

A trip for All Seasons

Take advantage of the changing seasons for a unique family escape, says Aby Dunsby

@AbraDunsby



SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



WINTER

PICTURES: CARIBTOURS; MARK BADER; TRAFALGAR; LOLA AKINMADE; MIKE TOY

For every family who likes to spend a week fleeing the cold and enjoying the sunshine over winter, there's another praying to wake up to thick blankets of snow.

'When to go' is a question almost every client will ask when booking a holiday, and it's important for agents to highlight that each season can bring an entirely different experience to one destination.

A week in La Palma in the Canaries in the height of summer means a chance for beachside lazing, for example, while a cooler springtime visit is perfect for active families keen for mountain biking, hiking, and strolls through the charming capital, Santa Cruz de La Palma.

Not only does each shifting season represent a unique chance for clients to get away with their families, if they pick their destination wisely, it can mean fewer crowds and cheaper prices too.

► SPRING
LONG-HAUL: Orlando, Florida

The theme park capital of the world drew in a record 66.1 million tourists last year, so Orlando is never going to be quiet, but for more manageable crowds and the most enjoyable weather, tell clients to go in early spring, when temperatures reach a pleasant 23C in the day.

"Orlando is one of our most popular family-friendly holiday options with attractions for

children from theme parks to water parks, and golf courses for the adults, to myriad other attractions, including a rapidly expanding shopping and dining 'town centre' called Disney Springs," says Rebecca Evans, senior marketing executive at Funway Holidays.

Next year sees the opening of heaps of new theme park attractions, including The World of Avatar at Disney's Animal Kingdom, Volcano Bay Water Park at Universal Orlando Resort and new immersive ride Lego Ninjago World coming to Legoland Florida.

SHORT-HAUL: Weymouth, UK
Going away needn't break the bank, and families can take advantage of the Easter break with a coastal staycation trip that'll keep the kids entertained.

Haven's Weymouth Bay Caravan Park is set among rolling hills and river valleys and is a mile's walk to the beach. The park boasts a heated indoor pool and outdoor fun pools with a lazy river, plus kids' clubs and a crazy golf course.

Those visiting at Easter will also be able to take advantage of Haven's Easter programme of activities, which includes Easter bonnet making, a parade, egg hunts and Easter parties.

OR TRY: Sardinia, Italy
Sardinia's breathtaking vistas of undulating hills, craggy mountains and windswept beaches are perfect for families seeking an idyllic setting for their

active holiday. Neilson's new 156-room Baia del Mori Beachclub on the northeast coast is perfectly located for some challenging road cycling, offering a thrilling mix of sweeping curves and dipping hills, and for those who prefer mountain biking, there's a good choice of flat routes for beginners, and a whole range of technical climbs for the hardcore. The region also boasts excellent breezy conditions for sailing, windsurfing, and kitesurfing, all offered by Neilson.

► SUMMER
LONG-HAUL: Barbados

While many associate the Caribbean with winter sun, families who take a trip there in summer can bag themselves some excellent deals.

Barbados boasts a whole host of mid-range all-inclusive options, a lot of which offer great value in summer. Paul Cleary, managing director at Caribtours, says: "Barbados is our biggest selling destination and it's perfect in the summer. There are so many family options when it comes to hotels, and it is about 40% less expensive to visit the same hotels in summer as it is in winter."

Summer is especially affordable for clients with pre-school age children, who are able to avoid the school holiday prices. "Flights are direct with BA and Virgin, so clients can be on the beach by mid-afternoon, and Barbados has many calm beaches, making it perfect for

those with young children," Cleary adds.

SHORT-HAUL: Menorca
Famous for its relaxing atmosphere, abundance of beaches and family-friendly resorts, Menorca is a failsafe option for clients with little ones, and the short two to three-hour flight keeps travelling stress to a minimum.

The all-inclusive hotel offering is strong, and there is lots to see and do on the island, whether families want to take in the scenery of the S'Albufera des Grau Nature Park, spend a day splashing about at the Aquarock water park, or visit the island's smattering of Bronze Age sites.

Beverley Jones, regional product manager for the Balearic Islands at Thomas Cook, recommends the beaches of Cala'n Bosch and Cala'n Forcat. She says: "Both resorts offer safe, sandy beaches and shallow bays that are easily accessible by buggy, and for older children and adults, there's a selection of water sports on offer." SunConnect Los Delfines in Cala'n Forcat is ideally located near restaurants, shops, and the coast, and the hotel has a kids' Club for children aged three to 11.

OR TRY: South Africa
Summer safari holidays to South Africa mean less vegetation, so the big five are easier to spot, and clients will benefit from hardly any rain, warmer days and fewer mosquitoes.

