

Easy does it

A family holiday without the hassle? Greece and Cyprus have it sorted, writes Katie McGonagle

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Ask the kids their top priority for a summer holiday and the size of the swimming pool, sandiness of the beach or whether they can still play their favourite Xbox games will likely rank high on the list.

For parents, though, it's probably just the chance to have an easy week away – the more hassle-free and stress-free, the better.

So why not keep them all happy by booking an easy escape on the familiar islands of Greece and Cyprus? They're easy to get to from anywhere in the UK, simple to get around once you're there, and the resorts couldn't be better set up for families in search of a stress-busting stay.

▶ EASE THROUGH THE AIRPORT

Even the most zen-like resort won't be worth it if getting there sends blood pressures soaring with the stress of bundling

everyone out at the crack of dawn or spending hours keeping kids amused in the airport.

For early flights, an airport hotel is money well spent, as is a fast-pass through airport security – Holiday Extras offers them from just £3, or bundled in with airport parking and hotels – to avoid youngsters getting restless in the queues.

It might even be worth splashing out on lounge passes to make those hours at the airport go by quicker. By the time you buy the whole family a meal just to sit in the airport restaurant, or rack up a hefty bill while teens browse the shops, it might not even work out any more expensive.

Lauren Ross, product and commercial manager for Europe with Simply Luxury by Travel 2, says: "When you're thinking of a family holiday, luxury travel doesn't always spring to mind, but it is a great option for those



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wanting a completely hassle-free week of relaxation and family fun. Simply Luxury by Travel 2 offers complimentary UK lounge passes to make the airport experience a breeze, and also private transfers at the destination."

▶ DON'T BRING THE KITCHEN SINK

Travelling with a baby is tough enough to start with – you've got the buggy, bottles, spare clothes, toys to keep them amused on the flight, just for starters – so add a week's worth of nappies and baby food and you might wonder

how on earth you'll make it out the front door.

The answer? Book a hotel that sorts out baby essentials for you. These packages are becoming more common, following the lead of Thanos Hotels & Resorts, which offers a Baby Go Lightly service at its Annabelle, Anassa and Almyra properties in Cyprus. It allows parents to pre-book a car seat, potty, baby walkers, buggy, high chair, nappies, toiletries, bottles and sterilisers, so they don't have to drag them along.

Elysium Beach in Paphos can, likewise, provide bottle warmers, baby bathtubs and car seats, while Columbia Beach Resort offers baby gear and accessories alongside an on-site creche for babies from four months old.

▶ KEEP THEM BUSY

Quality family time is key, but there's no harm in parents wanting a few precious hours to themselves. Luckily, the array



of kids' clubs and sports facilities at most family hotels will keep little ones occupied trying out exciting activities, and it might even have the added bonus of tiring them out so they don't misbehave come bedtime.

They'll definitely be in need of an early night after sampling the sports at Neilson's Messini Beachclub in Analipsi, Crete, which range from windsurfing, waterskiing and wakeboarding, to kayaking, sailing and stand-up paddleboarding on the water, plus tennis, rock climbing and mountain biking back on land.

So far, so sporty, but there are also plenty of softer activity options. Step inside the play areas of The Westin Resort Costa Navarino - Cocoon for infants or Sandcastle for four to 12-year-olds - and the only worry will be where to start. Under-12s will spend their days making ice cream,

dancing, painting and storytelling, while teenage siblings can burn off energy on the basketball, volleyball or badminton courts, or chill out in the on-site cinema and bowling alley.

▶ MAKE MEAL TIMES EASY

One day they like peas, the next day they can't stand them - it can be hard to keep up with kids' eating habits, and even harder when you haven't got familiar foods to hand. So an all-inclusive buffet is a great way to introduce young palates to new flavours, with plenty of alternatives if they don't like their chosen dish.

The Aldemar Royal Mare in Crete, for example, has a themed barbecue night and children's buffet on standard all-inclusive stays, while its premium all-inclusive dine-around package features à la carte dinner with a kids' menu for two to 11-year-olds, along with

the barbecue night and Greek buffet.

Alternatively, try a villa stay where families have complete control over what they eat and when. But if the prospect of cooking puts parents off, recommend a holiday home on a hotel complex or near restaurants.

Alex Stuart, general manager at Novasol, says: "Choosing a home on a complex offers the best of both worlds: the convenience of on-site bars, restaurants and even spas, while enjoying the luxury and space of your own holiday home. This can be a great choice for families, as once the children are in bed, adults can still sit outside their private villa and enjoy a glass of their favourite tippie."

Novasol has a four-star holiday villa in Rethymno, Crete, sleeping up to five in two bedrooms, with its own kitchen and plunge pool, plus an on-site restaurant and spa. **TV**



Olympic Holidays offers a week's all-inclusive at Aldemar Royal Mare Thalasso in Crete from £937, based on two adults and one child travelling in August. The price includes private transfers and flights from Gatwick. olympicholidays.com

Cyplon has seven nights' B&B at Columbia Beach Resort in Pissouri Bay from £1,300 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing an executive suite from July 21, with easyJet flights from Gatwick. cyplon.co.uk

Simply Luxury by Travel 2 offers a week's B&B at The Westin Resort Costa Navarino, from £1,259, departing August 14. The price is based on four sharing, and includes UK lounge passes and private transfers. travel2.com



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; DIMITRIS POUPALOS

ABOVE LEFT: Novasol villa, Crete

ABOVE RIGHT: Neilson's kids' club

LEFT: Aldemar Royal Mare