

Take the leap

Give families something to look forward to with a Caribbean holiday that will make them jump for joy, writes **Laura French**



With schools closed, sports clubs on hold and parents juggling work and home-educating all over again, it's safe to say it hasn't been a great start to the year for most families.

Yet that's all the more reason why they'll need something to keep them going through the latest lockdown. Dreams of a week in the sun, running along a sandy beach and splashing in the sea might be just the thing to blow away the stresses of the past year – and for that, the Caribbean calls.

So where can you offer to clients who are keen to travel when restrictions ease? We've found some of the best family deals at resorts across the region.

The entry requirements listed below were correct at the time of going to press, and all islands were on the UK travel corridors list, but clients should check the latest Foreign Office advice before departure.

TURKS AND CAICOS: COMO PARROT CAY

For families after a holiday to remember amid scenes that look almost too perfect to be real, it's hard to beat the Turks and Caicos Islands – and few resorts are quite so appealing as Como Parrot Cay.

"This 1,000-acre private island is renowned for its mile-long white-sand beach," says Matt Rushbrooke, director of touring and tailor-made at the Inspiring Travel Company.

"But there's plenty for those looking to get active too, with walking trails, tennis, yoga, Pilates and watersports, plus accommodation catering to everyone from couples through to multigenerational families."

Among its plethora of family-friendly offerings is a Play by Como activity programme, a dedicated Play Space offering craft areas and an 'imagination zone' designed to get kids' creative juices flowing. ➤

ADULT-ONLY ALTERNATIVES

Families aren't the only ones in need of a long-overdue break, so if your coupled-up clients want to escape the kids, try one of these for size.

✿ **Serenity at Coconut Bay, Saint Lucia:** Caribtours recommends this secluded, adult-only hideaway for a luxury stay that's all about the romance, with private pools for every guest alongside butler service and gourmet dining. Guests after a little more activity can access the wider Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa, where they'll find five pools and a water park alongside several bars and restaurants. A week's all-inclusive starts at £2,599 per person based on two sharing a Serenity Plunge Pool Butler Suite, including a Grand Romance Package worth \$1,000, featuring an in-suite massage, sunset catamaran cruise, private beach picnic or a private island tour. Prices include flights, transfers and use of a UK airport lounge, and are based on travel in July or August.

✿ **Sandals Grenada:** Set on the iconic Pink Gin Beach, this award-winning resort combines swim-up suites and private, infinity-edge plunge pools with butler service, 10 fine-dining restaurants, diving and other watersports, all as part of its all-inclusive package. A week in a Lovers Lagoon Hideaway Junior Suite with Balcony Tranquility Soaking Tub starts at £1,699 including Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow and transfers, valid for travel in September.

✿ **Hermitage Bay, Antigua:** This 30-suite boutique is a wise choice for couples in search of a tranquil retreat, with wellbeing activities like yoga, Pilates, meditation and spa treatments combined with menus that use ingredients from the hotel's own organic garden and an idyllic position on a secluded beach. Inspiring Travel Company offers a week's all-inclusive from £5,839 per person, including flights and private transfers on select dates in 2021. Over-14s are allowed.



Entry requirements: Clients need to upload proof of a negative Covid test (taken no more than five days before arriving in Turks and Caicos), along with evidence of Covid insurance cover to obtain pre-travel authorisation. **Book it:** Inspiring Travel Company offers seven nights from £6,795 per family, based on two adults and one child sharing a Garden View Room with breakfast, flights from Gatwick and private transfers, departing July 25. inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk

CUBA: OCEAN VISTA AZUL

Cuba's white-sand beaches and Latino-meets-Caribbean vibes will appeal to clients after a culture-filled escape.

For an especially good-value stay that caters well to the family crowd, Tui recommends the 4T-rated Ocean Vista Azul in Varadero. Alongside six restaurants ranging from à la carte Italian to burgers on the beach, little ones can splash around in the resort's two pools, try their hand at tennis and basketball, or play in the kids' and teens' clubs while mum and dad hit the spa.

Entry requirements: UK visitors need proof of a negative PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before travel. On arrival they'll be given another PCR test; Tui includes the cost of the second test in its packages.

