

EASTER

3 ways

Forget Easter eggs, it's time to take those little lambs on holiday, writes Joanna Booth

Summer is too busy. Christmas is too fiddly, with all those family members to visit. And the half-terms simply aren't long enough. To my mind, Easter is the perfect school holiday. It's a time of transition. Spring is doing its thing, and while Europe's beaches haven't really hit the boil, temperatures in the southern Med are perfect for an active break. Yet you can still hit the tail end of the ski season or spot the northern lights if chilly thrills appeal. And with a solid fortnight, long-haul travel really comes into its own. We've rounded up some of the best Easter breaks based on age – for tots up to the age of seven, tweens (from eight to 12) and teens – so you can find one to fit each client.

Tots

What young families are capable of taking on is rather subjective. Some parents may be champing at the bit to get back to their adventurous ways, while others, taking their first tottering steps towards a family holiday, may prefer the simplicity of a more manageable resort stay.

For the latter, Al Fresco Holidays recommends La Croix du Vieux Pont, a holiday park just a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Calais. Indoor soft play and a retractable roof over the family pool, shallow kids' pool and spray park – all heated – weather-proof this trip to France so early in the year. When the sun is out, there are three playgrounds, and activities including go-karting, trampolining and cycling, with kid-sized

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bikes and baby seats available. Seven nights in a two-bedroom mobile home, plus a standard car on the Dover-Calais ferry, leads in at £460.

If sun is key, budgets are bigger and they're game to go long-haul, Tui suggests the Riu Santa Fe in Los Cabos, Mexico. It's a 24-hour all-inclusive with an on-site splash

park and a kids' club for the over-fours. A week at Easter starts at £1,120 per person, including flights.

Adventure can be on the cards, even for young children. Families Worldwide brings Morocco into play for kids of two and over with its nine-night Atlas Mule Train trip, which includes a horse-drawn carriage ride around Marrakech, four days in the Atlas Mountains (adults walk, kids can ride mules) and a beach stay at Essaouira.

Solo parents can benefit from the security and companionship of an organised tour, and Intrepid Travel's 10-day Northern India Family Holiday for Solo Parents is open to children of five and over. Explore bazaars, marvel at the Taj Mahal and even spot tigers – they'll think *The Jungle Book* has come to life. ➤

Haven is perfect for outdoor activities



3
OF THE BEST
FLIGHT-FREE
BREAKS

Easter Fun

Easter activities at Butlin's include a Spring Farmyard and Easter Egg Hunt, which suit the very youngest. The Bognor Regis resort has a huge indoor pool with a toddler area, plus football classes for two-year-olds and up.

Outdoor activities

Haven parks have plenty for tweens, from bushcraft to archery. At Craig Tara, the new all-weather Lighthouse Harbour Adventure Village has climbing walls, rope courses and crazy golf.

Theme park

Easter at Disneyland Paris combines favourite characters, with Frozen celebrations continuing until May, and Marvel Super Heroes arriving at the end of March.

PICTURE: Sam Todd



PICTURE: Alexander Shalomo/BlueOrange Studio; Classic Collection Holidays

SAFARIS
WITH KIDS

Classic Collection Holidays' director of product and supply, Alex Gavalda, recommends Madikwe Game Reserve in South Africa for safaris with younger kids. "It's in a malaria-free zone and has the big five. Even under-sixes can enjoy a private, 90-minute game drive with their parents." He suggests combining Madikwe with a stay in Cape Town, where they can see penguins, and time at Sun City, which has a water park and crocodile village.

G Adventures' new National Geographic Family Journeys feature an Easter Serengeti Safari. It's for over-sevens and clients will need to take antimalarial tablets, but the game-viewing options are great, with visits to the Serengeti plain and Ngorongoro Crater.

This age bracket is the easiest to book for. They're not too old for fun-packed stays at hotels with all the bells and whistles, and age-appropriate adventure tours abound.

