

From Times Online

April 21, 2007

20 ideas for a family holiday

What, you stil haven't booked the big holiday this summer? No worries - we've 20 hot tips for getaways



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All prices are for August. Family prices are for two adults and two children aged from 2 to 12, sharing a room, unless otherwise stated.

Turkey on special

Poor Turkey saw a 40 per cent downturn in bookings last year following bird flu fears (even though holiday areas were not affected). But Turkey's misfortune last year means good value this year as holiday companies offer high quality at better rates than elsewhere in the Med in a bid to lure back tourists.

Creative Traveller has villas previously offered by Simpson Travel, which has dropped Turkey. Creative Traveller's Mathew Simpson says that you get much more for your money in Turkey than in Greece. Chalet Vista is a stunning three-bedroom villa with pool on the Bozburun peninsula that sleeps eight. Two weeks cost £2,400, villa only. Flights to Dalaman can be booked through www.avro.co.uk, www.xl.com or www.flythomascook.com. (020-7385 5200, www.creativetraveller.com)

Tapestry Collection, the company that emerged from the ashes of the Turkish specialist Tapestry Holidays, has a wonderful selection of villas. Two weeks at the Villa Egon Evi in the Kaya Valley (90 minutes' drive from Dalaman) cost £2,680 for two weeks for a family, including flights and hire car. (020-8995 7787, www.tapestryholidays.com)

Bag a week in five-star contemporary luxury at the new family-friendly Hotel Rixos in Bodrum with Sovereign Luxury Holidays. The price is £2,861 per family, departing from Gatwick on August 19 for seven nights all-inclusive, including flights and transfers. This price includes a free child place and an early booking discount of 10 per cent, available on bookings made before April 30. (0870 3661626, www.sovereign.com)

Holiday for rent

When you rent somebody's holiday home the costs are often cheaper than going with a tour operator, although your holiday won't carry financial protection if you book this way. If you want to go in August, hurry, as many properties are already taken. Useful websites: www.holiday-rentals.co.uk and www.holidaylettings.co.uk have villas and apartments across the Med; www.cheznous.co.uk specialises in France.

Owners Direct has a villa (ref S4542) in Frigiana, near Nerja, on the Costa del Sol, costing £1,450 a week, sleeping eight. Ideal for sharing with another family, the property has a main house and smaller outhouse for spillovers and a 9m x 6m swimming pool. For flights to nearby Malaga try www.easyjet.com. (www.ownersdirect.co.uk)

Holidaylets has lots of big villas available. For example, Homer's Hideaway (www.holidaylets.net/prop/17755) in Zakynthos, Greece, has a large pool (12m x 6m) on a hillside overlooking the sea, near Port Nicolas in the north, sleeping ten. A week in late August costs £1,800. Direct charter flights are available from www.travelrepublic.co.uk and www.airflights.co.uk. (01234 757290, www.holidaylets.net)

Dare to be different

If you're having problems finding space in the holiday honeypots, ask tour operators for advice on how to think differently. For example, if everyone's packing into the Greek islands, head to the mainland, Croatia, Malta or Gozo. If the Balearics are too busy, try the Costas, where there is more capacity. Or if everyone's off to Tuscany, try Calabria.

Simply Travel features mainland Greece. Seven nights in picturesque Villa Rodia in Neochori, Pelion, costs £2,200 per family including flights from Gatwick and car hire. (0870 1664988, www.simplytravel.co.uk)

Holiday Options has 14 nights at the four-star, refurbished Grand Hotel Elahusa in Bol, Croatia, for £2,433 for two adults and one child including flights from Gatwick or Manchester to Split, ferry and road transfers and half-board in a sea-facing room. (0870 4208372, www.holidayoptions.co.uk)

Costa Brava specialist PCI Holidays is offering Casa Evalan, a modern three-bedroom, two-bathroom villa near medieval village Pals. One week, villa only, is £1,695. Flights to Girona or Barcelona can be booked through www.easyjet.com and www.ryanair.com. (01305 835835, www.pci-holidays.com)

Real Holidays has a villa/apartment complex in Calabria, the toe of Italy, called La Conchiglia. A two-bedroom villa costs £683 a week. You can fly to nearby Lamezia with www.ryanair.com — bookable through Real Holidays, which can also rent you a car for about £230 a week, high season. (020-7359 3938, www.realholidays.co.uk)

The Villa Book suggests Zifna, a farmhouse in Gozo sleeping six, which costs £204pp, per week, rental only. For flights to Malta try www.ba.com. Gozo is a 25-minute ferry ride away. (www.thevillabook.co.uk)

Simply the best

In the past, luxury hotels were the domain of child-free holidaymakers, but travel companies say that the thirst for upmarket family holidays is growing like mad and hotels are adapting to their youngest guests.

