbing walls and, best of all, walls they can actually draw on.

A seven-night holiday costs £9,088 for a family of four based on two adults and two children aged five and 10, departing December 22, and including flights, transfers, ski passes and ski equipment.

BEST FOR...GUARANTEED SUNSHINE

Tenerife: Forget slaving over a turkey dinner for hours when you could be sitting by a pool while someone else does all the hard work. Some resorts go all out on Christmas Day to make sure both parents and kids can enjoy the day. At Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife, the festive season starts as early as December 6, when youngsters at the Roxity Kids Club make stockings to hang on their doors, and continues all the way to Christmas Day when kids make costumes, decorate cookies and get a visit from Father Christmas. There's Christmas dinner in the buffet restaurant (included) or à la carte restaurants (at extra cost), and a film night for little ones so adults can party until 1am in the sports bar. Prices start at £873 per person with Jet2holidays, based on four sharing a Studio Suite Silver on a B&B basis, with flights from East Midlands departing December 19.

Mauritius: "There's nothing more magical than Christmas on far-flung shores, and I'd definitely recommend Mauritius for families," says Susan Greenhorn, assistant ➤

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product and commercial manager for the Indian Ocean and If Only. "The majority of resorts are very child-friendly, with award-winning kids' clubs and accommodation catering for families of all sizes."

All-inclusive resort Tamassa has kids' and teens' clubs offering treasure hunts, sports and games, plus activities for the family to try together, including a home-cooking class or tennis tournament. Prices for a five-night stay start at £2,374 based on three sharing with flights and private transfers.

Dubai: Make the most of Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts' new family programme, combining fun activities such as camel rides on the beach, feeding rescued turtles or a family day out at Wild Wadi water park, with supervised kids' nights three times a week to keep little ones occupied while mum and dad take a break too. Make time for the beach cinema under the stars - complete with butlers serving popcorn and milkshakes - or join the Friday family brunch at Jumeirah Creekside Hotel, where kids can try arts and crafts, face painting or jump around on a bouncy castle.

An 11-night stay for a family of four in a Club Room at Jumeirah Creekside costs £3,171 with breakfast and entry to Wild Wadi, based on travel from December 23

“Make time for the beach cinema, with butlers serving popcorn and milkshakes

to January 3, plus return Emirates economy-class flights at £1,150 for the same period.

BEST FOR...MAKING MEMORIES

Orlando: For a truly magical Christmas, Funway Holidays' product destination manager Malcolm Davies reckons Walt Disney World is the pick of the bunch. He says: "It's one of the most festive places to be in December and one of our Christmas family favourites. There is so much going on from the official tree-lighting ceremony to Disney Christmas parties, festive live shows and even 'snow' in Orlando."

Visitors can enjoy a new festive firework show at Walt Disney World Resort, a Holiday Hoopla Dance Party, candlelight procession at Epcot, and the chance to see Cinderella's Castle transformed into a glittering ice palace. A seven-night stay in a three-bedroom Disney Area private villa with private pool starts at £1,500 per

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DESTINATIONS

CHRISTMAS WITH KIDS | FAMILY HOLIDAYS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Chobe National Park, Botswana, with Intrepid Travel; Galapagos with G Adventures; Jumeirah Creekside, Dubai; Tamassa hotel, Mauritius PICTURE: Attili Patel

person, including American Airlines flights, for departures on December 22 with Funway Holidays.

Turks & Caicos Islands: Take Santa, add Sesame Street and throw in the Grinch, and you've got the makings of the Beaches Turks & Caicos Christmas extravaganza. Expect plenty of fun and games - from a contest for the ugliest Christmas jumper to Elf's Floatopia Pool Party - plus a Sesame Street parade and the chance to give presents to local kids in a Sandals Foundation initiative. Prices are yet to be released for Christmas 2020, but will be confirmed once flight schedules are announced next year.

Galapagos Islands: For the ultimate in memorable family adventures, head to the wildlife paradise that is the Galapagos Islands. There will be plenty of learning about animals and the environment, not least at the Charles Darwin Research Station and giant tortoise breeding centre. But kids can also have fun as they learn with snorkelling, hiking, kayaking and swimming at various locations.

Prices start at £1,499 for G Adventures' Family Land Galapagos tour, an eight-day round-trip from Quito, departing December 21. Flights not included. Suitable for children aged six and up. **TW**

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TOP TEENS

Once they hit the terrible teens, Santa and his reindeer probably won't cut it, so you'll need something more to engage their interest. Intrepid Travel has a teen-oriented adventure through Botswana, which is a great safety net for parents who haven't tried a family safari before. It takes care of the logistics, so they can concentrate on canoeing along the Okavango Delta or seeing thundering Victoria Falls. Intrepid Travel head of sales Andrew Turner says: "It's an incredible way to get up close to the amazing sights and wildlife of Botswana and offers a truly memorable experience for all the family. This is a camping trip and is a great way for families to get into the team spirit; the journey and the destination are, of course, wonderful, but half the fun is the camaraderie." Prices start at £1,065 per adult and £959 per child for 10 days, excluding flights, departing December 29 and including nine nights' camping, most meals and activities.

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*Valid for stays from 1 May - 31 Oct 2020. Prices based on 7 May 2020 departure and correct at time of publishing. Price based on 2 adults sharing. Subject to availability. All flight inclusive holidays are operated by ATOL scheme. *Standard bookings must include min 3 nights and be booked 1 Apr - 31 Dec 2019 and will automatically be entered into our monthly prize draw. The winner will be announced on our Facebook partner page on the last Friday of every month in Arabic, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

