

In the lap of luxury

Premium resorts are changing the all-inclusive game with a plethora of additions, writes Laura French

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Turn back the clock and the all-inclusive formula was simple: all-you-can-eat buffets, cheap plonk by the glass and spirits with a label you'd never seen before and probably never wanted to see again.

But today's luxury resorts are ripping the stereotypes to pieces with innovative concepts that go beyond the classic food and beverage deal, throwing in spa treatments, rounds of golf, water sports, excursions, Michelin-starred dining and more – often with just one price tag, all payable upfront through an agent (hello, extra commission).

Luxury properties that weren't all-inclusive have added packages for those wanting the option, while the classic high-end all-inclusive brands have upped their game with new

products and extra inclusions.

That means you've got more reasons to sell – and more options to choose from – than ever before, so whether it's a couple on a honeymoon or a family on a spending spree, there should be a premium all-inclusive package to suit.

► CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean is a treasure trove of high-end, ultra-luxury abodes. Among those leading the premium pack in Antigua is Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort, set on a private island. There are no cars in sight, meaning there's nothing to distract from the

talcum-powder beaches and calm waves, and water sports such as waterskiing, paddleboarding, kayaking, windsurfing and a weekly snorkelling trip to nearby Bird Island are all complimentary.

The real selling point, though, is the food. Among its six opulent restaurants is The Estate, an 1830s plantation house that reopened in November following a one-year, \$6 million renovation – and it's all included.

Elsewhere on the list of exclusive resorts, there's Palm Island, set on the southern tip of St Vincent and the Grenadines, which has just 43 rooms. "It's a great option for a private-island holiday at public prices, with 55 hectares, multiple beaches, an open-air spa, biking, hiking, hammock picnics, sailing and limited Wi-Fi for a real switch



Jumby Bay,
Antigua

Sandals

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Travel 2 offers a week's all-inclusive at the five-star Gloria Golf Resort in Turkey, from £1,149 per person, departing September 20.

The price includes flights from London, an airport lounge pass and private transfers.

travel2.com

Hayes & Jarvis offers seven nights' all-inclusive at the Palm Island Resort & Spa, in St Vincent & the Grenadines, from £2,099. The price includes Virgin Atlantic flights from Gatwick on September 3, and transfers.

hayesandjarvis.co.uk

Grand Velas
Los Cabos



PICTURES: VICTOR ELIAS; FELIX HUG/EYESONASIA.NET

off," says Paula Whitehead, European managing director for Elite Island Resorts. Some activities cost extra.

For something a little different, Prestige Holidays recommends Grotto Bay Resort in Bermuda which, although not in the Caribbean, should appeal to the same kind of client. Guests can embark on guided tours around a series of underground caves filled with towering stalagmites, while enjoying a generous list of inclusions - non-motorised water sports, a Bermuda public transport pass, three-course à la carte dinners, unlimited branded drinks and a kids' club (for a supplement of \$114 per day).

In Jamaica, Sandals has things covered with its South Coast outpost, where new over-water bungalows mark a first for the Caribbean and add a dollop of extra luxury with a

private butler, 24-hour room service and free Island Routes catamaran tour. Across the resort, there are nine restaurants to choose from, alongside activities such as scuba diving, which is free for certified divers.

On the north coast of the reggae-loving island sits Zoëtry Montego Bay, the brand's newest property and a flagship for its Endless Privileges concept. Cherry-on-the-cake inclusions are its forte: a complimentary wellness experience or fitness consultation, laundry service, butler, snorkelling tour and sunset boat trip are thrown in with AMResorts' signature Sip, Savour & See programme, which lets guests dine for free at neighbouring Secrets resorts.

If it's tequila and margaritas that are likely to grab a client's interest, look to Mexico, specifically the new Grand Velas Los Cabos - the first luxury all-inclusive on the Baja Peninsula. It's home to four bars, a two-Michelin-starred restaurant

and seven other indulgent eateries, with everything bar the spa included.

Over in Riviera Maya, there's Unico 20°N 87°W. This adult-only resort is on a mission to redefine the all-inclusive concept with spa treatments and excursions included in the deal - think swimming with dolphins and dining in a lagoon under the stars (subject to a 20% service fee). Chefs are rotated regularly to bring in new flavours, and there's a mixologist on hand to rustle up cocktails.

