

The space race

Tap into the trend for self-contained villa stays, writes Katie McGonagle



Villa Korsan
Kuzey, Turkey

Villa holidays have always had their selling points – your own space to stretch out in, a private pool where you don't have to be up by dawn to bag a sunlounger, and no need to gamble on getting interconnecting rooms for the kids – but in the current climate, they are all the more appealing.

Even once travel restrictions are lifted and holidays can resume, it seems likely travellers' habits will have changed, at least in the short to medium term, with social distancing and self-contained accommodation replacing sun and a sea view at the top of the list of priorities.

Add the potential for larger family groups wanting quality time together after months apart during lockdown, and villa holidays look set to be more popular than ever, so here are five easy selling points to help you target them at the right clientele.

YOUR OWN ROOM

When people picture a holiday, they probably think of balmy evenings spent sipping wine as the sun sets – not tiptoeing around a darkened room trying not to wake sleeping kids. Yet for parents of younger children, the reality of sharing a family room in a hotel often means they get precious little space to enjoy their own holiday.

Book a villa with enough bedrooms for everyone, though, and you can maintain a better bedtime routine, let older kids stay up later while their younger siblings go to sleep, and once everyone's in bed, the adults get the evenings to themselves. Just be sure to avoid apartments or villas where the living room doubles as a sleeping area for kids if space is a priority.

Danny Waine, commercial manager at Interhome, recommends Villas Puerto Rubicon in Playa Blanca, Lanzarote, ➤



FROM FAR LEFT: (top) Villa Mar y Sol in Calpe, Spain; Villa Salina II, Fuerteventura; (inset) Villa Yukka, Corsica; Villas Puerto Rubicon, Lanzarote; Le Home in Calvi, Corsica PICTURES: majphotography.com; Jon Ingall

4 OF THE BEST

VILLAS

Best for... sea views

James Villas offers a week at the three-bedroom Villa Salina II in Caleta de Fuste in Fuerteventura from £769 in total (villa-only) or from £289 per person (including easyJet flights from Gatwick, based on six sharing), based on a February 20, 2021, departure. jamesvillas.co.uk

Best for... luxury and location

Simpson Travel offers a week at Korsan Kuzey in Kalkan, Turkey, from £815 per person based on maximum occupancy (sleeping up to 10), including flights and car hire for departures in October. simpsontravel.com

Best for... convenience

Jet2holidays offers seven nights at Villa Mar y Sol in Calpe on Spain's Costa Blanca from £669 per person based on two adults and two children, including flights from Birmingham on May 2, 2021, with baggage. jet2holidays.com

Best for... theme parks

Gold Medal offers a week in a three-bed self-catering home at West Haven Standard Plus Homes in central Florida from £599 per person based on a family of four, including Delta Air Lines flights from Heathrow departing February 13, 2021; car hire extra from £32 per day. goldmedal.co.uk

for just such a scenario. He says: "I think it's perfect for a young family on a budget. It's a spacious villa split over two floors, with three bedrooms and an open-plan lounge and dining area. The lounge extends out onto a private terrace and the villa's own swimming pool."

"This property is perfect for a family with young children who are looking to have the privacy of their own pool and terrace, with the benefit of bedrooms for all of the children so the adults can enjoy the lounge and terrace area at night."

POOLS AND PERKS

One of the biggest selling points of a villa right now is that clients can remain relatively self-contained, should they choose to, without needing to use shared hotel facilities such as pools or restaurants. For those who want private access and don't tend to make use of kids' clubs, spas or hotel entertainment

anyway, that can be a major draw. Craig Davidson, general manager of trade sales at Jet2Villas, says: "For customers dreaming of a relaxing and affordable break away next year, agents should consider suggesting a villa stay. Travellers can enjoy a holiday at their own pace, ideal for those wanting a relaxing trip abroad, especially after these unprecedented times."

"When discussing villa options, focus on the pool facilities as this is a highlight for most holidaymakers. The Villa Mar y Sol in Calpe on the Costa Blanca is the perfect option for those wanting to soak up the sun by the pool as the patio opens up from the living room to an outdoor living area, with a beautiful pool taking centre stage, looking over the salt flats where pink flamingos live."

"A villa holiday allows travellers to really spend quality time together under one roof, offering privacy and a home away from home."

COME DINE WITH ME

Dining can be a make-or-break factor in choosing a villa – while some people hate the idea of having to cook while on holiday and prefer the convenience of hotel catering, others love the thought of finally having time to rustle up a real feast then sitting down to dine together.

So if you have clients whose ideal day out is browsing a farmers' market for local cheeses or picking up a bottle of wine and taking it home to try that evening, look for a villa with the kind of high-spec kitchen you see on TV adverts, and use it to draw them in.

Self-catering breaks can also be a great way to keep costs down and avoid having to shell out for restaurant meals each night, which is particularly important for families or destinations where food and drink can be expensive.

Corsican Places product manager Charlotte Eames says: "A self-catering

holiday in Corsica is a great budget-friendly choice and there is an abundance of apartments and villas across the island. Many towns and villages have markets where you can buy local produce and the supermarket prices in Corsica are comparable to the UK, so although restaurants can be a little pricey, picnics on the beach and eating in doesn't need to break the bank."

LOCATION, LOCATION

Villas have a reputation for being set in remote locations, surrounded by rolling countryside or along winding roads out of town, but that isn't always the case. While there are many that offer a sense of isolation – a big draw for clients who like the quiet life – there are plenty of options set right in the heart of the action too, with easy access to nearby attractions.

Take Florida, for example, where thousands of holiday homes across

Kissimmee or central Florida actually get clients closer to the theme parks than they would be in downtown Orlando, plus they can spend the rest of their holiday exploring the state's other attractions without having to battle through city traffic.

Kris Keprios, senior tourism sales and marketing manager for Visit Central Florida, says: "For families taking a holiday in central Florida, vacation rental villas are a great option due to their value, number of amenities and proximity to Legoland Florida Resort, Walt Disney World and all our other famous attractions. Making your home base in a central Florida vacation home or villa is a great way to experience the best of Florida, all from one convenient location."

Neighbouring Kissimmee is also expecting a boom in villa rentals as current trends lean towards self-contained accommodation.

DT Minich, president and chief executive of Experience Kissimmee, says: "We expect reunion and multigenerational breaks in holiday homes to be very popular when it's safe to travel internationally again. Families and friends will want to make up for lost time and create everlasting memories away from crowded places."

"We hope they will choose to do that in Kissimmee, where we have 50,000 holiday homes ranging from two-bedroom cottages to 15-bedroom mega-mansions."

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MONEY TALKS

Just like hotels, villas come in all shapes and sizes, with budgets ranging from the most cost-effective options – perfect for a larger family group able to fill it to maximum capacity and bring the price per person right down – up to lavish holiday homes that let clients live like the rich and famous, even if just for a week or two.

"For a real luxury option with wow factor, I'd recommend Korsan Kuzey in Kalkan, Turkey," says Graham Horner, managing director of Simpson Travel.

"Sleeping up to 10 in five bedrooms, the villa enjoys outstanding sea views from its infinity pool and direct access to the sea from a private jetty."

"It's the ultimate party pad with games room, Jacuzzi and huge day bed for lounging on the terrace. A private chef can be arranged, so once you're there, there's no real reason to leave – it's glorious isolation!" **TW**