



6

OF THE
Best
WINTER-SUN
CRUISES

Skip the British winter
and sail towards the sun,
writes Jane Archer



PICTURES: SANCTUARY RETREATS; CARLOS OJEDA PHOTOGRAPHY; ANDY NEWMAN/CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE; TIM MCKENNA



The sultry days of summer may seem but a dream now the autumn chill has set in, but that just means it is time to get clients hooked up with a cruise in search of winter sun.

And from exotic sailings in southeast Asia to exploring the Vanilla Islands on a voyage through the Indian Ocean, there's quite the choice. Clients can go wildlife-spotting in South Africa or the Galapagos Islands, enjoy fun in the sun in the Caribbean, or find out why artist Paul Gauguin loved the South Pacific.

Closer to home, there are cultural cruises down the Nile, while those who don't want to fly can seek out the sun on an island-hopping voyage from the UK to the Canary Islands.

Here are a handful of great winter-sun cruises to help inspire your clients.

1 CARIBBEAN: FUN IN THE SUN

Sun, sea and sand is all very well, but what do you do when the sun goes down? Enter Carnival Cruise Line and its fleet of Fun Ships that don't stop rocking, from the moment you're on board to the moment it's time to go home.

Its newest ship, *Carnival Horizon*, which launched this year, holds almost 5,000 passengers. It's the place to show off dance moves in a pool-side sailaway,

RIGHT:
Carnival Horizon



imbibe Carnival's own-brew Thirsty Frog Red beer, and tuck into Asian favourites and giant steaks in speciality restaurants.

The fun doesn't stop on port days – ziplining excursions, trips into the rainforest, sailing, snorkelling, swimming with dolphins or just lazing on a beach are among the options.

Book it: From £599 per person cruise-only for an eight-day Exotic Eastern Caribbean cruise round-trip from Miami, departing February 23, 2019.

carnival.co.uk

Or try: From large to little. SeaDream Yacht Club's two ships hold just 112 passengers, anchor off small islands away from the



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crowds and come with fares that include drinks and tips.
seadream.com

2 EGYPT: TEMPLES OF VROOM

Demand for Nile cruises is rising so fast (British passenger numbers went up by just over 14% from 2016 to 2017, according to Clia UK & Ireland) that Scenic has teamed up with Sanctuary Retreats to offer holidays that pair a four-night sailing between Luxor and Aswan with overnights in the start and end ports, and four nights in Cairo.

The cruise is on Sanctuary Retreats' *Sanctuary Sun Boat III*, a luxurious vessel that holds just 36

LEFT AND BELOW:
Sanctuary Sun Boat III





→ passengers, has four-poster beds and boasts cabanas by the pool.

Clients who go in winter will escape the searing summer heat but enjoy sunny days, ancient Egyptian temples and balmy evenings with whirling dervishes, galibaya parties and cocktails on the sun deck.

Book it: From £4,895 per person including flights for an 11-day Treasures of Egypt cruise-tour departing January 18, 2019, combining Cairo, Luxor and Aswan with a four-night Nile cruise. scenic.co.uk

Or try: Monks, markets and bustling Phnom Penh await on AmaWaterways' 10-night cruise-tour, combining three nights in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with a

seven-night cruise on the Mekong to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. amawaterways.co.uk

3 GALAPAGOS: ANIMAL ATTRACTION

Good news for sun seekers in search of a winter wildlife wonderland – January and February are perfect for cruising the Galapagos Islands. The days are hot (an average 30C), the seas are calm, the water is lovely for snorkelling and the wildlife is out in force because it's the time birds begin nesting, iguanas start mating and turtles slope up beaches to lay their eggs.

Celebrity Cruises has a choice of island-hopping itineraries on

the recently refurbished *Celebrity Xpedition*, which take passengers to different bays each day so they can join their guides for walks ashore and get up close to marine iguanas, tortoises, boobie birds, sea lions and other species that have no fear of humans.