There are now lots of swanky hotels in Cyprus, but the all-suite Columbia Beach Resort (www.columbia-hotels.com) is my favourite. Perfect for families at the high end, it is built on a beautiful long beach in the style of a Greek village, with lagoon pools and holistic spa. Prestige Holidays (01425 480400, www.prestigeholidays.co.uk) is offering seven nights at £2,236 per adult and £639 per child B&B, including flights and taxi transfer.

Benidorm on the Costa Blanca might not sound an obvious choice for a luxury holiday, but the recent openings of Westin and Sheraton hotels (www.westin.com, www.sheraton.com) are changing all that. They are next to the Terra Mítica, Terra Natura and Acqualandia theme parks and feature big kids' clubs, pools, spas and golf courses. First Choice (0870 8504308, www.firstchoice.co.uk) is offering a B&B family week at the Westin Real de Faula Golf Resort and Spa for £3,230 including flights and transfers.

Los Monteros, near Marbella, is a five-star family bestseller from Cadogan Holidays (02380 828313, www.cadoganholidays.com). Seven nights cost £940 per adult and £350 per child including flights, transfers and B&B.

Wags central

If you want to rub shoulders with footballers and their families there are two places to head this summer:

Vale do Lobo in the Algarve is WAGs central. Under new management it has come down in price if you book direct. Not on the Med, but just a bit farther along on the Atlantic, it's ideal for families — long, sandy beaches, tennis academy, holistic spa, golf and only 20 minutes' transfer from Faro airport. For example, a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment is now £257 a night instead of £464. For flights to Faro try www.flymonarch.com. (00 35 12 8935 3333, www.valedolobo.com)

Forte Village in Sardinia features more footballers and a lot of Notting Hill-on-sea types. No bucket and spade shops, just D&G and the like. Prices are from £5,770 a week in a family bungalow at Il Villaggio, offering half-board including transfers and flights. Original Travel (020-7978 7333, www.originaltravel.co.uk).

Get active

With childhood obesity at a record high, holidays with calorie-burning activities to balance the hotel buffet are growing in popularity.

Mark Warner is offering two weeks at the Lakitira Beach Resort on Kos, Greece, for £1,702 adult and £1,021 per child sharing (2-12 years). Infants are charged at £100 a week. Activities include sailing, windsurfing, tennis, aerobics, beach volleyball, table tennis, boules, canoeing and waterpolo. (0870 8988942,

www.markwarner.co.uk/med)

Club Med has just reopened its flagship Village of Opio en Provence, near Cannes, after a massive refit. The village offers 13 tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, circus school and archery, plus kids' clubs for all ages. All-inclusive one-week prices in late August are £1,021 per adult, £734 per child aged 4-11 years, £344 per child 2-3 years and £193 per infant, including flights and transfers, many activities and some kids' clubs. (0845 3676767, www.clubmed.co.uk)

Neilson has seven nights at the Lumbarda Beachclub on Korcula, Croatia, which costs from £759 per adult and £589 per child. B&B, flights, transfers, windsurfing, dinghy sailing and RYA instruction are included. (0870 9099099, www.neilson.co.uk)

Bovered?

Teenagers: what to do with them? There's still time to tackle even this most intractable of holiday problems.

Premier Holidays has villas on Ibiza, far enough away from the clubs to be peaceful but close enough for determined teenagers to get there. Villa Dos de Mayo in Jesús, for example, is set in a pine garden with pool. One week in August costs from £2,418, villa only. Try www.ba.com for flights. (0870 4432302, www.premier-holidays.com)

The Cyprus specialist Sunvil suggests staying at the Linos Inn in Kakopetria, if you have older children (you get two separate rooms) and there are lots of nature trails and mountains to explore. Prices start at £648pp for seven nights' B&B, car hire and flights. (020-8568 4499, www.sunvil.co.uk)

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