

8 of the BEST

HALF-TERM ESCAPES

From Turkey to Dubai, **Laura French** scouts out top last-minute deals for families looking to escape the UK this October

With the red list reduced, the amber list scrapped and testing restrictions eased, families that didn't manage to get away over summer might well be looking to jet off in the coming months – and for those that can't bear to wait much longer, it's not too late to book a last-minute escape for October half-term.

We've rounded up some of the best options for those looking to do just that, from beach breaks in Egypt to luxury escapes in Barbados and everything in between.



1 EFTALIA AQUA RESORT, TURKEY

Turkey is back on the cards, so make the most of it by selling a stay at this splash-centric, all-inclusive resort in Antalya. Home to several pools, waterslides and two restaurants, it also offers access to Eftalia Island – a huge beachfront area where a separate water park, beach, children's play area, amphitheatre, restaurants and more await. "This is perfect for families, with an aqua park on site and a whole range of pools to choose from," says Paul Bixby, commercial director for easyJet holidays. "The kids' club is also fantastic."

Book it: EasyJet holidays offers seven nights' all-inclusive from £678 per person, including flights from Manchester on October 26. easyjet.com



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TUI MAGIC LIFE KALAWY, EGYPT

Also back on the table is Egypt, and for families keen on diving and snorkelling, it's hard to beat Hurghada, where shallow waters and colourful reefs invite beginners as well as the more advanced. For an especially family-friendly spot, suggest Tui Magic Life Kalawy, which lies in front of a lagoon graced by lionfish, rays and turtles, and offers diving as well as canoeing, windsurfing, stand-up paddleboarding and more, with four pools, a private beach, five restaurants, tennis courts and a spa among its facilities. Those wanting to explore beyond the resort will find Hurghada's frenetic centre a stone's throw away, as well as El Dahar, the city's atmospheric Old Town.

Book it: Tui offers a week's all-inclusive from £859 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing with flights from Gatwick on October 26. tui.co.uk

3

SUN GARDENS DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

Interest in Croatia soared over the summer and with temperatures resting in the 20s well into October, demand isn't likely to wane any time soon. For families after a beach-meets-city break, Classic Collection Holidays recommends the five-star Sun Gardens Dubrovnik. Overlooking the ocean in the village of Orašac, just outside the city, it offers a collection of rooms, suites and residences, with seven restaurants, a spa and Marco Polo kids' club among the attractions – plus an impressive range of sports academies that span swimming, squash, basketball, tennis, football and beyond.

Book it: Classic Collection offers a week in a Two Bedroom Residence from £2,699 for a family of four (room-only), including private transfers and flights from Gatwick on October 24. classic-collection.co.uk



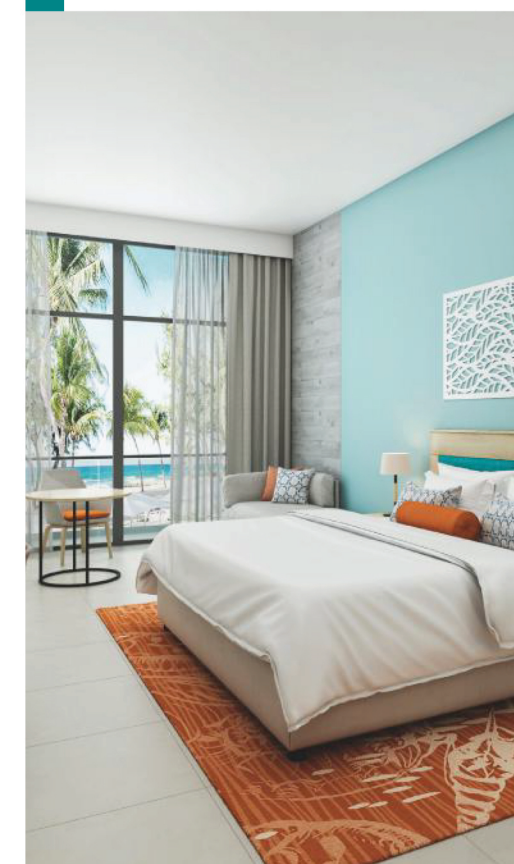
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CENTARA MIRAGE BEACH RESORT, DUBAI

For clients wanting to head a little farther afield, look to Dubai, where a host of child-friendly attractions – from Legoland to KidZania, Aquaventure to the Dubai Aquarium – greet families seeking fun in the winter sun. For a base in the heart of the action, Gold Medal suggests the new Centara Mirage Beach Resort, set to open in October on Deira Islands.

