

# ASK THE experts

What makes life easier for families travelling with toddlers? **Cathy Toogood** finds out from the experts



PICTURES: Michael Reusse; Jet2holidays 2013/16 Hunt Photography

## 1 Stress-free travel

Clarisse is responsible for fostering and growing relationships with Club Med’s trade partners and overseeing and caring for its customers. With 65% of British bookings made by families, educating customers on the brand’s family offering is a huge part of Clarisse’s role. She also offers advice on resorts that are best suited to families.



**Clarisse Chapolard**  
head of sales, contact centre,  
customer care and transport for UK,  
Ireland and Nordics, Club Med

It’s a big moment for parents when they travel with a toddler for the first time. There is excitement that this will be the first holiday their child will experience fully, and it’s a chance to create memories. However, holidays with a child who is now walking and talking (and throwing tantrums) can present a challenge.

Getting prepared beforehand helps make the journey as stress-free as possible. Try to book off-peak flights so that the plane and airport are quieter and more comfortable. Staff will generally be more available to help too.

Flights can be the biggest headache with small children, so travel short-haul where possible. If the destination is long-haul, night flights can help children sleep. Don’t just think about the flights, either – is the destination airport easy to navigate? Is it a short transfer to the hotel?

At the destination, the all-inclusive model is a great option. Club Med has an offering tailored for smaller guests starting from four months old. Also, make sure there are activities nearby to keep toddlers happy. Petit Club Med offers children aged two to three years old activities such as sports, crafts and games, supervised by a dedicated, qualified team. It also means parents can take time for themselves – that’s what holidays should be all about.

## 2 Child-friendly hotels

Chitra is a real estate and hospitality entrepreneur. She’s the owner and founding board member at Martinhal Family Hotels & Resorts and Martinhal Residences. Working with her business partner and husband, she developed the flagship Martinhal Beach Resort & Hotel in Sagres.



**Chitra Stern**  
founder and chief executive,  
Martinhal Resorts

As children become more mobile and explorative, it is important that they have space and the right stimulation. But parents need to make sure they have time for themselves too, so childcare is important.

Accommodation needs to be child-friendly and safe, but also stylish and comfortable for parents. At Martinhal, we have details such as bed protectors, stair gates, steps in the bathrooms and furniture with round edges. The kids’ club is organised by age, so toddlers feel welcome and have suitable activities.

Our restaurants offer a wide range of healthy food for children, while the kids’ corners and playground next to the restaurant enable parents to finish their meals and have their cappuccino, with the foam still on it!

Whenever possible, keep the time zone difference as small as possible for toddlers and choose a safe destination with good healthcare in case it’s needed. If clients prefer somewhere long-haul with a larger time difference, advise them to spend as much time outdoors in the light after they arrive, so they can all get to sleep in the evening. A daytime nap on arrival day sets the clock differently, making it more difficult to get over jet lag.

## 3 Package holidays

Alan has worked at Jet2holidays for more than 15 years, having originally joined the company to launch its trade sales channel. He has worked in the travel industry for 45 years, in several roles including retail, airline reservations, cruise, advertising, publishing and corporate software.



**Alan Cross**  
director of travel agent relationships,  
Jet2holidays

Parents with toddlers are often attracted to package holidays because they wrap everything up in one booking, offering peace of mind, ease and assurance. Packages with Jet2holidays include the hotel, return flights, 22kg baggage and hotel transfers. There are some great offers to mention to clients, including free child places, single-parent deals and discount codes, plus all infants under two go free.

All-inclusive holidays are a favourite for families as everything is included in the price, while villa holidays offer the benefits of a package holiday, but with added privacy. Families with toddlers may appreciate dedicated facilities like kids’ clubs, children’s pools, creches, playgrounds, cots and highchairs.

Look at flight times to suit your client’s needs – routines, such as nap times, can be important with toddlers. Jet2’s Red Team are always on hand to help at the airport and in resort. For customers travelling with a pushchair, reassure them that they can take this right up to the plane door just before boarding. Car seats weighing up to 10kg can also be checked into the hold for free.

Recommend planning for the flight itself, too: offer children something to sip during take-off and landing in case the pressure affects their ears, and pack some entertainment items in hand luggage.