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BEST



WAYS TO UPSELL WINTER SUN

Add value to a winter break with advice from the experts, writes **Katie McGonagle**

Forget the peaks and troughs of your usual yearly bookings. In the current travel market, the normal rules simply don't apply.

That's true of winter-sun bookings too. They might ordinarily be your clients' second or third break of the year – complementing a summer holiday and a city break, perhaps – but now, that Caribbean or Indian Ocean escape could well be their only holiday of the year, and they want to make it count.

They might have an abundance of annual leave, meaning they can double the duration; want to have lots of space, and so splash out on a suite; or wish to make every moment count with extra activities. Whatever their reasons, it's an opportunity to upsell their winter-sun escape – and boost your commission.



1 UPGRADE TO BUSINESS CLASS

Bumping clients up to business makes the holiday feel special right from the start and, crucially, offers more space in the lounge and on board. Alison Murphy, If Only's product and commercial manager for Australasia and the Far East, says: "I always recommend agents suggest a flight upgrade to add a touch of luxury to a trip. There are some really reasonable rates out there at present – I've seen return business-class upgrades for as little as £700 per person – and many airlines offer great-value extras such as private transfers to and from the airport. In the current climate, business or first-class flights are doubly attractive, since as well as offering a VIP experience, they allow passengers more space and opportunities to social distance, both in the air and in the airport lounge. Even if customers are not flying business, I still recommend offering an airport lounge as part of their package."



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ARRIVE IN STYLE

It's not just about the flight – suggest rocking up to the resort in a helicopter or private jet. Sandals guests in Butler Elite or Club Elite suites (at selected resorts) get a luxury private transfer in a BMW, Rolls-Royce or Mercedes-Benz, while at its three Saint Lucian resorts there's the option to upgrade to a helicopter flight (pictured) to see the island from the air (from £351 per couple one-way). Elegant Resorts also recommends adding VIP transfers for travellers to Bequia Beach Hotel in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for "a faster, more personalised and seamless experience" than commercial connections. Guests are met on arrival at Barbados by hotel representatives who pick up luggage then chauffeur them to a private nine-seat King Air B200 aircraft for their flight to Bequia.

3

CHOOSE THE RIGHT RESORT

Clients' priorities may have changed, at least in the short to medium term, with reassurance over safety and social distancing now a consideration. Colin Pegler, managing director of Resort Marketing, which represents Caribbean properties including Casa de Campo Resort & Villas (pictured) in the Dominican Republic, says: "Once the coronavirus situation is over, there will undoubtedly be pent-up demand from those who missed a summer holiday. The luxury sector is well-placed to meet demand from those who want to make up for a missed break with an extra-special trip, and those looking to escape the crowds. Luxury resorts typically offer more space for guests. This has traditionally been to offer more privacy but is relevant to anyone looking for a quieter getaway. From quiet beaches to private dining cabanas, it's easy to distance yourself from others when you have more space."



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BOOK A VILLA

The consensus across the industry is that villas and suites – especially those with pools, private space and complimentary room service – will see a boost as guests seek to enjoy their holiday while minimising time in public areas. Nicky Shafe, marketing manager for Prestige Holidays, says: "Private villas and larger suites in hotels will have strong appeal for those travelling later this year, making them an obvious upsell. For example, the spacious one and two-bedroom villas at Hotel Bahia Del Duque (pictured) in Tenerife are in a separate area of the property, offering privacy and seclusion, and all have their own pools. They are substantially more expensive than double rooms but come with lots more space and a range of extras such as afternoon champagne, high tea and 24-hour butler and room service."



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SPLASH OUT ON A SUITE

Having saved by skipping their summer break, well-off clients might have the budget to choose a higher-room category than usual. Beachcomber Resorts recommends upgrading to pool suites or, for families, a pool villa, while Graham Brooks, business development manager at Hard Rock Hotels, says: "Upgrading to a higher-category room with the luxury of its own private space to sunbathe is the perfect opportunity to earn extra commission." Sandals recommends its LoveNest Butler Suites – there are SkyPool Suites with private balcony infinity pools at Sandals Grenada Resort & Spa and Sandals Royal Barbados; and Millionaire Suites with over-sized soaking tubs at Sandals Regency La Toc (pictured) in Saint Lucia and Sandals Negril in Jamaica – to make the most of VIP check-in, butler service and commanding views across the resort.

ASK THE expert

Alison Murphy,
product and commercial
manager for Australasia and
the Far East, If Only

"I think it's highly likely we will see more people opting for a winter getaway at the end of the year and into early 2021. Many travellers typically enjoy multiple holidays annually, so with only one main trip looking likely, I think there will be a notable increase in customers willing to treat themselves and make their escape more memorable."

Janice Adey,
UK sales director,
Unico 20°87°, Mexico

"Post-lockdown, slow travel is set to be even more popular, with a greater interest in travel that emphasises connection to local people, cultures, food and music. With more customers looking for an authentic experience when travelling rather than the traditional fly-and-flop holiday, agents can enhance their clients' local experience by helping them to immerse themselves in the heritage, culture and nature of the region."

6

EXTEND THE DURATION

Some clients will get to November or December with much of their year's annual leave still to take, so ask whether they want to extend their winter-sun escape to 10 or 14 days. There may also be more appetite for this in future, with many experts predicting a return to fewer, longer holidays. Ian Scott, UK director for Ajman Tourism, says: "After missing their summer holiday, encourage clients to take a longer, extended winter break of 10 or more days instead of their usual one-week holiday. You will find it easier to upsell destinations that have shorter flight times so they can make the most of their first proper sunny holiday of the year, as well as regular daily flights so they can choose the length of their extended stay."



Ajman

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ADD EXCURSIONS

Pre-booking activities can boost the value of a break considerably, as well as being key selling points for a particular resort or destination, doing more to engage clients than pictures of a hotel room while also giving them the escapism they crave right now. Tara Taylor, product manager at Elegant Resorts, recommends the private cinema experience at One&Only Reethi Rah (pictured), where couples or families can have their own beach set-up for a movie under the stars. Or she recommends the private beach day at fellow Maldivian hotel Six Senses Laamu, where guests are taken by speedboat to a deserted island and picked up again that evening, leaving them with a day to themselves on their own private island.

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LOOK OUT FOR TRENDS AND DEALS

Winter sun doesn't just mean sitting on a beach – consider outdoor adventures, self-drive holidays, and other trends set to be more popular post-coronavirus. Rebecca Platt, sales and marketing director for SunSwept Resorts, owner of the BodyHoliday resort (pictured) in Saint Lucia, says: "As travel returns, we will look to maximise our time away, using it to immerse ourselves in destinations, improve our wellbeing and enhance our relationships. This increased appreciation for travel will offer agents opportunities to add value and product suggestions for the client. The Covid-19 situation has really put an emphasis on health and we expect to see consumers looking to incorporate more wellbeing experiences into their travel plans. BodyHoliday offers a range of wellbeing activities, including yoga, meditation, watersports, fitness classes, a BodyScience consultation and daily 50-minute spa treatment." Look out too for deals enticing guests to return, such as fellow Saint Lucian resort Windjammer Landing's offer of \$150 resort credit on all new bookings, to be spent on spa, dining or activities around the resort.



PICTURES: Shutterstock; Thiago da Cunha; Joana Skladanek; Sandals