Book it: Tui offers a week's all-inclusive from £1,089 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing, with flights from Manchester on July 22 and transfers. tui.co.uk

“The resort is perfect for social distancing with so much space, set among 100 acres of tropical forest and sandy beach

ANTIGUA: ST JAMES'S CLUB & VILLAS

Antigua is known for its array of family-focused resorts, and for one of the most all-encompassing, suggest St James's Club & Villas on the south coast.

Windsurfing, sailing, kayaking, paddleboarding, tennis and pickleball (a cross between table tennis and badminton) are among the included offerings, while diving, catamaran trips and golf are also on hand in the vicinity. There's a kids' club hosting everything from art classes to nature trails, plus four restaurants, a games area and Teen Pavilion, with accommodation ranging from beachfront rooms to family-friendly villas – likely to be in demand this year as a preference for space and privacy continues to reign supreme.

Entry requirements: Visitors need to get a negative PCR test within seven days before arrival (home tests aren't permitted). They'll be screened on arrival and asked to complete a Health Declaration Form. Those staying in accommodation included on the government's approved



ABOVE: St James's Club & Villas, Antigua **FACING PAGE:** (clockwise from top left) Sugar Bay, Barbados; Como Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos; Serenity at Coconut Bay, Saint Lucia; and Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, Saint Lucia **PICTURES:** Martin Morrell; Kikar

list will then be free to move around the island.

Book it: Premier Holidays offers seven nights' all-inclusive in a Premium Oceanview Room from £5,499 in total for two adults and two under-12s, including BA flights from Gatwick departing August 21, and private transfers. premierholidays.co.uk

BARBADOS: SUGAR BAY

For an excellent-value all-inclusive that packs in an impressive array of family activities, entertainment and dining options, Gold Medal points to Sugar Bay in Barbados.

“Every need has been thought of here,” says Ashley Pilkington, destination manager for the Caribbean and Mexico. “It's also ideally located, set on a stunning, white-sand beach in a tranquil bay in the Unesco-listed Garrison Historic Area.”

Alongside a creche and kids' club, there's a teen clubhouse, games room and arcade, with two pools, four

restaurants and a spa on hand for parents in need of some downtime.

Entry requirements: Travellers need to get a PCR test no more than three days before arriving into Barbados and upload their test results via an online form. On arrival, they will need to stay in-resort in a government-approved property and take a second test four or five days after the first (available at the hotel). Once negative results come in, they can explore the resort and the island at their leisure. **Book it:** Gold Medal offers a week's all-inclusive in a Family Suite, including Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow and transfers, from £1,599 per person based on two adults and two children sharing, departing July 24. goldmedal.co.uk

SAINT LUCIA: SUGAR BEACH, A VICEROY RESORT

With its ziplines, mud baths, hiking trails and rainforests, Saint Lucia is a real-life playground for families,

and it's not short on child-friendly resorts to match. For one of the standouts look to Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, says Tara Taylor, product manager for Elegant Resorts. “The resort is perfect for social distancing with so much space, set among 100 acres of tropical forest and white-sand beach,” she says. “Every guest gets their own private pool and butler service, and there's an impressive choice of restaurants too.”

The Sugar Club offers treasure hunts, archery, ‘coconut bowling’ and other activities to under-12s, while the Spice Club caters to teens with the likes of kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, billiard tournaments and sailing, including a five-day sailing course for those looking to take home some new-found skills.

Entry requirements: Travellers need to have a negative PCR test within seven days prior to travel and fill in a pre-arrival registration form. They'll be screened on arrival and

taken to their accommodation (which must be Covid-certified). Visitors aren't currently permitted to explore the island independently but can take part in approved activities and tours.

Book it: Elegant Resorts offers a week in a Superior Luxury Cottage on a room-only basis from £18,485 for a family of three, including BA flights from Gatwick, private transfers and a UK airport lounge, based on a December 20 departure. elegantresorts.co.uk **TW**

KIDS STAY FREE

AMResorts is offering a kids-stay-free deal plus a complimentary room upgrade, \$200 in-resort credit and a free night certificate for a return stay on bookings made before February 2, valid for travel up to April 30, 2022. amresorts.com