

Match point

Up your game in time for Wimbledon with a tennis break, says Aby Dunsby

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It's almost that time again. Supermarkets are stocking their shelves with fresh strawberries and bottles of Pimm's, and as the pros prepare to battle it out on Centre Court, people up and down the country are digging out their own rackets in solidarity.

While it's often dubbed 'Wimbledon fever', our affection for tennis is more enduring than a hot flush. Whether you put it down to Andy Murray's victories or an increasing number of all-weather public facilities, more people are taking to the courts year-round, and many are even choosing to take their rackets away with them on holiday.

Clients used to have to travel to Florida or Spain for the best tennis resorts, but an increasing number of hotels have recognised that tennis buffs need more options to brush up on their backhand, and have increased their product accordingly. Mark Warner's tennis courses last year proved so popular they sold out; now the team is working closely with the LTA to create even more.

Whether clients are newbies or pros, we've rounded up the best tennis holidays for those looking to ace it on the courts. →



PICTURE CLUB MED



LEFT:
La Manga Club, Spain

RIGHT:
Robinson Club Cala Serena, Majorca

BELOW:
Buccament Bay, Antigua



▶ BEST FOR: BEGINNERS

For clients whose racket-to-ball coordination needs some work, suggest a hotel or resort where tennis is available alongside other activities, so there are welcome distractions when they've had enough time on court.

Spanish resort La Manga Club boasts a 28-court academy, with lessons by experienced English-speaking coaches who group people according to ability. The Adult Academy is perfect for beginners: clients will be taught for two hours a day over five days, with the chance for evaluations and Q&As after each session.

Once the serve, backhand and smash practice is over, the rest of the day can be dedicated to easing aching muscles in the spa, lounging by the pool or teeing off at one of the resort's three 18-hole golf courses. Those who want fast results can sign up for the resort's Weekend Warrior package, an intense eight-hour weekend course that covers



At Buccament Bay, ex-Wimbledon champ Pat Cash has devised the tennis programme

everything from movement and positioning to serve and return. Prices start from £378 including a place on the Weekend Warrior tennis academy and three nights' accommodation.

For clients craving something more leisurely, Thomson's Robinson Club Cala Serena in Majorca offers free taster sessions on its 12-court complex, including rackets and balls.

There are few more idyllic venues in which to nail that backhand than Carlisle Bay in Antigua, where clients can get

up a good rally while looking out across topaz waters and rainforest-cloaked hills. Of the resort's nine tennis courts, four are floodlit to allow for cooler, more relaxing night-time play. Guests can book an instructor for group or one-on-one lessons, or sign up to a complimentary tennis clinic as part of the resort's weekly activities programme (from \$495 per room; tennis lessons cost \$80 an hour).

▶ BEST FOR: ADVANCED PLAYERS

Tennis fans will revel in the chance to while away the hours on the four courts at the Algarve's Pine Cliffs, a Luxury Collection Resort, which this year has teamed up with the Annabel Croft Tennis Academy to create a programme of tennis coaching and events. While the programme is suited to all ages and abilities, its Slam tennis packages are aimed at advanced players and include four hours of tennis a

day, plus exercises and specific match play sessions to improve competitive play. Packages start from £503 based on a three-day 'Weekend Retreat' package, including B&B accommodation and 10 hours of tennis coaching.

Those who are serious enough about their serve to fly long-haul can immerse themselves in the world-class tennis programme at Florida's Boca Raton Resort & Club. Tennis highlights include its 18 Hydro-Grid Courts, which incorporate clever technology to ensure courts maintain the best levels of moisture to optimise play, a tennis concierge to help reserve courts, and the option of a full-day clinic with tennis legend Jimmy Connors (rooms start from \$249).

There's plenty more star appeal in St Vincent & The Grenadines at Buccament Bay, where former Wimbledon champ Pat Cash has developed the hotel's tennis coaching programme himself. Cash oversees the club and



RIGHT:
Neilson tennis
ambassador
Mark Petchey

FAR RIGHT:
Haven
holiday park



PICTURE: MATT ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHY



Neilson offers a week at Messini Beachclub in Analipsi, Greece, from £579, travelling on June 26. Price includes seven nights' accommodation, British Airways flights from Heathrow, transfers and activities. neilson.co.uk

Prestige Holidays offers a week's B&B at Pine Cliffs, Portugal, from £1,369 including the five-day Grand Slam package, plus flights from Gatwick to Faro and transfers, departing June 15. prestige.holidays.co.uk

→ regularly supplies coaching for those who request it, but even if guests can't afford his rates, they can still benefit from his experience as Cash also taught resident head coach Kelvin Orsi. Rates for a week's stay start from £1,199 including flights and transfers.

Neilson's improved tennis programme has also been devised by a pro: its new tennis ambassador is Mark Petchey, former coach to Andy Murray. The Mark Petchey Tennis Programme is available at Neilson's eight beachclubs across Greece and Turkey, and is open to everyone from newbies to racket pros.

For advanced players, its premium tennis package at Messini Beachclub in Analipsi, Greece, is a great option (from £125). The course runs over five days and is held in groups of six, with training in the form of daily video coaching from professional coaches, plus a 30-minute one-on-one session. At the end of the week, clients can show off their new-found skills in a tennis tournament.



BEST FOR: FAMILIES

At Mark Warner, tennis coaching can start as soon as kids are tall enough to peer over the net at three years old. Mark Warner sales and services manager Chloe Ruffitt says: "Our ever-popular resort Lakitira Beach Resort in Kos is perfect for families on and off the tennis courts. For the kids, we run mini and junior LTA programmes under the watchful eye of our experienced coaches. Off-court, the resort has plenty to offer families, including complimentary

childcare from four months to 17 years, a purpose-built childcare centre, family rooms and a child-friendly menu."

Mark Warner is running specialist tennis weeks at the resort this year, (June 8-September 28) where clients can get stuck into more than 20 hours of on-court tennis, or sign up to a speed-serving competition and singles and doubles tournaments. After their hard work on the court, reward comes in the form of evening entertainment, exhibition matches and social dinners, plus all the usual Mark Warner activities.

The activity offering at Club Med Punta Cana Resort in the Dominican Republic is similarly impressive, and families with a sporty bent are spoiled for choice here as the resort is home to a huge sports school, offering group lessons for all skill levels. Aside from its dedicated tennis lessons, there's a fitness school and a golf academy, while other sports on offer include sailing, windsurfing and basketball. There's even more to do in the dedicated kids' and teens' clubs, and families who want to enjoy something new together can pick up some circus skills thanks to the resort's collaboration with Cirque du Soleil.

At family-oriented hotel Los Jameos Playa in Lanzarote, kids aged six to 14 can get involved in the junior tennis programmes and tournaments run by tennis director Xavier Guyot, and get private lessons if they really want to brush up. Families that are even more tennis mad can sign up to tennis camp weeks or book one of the three-day courses run by prestigious tennis coaching brand Peter Burwash International (a three-day junior course starts from €85).



LEFT:
Mark Warner's
Lakitira
Beach
Resort, Kos