Book it: From £3,789 per person cruise-only for a seven-night Inner Loop cruise departing January 13, 2019. cruisingpower.com

Or try: Swap birds and lizards for the 'big five' on Oceania Cruises' 15-day South African Explorer voyage round-trip from Cape Town next January, which offers safaris in game reserves and wetlands. oceaniacruises.com

4 SOUTH PACIFIC: FAR AND AWAY

With blue skies, white-sand beaches, dreamy landscapes captured by artist Paul Gauguin and temperatures averaging 28C, a one-week voyage around French Polynesia with Paul Gauguin Cruises is a hard act to beat when it comes to escaping a dreary UK winter.

Clients can sip cocktails on the cruise line's private island of Motu Mahana (drinks are included in the cruise price), learn about life on the islands from Les Gauguines entertainment team, see the sights by ATV or 4x4 jeep, and enjoy a beer at celebrity watering hole Bloody Mary's on Bora Bora.

The *Paul Gauguin* has snorkelling gear that can be borrowed, and scuba-diving instructors, so beginners and experts can explore a world beneath the waves.

Book it: From £2,688 per person for a seven-night Tahiti and the Society Islands cruise round-trip from Papeete departing January 19, 2019, including return flights from Los Angeles and Papeete. International flights extra. pgcruises.com

Or try: Say "aloha" to Hawaii on Norwegian Cruise Lines' *Pride of America* – the only mass-market cruise ship based in the islands. One-week cruises sail round-trip from Honolulu. ncl.com



TOP LEFT: Galapagos tortoise

TOP RIGHT: Snorkelling with Paul Gauguin Cruises

LEFT: Sea lions on the Galapagos Islands



ABOVE: Canaries, with P&O Cruises



RIGHT: Mayotte, Indian Ocean

BELOW: Paul Gauguin

5 WAYS TO SELL WINTER SUN

Emphasise cruising's value:

This might enable clients to visit high-end destinations for less.

Embrace the festive period:

Availability for Christmas and New Year cruises this year is now limited, so sell ahead for 2019 if you can't secure a spot.

Pick quieter times: Clients who don't want to be surrounded by kids will find fewer families on board in winter if they avoid school holidays.

Recommend island-hopping:

Passengers can visit several destinations but still tick the fly-and-flop box on the beach or sun deck.

Cross-sell to snow: If winter sun doesn't appeal, suggest northern lights in Norway, snow-covered cities in the Baltic or penguins in the Antarctic.

5 CANARY ISLANDS: HEAT UP

The Canaries are a winter-sun hotspot with Brits, but why stay in one hotel when you can sail from the UK with P&O Cruises, tick off four islands in one family-friendly festive holiday, and be in Madeira overnight for New Year's Eve fireworks?

The islands are Spanish but, being off the coast of Africa, are sun-kissed year-round. Families can spend their days at the beach, turn up the heat at Lanzarote's Fire Mountain, go on whale and dolphin-watching tours, make a splash in Gran Canaria's water park and take on the Tower of Power in Tenerife's Siam Park – a 28-metre-high water slide that ends with a tube ride through a shark tank – if they dare.

Book it: From £1,899 per person for a 14-night Christmas and New Year cruise to the Canary Islands round-

trip from Southampton, departing December 21, 2018.

pocruises.com

Or try: If time is tight, Marella Cruises has seven-night Canarian Flavours fly-cruises from either Gran Canaria or Tenerife between November and April that visit La Gomera, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and Madeira.

tui.co.uk/cruise

6 INDIAN OCEAN: ISLANDS AHOY

Atlases out, folks – we're off on a cruise around the Vanilla Islands with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines. Not that a map will help, because it's the marketing name for a collection of island nations in the Indian Ocean that includes the Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives.

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' voyages around the islands are selling like hot

cakes to clients yearning for winter sun (the average temperature in the Seychelles is 27C), lovely beaches and a touch of the exotic.

Réunion Island has an active volcano; you can ride Segways in Casela World of Adventures in Mauritius; snorkel in the Maldives; and get close to giant tortoises in the Seychelles.

Book it: From £2,199 per person including flights for a 14-night Islands of the Indian Ocean cruise from Port Louis in Mauritius to Colombo in Sri Lanka, departing December 26, 2018. fredolsencruises.com

Or try: Voyages to Antiquity's Islands of the Indian Ocean and South Africa is a mammoth 33-night cruise from Colombo to Cape Town, departing February 10, 2019, and visiting the Maldives, the Seychelles, Mauritius and Réunion en route.

voyagestoantiquity.com 