"The exchange rate makes

➔ South Africa incredible value for money, so it's no wonder that it's a such a popular family adventure destination," says Tim Winkworth, product and brand manager for The Family Adventure Company. The operator has seen such a growth in sales for its South Africa Teenage Safari that it is adding additional departures for 2017. The group tour allows clients to learn from local guides, and also cuts the costs of a safari holiday considerably as clients stay in hotels, chalets and campsites rather than luxury safari lodges.

▶ AUTUMN

LONG-HAUL: Thailand

Thailand offers excellent value and allows families to experience the exotic, while also benefiting from the reassurance of an extensive tourist infrastructure.

Autumn is a great time to visit as there is reduced humidity and clients can avoid the summer rains, plus flight prices are very reasonable and hotels will still have great offers in place following the summer season.

Thai people are famously welcoming to children and the country has



Bright lights, fantastic food and iconic monuments make Paris a top city-break destination

impressive family accommodation, with lots of hotels offering kids' clubs, children's activity classes, interconnecting rooms and dedicated children's pools.

Rebecca Turner, senior product manager for Asia and Australasia at Gold Medal, recommends families stay in luxury tented camps at Elephant Hills, giving them the chance to see elephants up close, hear how they are taken care of, and wash and feed them.

SHORT-HAUL: Paris, France

Bright lights, fantastic food and iconic monuments make Paris one of Europe's top destinations for a city break. While teens will love scaling the Eiffel Tower, visiting Notre Dame Cathedral and shopping on the Champs-Élysées, parents with little ones should consider tagging on a trip to Disneyland Paris. Average temperatures in October half-term are about 12C, so it won't be too chilly while kids wait to meet Mickey or queue for rides including Big Thunder Mountain, which is due to reopen from September this year.

SuperBreak offers accommodation at the Kyriad Hotel Disneyland Paris, which is connected to Disneyland Park, Walt Disney Studios Park and Disney Village by a 10-minute shuttle, and is located in tranquil French countryside, about an hour and a half away from the centre of Paris by train.

OR TRY: National Parks, US

September is a great time to visit the USA's National Parks; the crowds ➔



The Family Adventure Company's 12-day South Africa Teenage Safari costs from £2,225 per child and £2,473 per adult, including flights, accommodation, entry fees and some meals.
familyadventurecompany.co.uk

Thomas Cook offers seven nights in Menorca from £815 per family of four staying at SunConnect Los Delfines on a self-catering basis including flights from Gatwick on May 10, 2017.
thomascookworld.com



ABOVE: Neilson Baia del Mori Beachclub, Sardinia

LEFT: South Africa

→ have thinned, the air is fresh and the colour of the foliage is starting to turn. September is also the best time to spot wildlife such as elk, moose, bison and bear before they migrate for the winter, and visitors to Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming may even start to see snow.

“Any child would love the day trip, even if they no longer believe in Father Christmas, as the Lapland experience is phenomenal

Dubai Parks and Resorts, which opens for international visitors in December, is a must-do.”

The mega-park features four theme parks within it, including Legoland Dubai and Motiongate Dubai, which pays homage to Hollywood movies.

“Our top selling tip would be to make sure you offer packages that include the theme park ticket price to get clients the best value,” adds Wadham.

SHORT-HAUL: Lapland
What better way to celebrate all things twinkly and festive than with a trip to Lapland to see Santa himself? “This is truly one of the most special family memories anyone could share at Christmas time – it’s pure



PICTURE VISIT DUBAI

magic,” says Andy Jones, product director at Newmarket Holidays, speaking about the operator’s Lapland Day Trip.

Families fly into the tiny airport of Pajala, 70 miles above the Arctic Circle, before changing into thermals, and journeying by sleigh or husky ride through the forest to have a private

meeting with Santa. “Having crafted this trip and visited many times myself, I can say that any child would love it, even if they no longer believe in Father Christmas, as the Lapland experience is phenomenal – plus some lucky customers have seen the northern lights on their visit,” says Jones.

OR TRY: Beitostølen, Norway
A four-hour flight from the UK to Norway will bring clients guaranteed snow in winter, allowing them to don their bobble hats and charge through thick duvets of snow. The resort of Beitostølen is a good family option: it’s small enough that kids can run wild outdoors without

getting lost, and the excellent, English-speaking ski school offers long, wide runs that are ideal for those looking to learn to ski or progress quickly, plus nursery slopes are free to access. Family-friendly activities range from husky safaris and snowmobiling to ice fishing and snow rafting. **TW**



ABOVE: Rare white reindeer

LEFT: Dubai

BELOW: Bison in Grand Teton, Wyoming



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