"The hotel boasts a beachfront pool with waterslides and a lazy river as well as kids' clubs and a family-friendly lounge," says John Poulton, destination manager for the Middle East. "There's even a candy-themed kids' spa!"

Book it: Five nights' all-inclusive in a Superior King Room at Centara Mirage costs from £1,259 per person, based on a family of four sharing with flights from Heathrow on October 25. goldmedal.co.uk



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SAINT PETER'S BAY, BARBADOS

If it's more a luxury Caribbean escape that tempts, look to Barbados. October demand is booming, according to Caribtours, but families seeking a luxury retreat can still find space at Saint Peter's Bay, home to 57 self-catering residences as well as a lagoon-style pool, cocktail bar and white-sand beach where hawksbill turtles nest. There's also a five-bedroom penthouse with private roof terrace and pool for those really wanting to push the boat out, and every guest gets a free water taxi to sister resort Port Ferdinand, where a kids' club, kids' zone, watersports and spa await. **Book it:** Caribtours offers a week in a Three Bedroom Premium Beachfront Suite from £3,649 per adult and £1,499 per child (room-only), departing October 23 and including a free room upgrade. caribtours.co.uk



Alan Cross, head of trade, Jet2holidays

"Following the latest travel update, we saw an immediate surge in bookings and have experienced phenomenal demand for October half-term breaks from holidaymakers looking to take advantage of the easing of restrictions and enjoy some autumn sunshine. Our top-selling destinations for half-term include Antalya and Dalaman in Turkey, as well as Tenerife, Lanzarote and Majorca. While our holiday programme to Turkey only resumed on September 23, we have already seen customers flocking to book holidays to the country. For agents looking for advice on how to sell a last-minute family getaway, we urge them to be as proactive as possible so they can capitalise on this demand. Social media is a great way to engage with customers and we recommend agents take full advantage of the Jet2holidays Trade Media Library, which includes a range of social media assets and e-shot templates to help you sell to customers."



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HOTEL SUR MENORCA SUITES & WATERPARK, MENORCA

Clients prefer the idea of a budget-friendly escape in the Med? Look no further than this action-packed resort in Menorca, which Jet2holidays recommends for its impressive menu of activities. "Aqua aerobics, darts, football, table tennis and volleyball are all at your fingertips, while those looking to explore farther afield can take advantage of the hotel's courtesy shuttle service to the nearby golden coast," says Alan Cross, head of trade. But the real USP is its on-site water park, where guests enjoy unlimited access to kamikazes, black holes, a multi-lane racer, lazy river, mini slides and more throughout their stay. **Book it:** A week's B&B costs from £579 per person based on two adults and one child sharing, with transfers and flights from Birmingham on October 23. jet2holidays.com



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KILKEE HOLIDAY HOMES, IRELAND

Closer to home still there's plenty to draw families in, and for rolling pastures, postcard-pretty villages and windswept coastal walks, it's hard to beat Ireland. For a beachside retreat on a budget, Irish Ferries recommends Kilkee Holiday Homes, where two-bedroom apartments overlook the Atlantic Ocean and the rugged trails of the Wild Atlantic Way are just a stone's throw away. "Active families can bring their bikes along or hop into a kayak," says Marie McCarthy, Irish Ferries' passenger sales manager for the UK and Ireland. "Visitors can also head into Ballharbour and take a chocolate tour at Hazel Mountain Chocolate or visit the Burren Perfumery. This kind of break doesn't need summer weather to be a winner." **Book it:** Seven nights starts at £590 for a family of four, including return ferry crossing with a car on October 23. irishferries.com/holidays

8

MALTA MARRIOTT HOTEL & SPA, MALTA

Direct families in search of impressive art and architecture to Malta, where capital Valletta – all baroque buildings, limestone-sided alleys and 16th-century city walls – meet archaeological sites including the Megalithic Temples, dating back to before 3000BC. For those wanting to combine cultural exploration with beach time, suggest the seaside town of St Julian's, where the Malta Marriott Hotel & Spa has just undergone a €30 million refurbishment and now boasts four restaurants, three bars, a rooftop pool, kids' pool and Balinese-style spa among its lures, with rooms and suites overlooking the picturesque Balluta Bay. **Book it:** Mercury Holidays offers a week's B&B from £747 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing a Superior Town View Room, and including flights from Luton on October 23. mercuryholidays.co.uk



PICTURES: Michael Kelly; Jet2.com; Shutterstock; Paryk Kosmider