

Festive families



Christmas holidays could be a good conversation starter to keep clients engaged, writes **Katie McGonagle**

Is it too early to start thinking about Christmas? In an ordinary year, yes, because you'd have months of summer bookings and perhaps a holiday of your own to think about first. But with so many families needing to replan their usual getaways, it would be wise to have a few festive options up your sleeve even now.

Of course, some clients won't entertain the idea of travelling at all this year, opting to set their sights on summer 2021. Yet for those who need something to look forward to – and with kids to keep fed, occupied and home-schooled while juggling work from home, who doesn't? – there are some fun family breaks that provide useful inspiration for your social media or marketing channels, helping to keep clients engaged about their future travel plans.

BEST FOR...SANTA SIGHTINGS

Lapland: Few things draw families in like seeing Father Christmas in his log cabin amid a snow-filled wilderness, according to Newmarket Holidays' head of trade sales, Richard Forde.

"For agents, Lapland is a great 'go to' if they are after an inspirational email, social media post or something different to offer clients, especially in these difficult times, as it conjures a magical feel no matter what the age," he says.

Day trips take families 60 miles above the Arctic Circle to a snow-covered landscape in the heart of Swedish Lapland, where festive

attractions including reindeer sleighs and snowmobiles await.

Book it: Prices for a day trip start at £529 in December, with flights from 12 regional airports to Pajala, transfers to Santa's village, inflight meal, thermal clothing, private family meeting with Father Christmas, lunch, plus rides on a snowmobile, reindeer sleigh and husky sled. newmarketholidays.co.uk

Or try: Fancy seeing a Flyboarding Santa? Kids can at the Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa, where Christmas Day activities include sailing to a deserted island to meet Father Christmas, ready to wow the crowds with 'magic' and festive cheer over a barbecue lunch. Rates from £315 per night.

BEST FOR...FESTIVE FIREWORKS

Orlando: The 'holiday season' is a big deal across the pond, but step into Walt Disney World Resort in Florida and Christmas spirit goes into overdrive, with over-the-top decorations, hundreds of fairy light-covered fir trees, candlelight processions through Epcot and festive costumes for its characters; and with the phased reopening of Disney Springs, the shopping and entertainment complex, starting last week, things are looking up for the Florida parks.

Ross Sinclair, Gold Medal's senior product manager for the US, says: "There is so much happening at Disney over Christmas, with Minnie's Wonderful Christmastime Fireworks ➤

DESTINATIONS

FAMILY HOLIDAYS | CHRISTMAS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Hard Rock Hotel Punta Cana; Walt Disney World Florida; the Serengeti, Tanzania; a Flyboarding Santa at Sheraton Maldives



PICTURES: David Massey/DMP Productions; Matt Shashone; G Adventures/Shereen Mroueh; Westend61/Newmarket Holidays

Show a real highlight. Combining Orlando with a stay at St Pete Beach presents a great opportunity to top up the tan and enjoy sunset with drinks on New Year's Eve."

Book it: Gold Medal offers a two-week holiday with flights from Heathrow, seven nights each at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando, and RumFish Beach Resort, St Pete Beach, both room-only, plus car hire and Disney's 14-day Ultimate Ticket with Memory Maker, from £1,999 based on a family of four travelling on December 28.

goldmedal.co.uk

Or try: If families want to spend Christmas at home with their loved ones, suggest a New Year escape instead. The New Year's Eve gala dinner at Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai offers good food, a glass of bubbly, live entertainment and a prime spot on the terrace to watch the city light up with fireworks at midnight.

BEST FOR...FAMILY FUN

Tenerife: Many hotels go to town come Christmas, with fun family activities that create a sense of magic for their littlest guests while giving parents a break too. Jet2holidays recommends Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife in Playa Paraiso, where kids get a visit from Santa on Christmas Day, along with live music and festive food.

Craig Davidson, general manager of trade sales, says: "Many of us are looking ahead to a much-needed trip away with the family over winter, especially at Christmas, which is already such a special time of year."

"The Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife is full of celebratory spirit, with live performances and a traditional Christmas menu. Guests can still enjoy time around the pool or a stroll to the nearby beach – something you certainly can't do in the UK in winter! It's also hosting a New Year's Eve gala, helping visitors see in 2021 in style."

Book it: Jet2holidays offers a week's B&B at Hard Rock Tenerife, with flights

from Manchester on December 20 from £989, based on two adults and two children with baggage and transfers.

jet2holidays.com

Or try: Father Christmas also hops across the Atlantic to sister property Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Punta Cana, where kids make festive sand sculptures, decorate stockings and write letters to Santa, before joining the man in red for selfies at a festive foam party and Christmas dinner under palm trees.

BEST FOR...MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Tanzania: Imagine waking up on Christmas Day to a picnic breakfast on safari in the Serengeti, making your way to the vast, sweeping caldera of the Ngorongoro Crater for an afternoon game drive, followed by a festive dinner in a safari lodge. If your well-heeled clients have seen their best-laid plans go up in smoke this summer, tempt them with some much-needed escapism on a National Geographic Journeys family adventure to Tanzania.

It's not just about the big day. The tour includes painting and craftwork at Mto wa Mbu village, learning about the discovery of early human fossils in the Great Rift Valley, game drives through Serengeti National Park, a coffee farm tour and visit to the G Adventures-supported Clean Cookstoves project in a Maasai village. Just warn clients their next Christmas will never match up.

Book it: G Adventures sells Tanzania Family Journey: A Serengeti Safari from £3,729 per adult and £3,569 per child (seven-11), for an eight-day trip departing Arusha on December 20, staying in safari lodges or tented camps, with transport, guided activities and some meals. Flights extra.

gadventures.co.uk

Or try: Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without building snowmen and seeing reindeer – both of which feature on Exodus Travels' Finnish Winter Adventure Family Holiday. It's the ultimate festive break, introducing kids to snowshoeing, dogsledding and cross-country skiing through snow-blanketed landscapes, with a chance to go sledding or ride on a reindeer sleigh. **TW**