EUROPE

Closer to home, the likes of Ikos Olivia in Halkidiki are at the forefront of the all-inclusive revolution. "When it opened in 2015, this resort sought to bring a new level of luxury to all-inclusives," says Fiona Greenhalgh, head of product and commercial for Carrier. "Food takes the spotlight, with Michelin-starred chefs overseeing exquisite menus offering the best French, Italian, Greek and Asian cuisine, complemented by fine wine and exemplary service." Most



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ASK THE EXPERT



Fiona Greenhalgh,
head of product
and commercial,
Carrier

There can be a stigma attached to all-inclusives. However, we think the negative perceptions, such as queues at buffets, mass-produced food and so on that used to be associated with low-cost all-inclusives is changing – especially as some very high-end hotels are all-inclusive. In recent years, some that are not entirely all-inclusive have started to introduce the option, for example Carlisle Bay in Antigua, and Constance Halaveli in the Maldives. Whether it's a relaxing beach getaway or an exotic cruise, all-inclusive holidays now offer a variety of inclusions, from spa treatments, golf, tennis, water sports and fitness classes to unlimited snacks, drinks, ice cream and gourmet dining.

notable is its dine-out concept, which enables guests to eat at certain local restaurants without paying extra.

A hop over to Crete takes you to Sea Side Resort & Spa, where fresh buffet spreads and live cooking demonstrations meet three bars, multiple pools and elegant, minimalist decor. There's a full animation programme alongside a kids' club, tennis courts, fitness room and more. It features in Olympic Holidays' Gold Collection, which means clients booking through the operator also get airport lounge access, private taxi transfers and extra luggage allowance.

For golf enthusiasts, suggest Gloria Golf Resort in Belek, Turkey, which has introduced an 'all in one' concept for this summer. Guests can use the spa and play golf at no extra charge, and there's also a kids' club, water slides, amphitheatre (shared with the neighbouring Gloria Serenity) and more to occupy fidgety types. Lauren Ross, Simply Luxury by Travel 2 product and commercial manager for Europe, says: "Guests have an excellent variety of dining and activity options to enjoy during their stay."

Classic Collection Holidays,

meanwhile, recommends the nearby Maxx Royal Belek Golf Resort. It offers four pools, a disco featuring renowned DJs and an array of sports facilities, including Montgomerie Maxx Royal – one of the most iconic golf courses in the Med, where guests get three rounds for free.

INDIAN OCEAN

Beachcomber Resorts & Hotels says demand for all-inclusive among its properties in Mauritius is growing. "Our all-inclusive resorts continue to sell well in the UK market, with figures running 15% up on last year," says marketing manager Mark Boullé.

Its Shandrani property offers various land and water activities alongside four beachfront restaurants, nightly live entertainment and a dedicated kids' club, under the All Inclusive Serenity Plus concept (there are also free pancakes every day from 3-5pm, just in case the rest didn't entice).

Those more sold on the Maldives might be interested to hear of the new Ozen by Atmosphere on Maadhoo. Surrounded by the South Malé Atoll and its turquoise hues, the resort is generous with its all-inclusive offering,

giving guests free dives and spa treatments, alongside sunset fishing, unlimited snorkelling excursions and dinner at the M6m underwater restaurant (for clients staying seven nights or more) – think real-life aquarium plus good local food at no extra charge.

"The all-inclusive package stands out, as it covers so much," says Deborah Wadhams, senior product manager for Gold Medal's Pure Luxury programme. "There are cheaper islands, but the all-inclusive packages won't include all of the above."

For foodies, Kuoni recommends Kurumba Maldives, thanks to its Dine-Around concept, which covers eight restaurants – from Middle Eastern to Italian – alongside a snorkelling safari, Malé tour or glass-bottomed boat trip (one per stay).

BEST OF THE REST

If it's spas that do it for your clients, the Fusion resorts in Asia might be just the ticket, turning the all-inclusive concept on its head with spa-inclusive packages, which don't cover food and drink but do include daily spa therapies. The all-villa Fusion Phu

BELOW:
Kurumba
Maldives

Quoc opened its doors this month on the up-and-coming Vietnamese island, and promises a minimum of two spa treatments per day alongside other wellness activities and specially designed FusionFood menus.

Wildlife lovers should look to Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort in Thailand, where the all-inclusive package includes a spa treatment and one activity per day – from an elephant mahout experience to a cookery class. Set amid 65 hectares of jungle in the north, it's a good suggestion for active types wanting to explore the region, with treks, visits to indigenous hill tribes and other experiences available.

Africa might not be the first destination you think of when it comes to all-inclusive, but the 17-suite Singita Lebombo Lodge, set on a 13,500-hectare reserve in South Africa's Kruger National Park, is setting a precedent with an offering including access to a premier wine boutique, stargazing trips, night game drives, Land Rover safaris, visits to the Singita School of Cooking and guided mountain biking and bush walks. Who said all-inclusive was all about fly-and-flop? **TW**

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