If it's the first time the family has gone beyond fly-and-flop, a familiar destination can calm parental nerves. Activities Abroad has a new, week-long Active Family Adventure in Tenerife, with thrills including snorkelling, whale-watching, stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking, zip-lining and a cable-car ride up Mount Teide. It's maximum fun,

minimum fuss, staying in one hotel all week, in the characterful north-coast town of Puerto de la Cruz.

Also staying at a single centre – a lodge on the Arctic Circle – Exodus Travels' Finnish Winter Adventure can bring snowy magic and sightings of the northern lights as late as April. At this time of year, long daylight hours leave plenty of time for snowshoeing, dog-sledding and, for the bold, ice-climbing.

For something farther afield, try Costa Rica – it's small and safe, with a well-established infrastructure and a thoroughly exotic range of landscapes and wildlife. Sunvil

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suggests a 12-night trip, staying in a jungle lodge in Tortuguero National Park, traversing canopy walkways and swimming in hot springs in the shadow of Volcano Arenal, and ending with a stay in a resort near Manuel Antonio's beaches, where

you can spot sloths, toucans and iguanas in the grounds.

For parents who'd prefer to combine action for the kids with a little adult downtime, Gold Medal recommends a stay at Centara Grand Beach Resort in Phuket. With a water park that features a lazy river and slides, a kids' club, children's playground and sports centre, there should be more than enough to keep the youngsters entertained while their parents relax with a book or spend time in the spa. Seven nights' bed and breakfast starts at £1,179 per person including flights. ➤

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"Orlando really is a destination for all ages. Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom lets toddlers meet their favourite characters and has many gentle rides without height restrictions. Tweens love the animal and marine life at Disney's Animal Kingdom and SeaWorld Orlando. And no teen could be bored with the new Universal Orlando Resort thrill rides – Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure and Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts. My pick for family stays are the new Universal Endless Summer Resort Dockside and Disney's Art of Animation Resort. Both are close to the parks and offer early admission."

Malcolm Davies,
product destination manager,
Funway Holidays

PICTURE: Ivan Sorbati

Teens



MSC Cruises

Ah, teenagers – perhaps the trickiest customers of all. Offer action, adventure and access to others of their own age to avoid the grunts, groans and sighs that signal dissatisfaction.

Luxury family favourite Sani Resort is starting the season with a teen-focused bang, with its new Bear Grylls Survival Academy launching on April 10. Teens can take part in shelter and raft building, and eating wild food, with classes starting at €40 per day.

Caribtours recommends the Annabel Croft Tennis Academy at Algarve super-resort Pine Cliffs. Coaching courses during the Easter holidays will get any budding Venus or Roger Centre Court-ready for the summer term. A seven-day, room-only stay with five days of coaching for the whole family starts at £2,739 for two adults and two children.

Cruise lines are also getting in on the teen market, increasing facilities tailored to their needs.

MSC reports that 40% of its under-18 passengers are teens, and new flagship MSC Grandiosa – sailing in the Med during the Easter holidays – features three new activities: a dance crew competition, drone relay race and a spy mission.

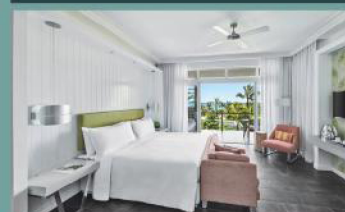
Carnival's newest ship, Carnival Panorama, is sailing from Long Beach along the Mexican Riviera, and features Sky Zone, a trampoline park and challenge area with a climbing wall, jousting beam and tug of war contests. There's also a 24-hour video arcade, some fairly hardcore waterslides and two clubs for teens – Circle C for 12-14s, and Club O2 for 15-17s.

Adventure tours also present a great opportunity for family bonding. The average age of children on Explore's 11-day Vietnam Family Adventure Tour is 14, and the highlights – kayaking in Halong Bay, trying the traditional martial art of kinh van, and learning to make Vietnamese doughnuts from a homestay in the Mekong Delta – suit teens perfectly. **TW**

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