

FAMILY
HOTSPOTS
2017

GO HAPPY FAMILIES

IF YOU BELIEVE THE SECRET TO A FUN FAMILY HOLIDAY IS CHOOSING ONE THAT SUITS YOUR TOT'S PERSONALITY, THEN LET **CATHY WINSTON** BE YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE

TV FANS

How to spot one: they've seen each episode of their fave show 279 times

Who needs beaches and pools when you can meet Elmo and Cookie Monster? Well, you do, obviously, which is why Beaches Turks & Caicos resort in the Caribbean is great for all the family. It offers guaranteed sunshine, all-inclusive food and drink, pools, a beautiful beach and kids' club. Even the long-haul flight is worth it for the chance to have breakfast with Bert and Ernie, make cookies with the Cookie Monster, and take a mini cruise with Elmo.

What's the damage?

From £1,341 for a family of four for seven nights. beachesresorts.co.uk



Cheer up Big Bird, the scenery's not half bad!



Be one of the first to stay in the new CBeebies hotel

UK SWAP

CBeebies fans will be in TV heaven at Alton Towers, thanks to fab new rides at CBeebies Land – and you can check in to the new CBeebies Land Hotel, opening in July. From £200 per night for a family of four. cbeebiesland.com

PLAY PROS

How to spot one: these tots want playtime to go on, for ever

Forget the Maldives' reputation as a honeymoon paradise – new hotel Kandima Maldives is home to Kandiland, the largest kids' club in the islands. With a large wet play area, a trampoline and activities from pirate hunts and coral planting to cooking and Dhivehi language lessons, there's plenty to entertain little ones. Throw in the longest outdoor pool in the Maldives and more beach than you can possibly cover with sandcastles, and it's definitely still paradise, even if it's not quite the honeymoon variety...

What's the damage?

From around £3,275 for five nights half-board for two adults and two children, excluding international flights. kandima.com



UK SWAP

At Mattel Play in Liverpool, there are huge interactive play areas themed around Fireman Sam, Bob the Builder and Thomas the Tank Engine. The tricky part is persuading the kids to leave again... £10 per child; £2 per adult. mattelplayliverpool.com



Happiness is being thrown in the air by dad on a sunny beach

Tots love beach time. Just make sure they're wearing a high-factor sunscreen, and have lots of time in the shade

City life in Palma is both laid-back and lively



URBAN TOTS

How to spot one: they have a short attention span and need plenty of variety

To experience a chilled-out city break with kids, sometimes you need to keep it a bit low-key. Bon Sol Resort & Spa in Mallorca is just outside the island's capital Palma, and has lots to entertain without being overwhelming. Grab an ensaimada pastry, then hit the aquarium, head to the historic buildings and castle in the old town, and take a 15-minute bus ride back to the family-owned resort, with pool, beach and kids' activities.

The free kids' club for ages two to 12 runs during school holidays from 11am to 10.30pm, so English-speaking nannies can whisk tots off to enjoy the kids' menu while you indulge in a long, lazy Spanish meal. There's also a baby-listening service – and interconnecting rooms mean you could pack the grandparents too.

What's the damage?

From £984 per adult and £390 per child for seven nights bed and breakfast, based on a family of four sharing. thomson.co.uk



Castle-side camping in Edinburgh

UK SWAP

Edinburgh is in the spotlight this year with the 70th anniversary of its famous festival. Avoid the crowds and glamp in the canvas cottages in the 400-acre grounds of Dundas Castle, 15 minutes outside the city, which have kingsize beds and en-suite showers. From £159 per night. glampoteldundascastle.com



Mini adventurers will love the chutes at La Vallée

THRILL-SEEKERS

How to spot one: no climbing frame is too high for this fearless little one

There's a ferry to Normandy with your name on it, thanks to a new activity club for children aged one to five at five-star holiday park, La Vallée. The Mini Fun Station Plus, open from late May to September, offers mini jet-skiing, scooter courses for kids, toddler aeroball and sensory play for tiny travellers, not to mention human table football and Zorbing for older kids. When everyone needs a break, there's a great swimming pool or you can refuel in the on-site restaurant.

What's the damage?

From £281 for seven nights in a two-bedroom mobile home, sleeping up to six. alfresco-holidays.com



Wobble along a rainforest bridge

UK SWAP

Brave tropical rainstorms and a wobbly bridge in cloudy treetops at the new Weather Maker attraction at the Eden Project, where you can pump water through a tree to see how clouds are formed. From £22.50 for adults; under-fives free. edenproject.com



The beautiful wide open spaces of Canada

TINY TRENDIES

How to spot one: they are the leader of the pack at preschool, and go their own way

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of its confederation, Canada is the place to visit in 2017. Entry to the country's national parks is free this year, plus you can take in its fantastic cities and stunning scenery. Get a taste of the wide open spaces on a family road trip, where you can set your own pace and factor in plenty of stops. Canadian Sky has several self-drive itineraries designed for families, including a popular route

that goes from cosmopolitan Vancouver to the Blue Mountains (bear viewings are optional) and ends up at Niagara Falls. It also includes boat rides on the lakes and a visit to the Okanagan Valley vineyards (because it's your holiday too...).

What's the damage?

From £999 per person for a ten-night trip based on four sharing, including flights and car rental. canadiansky.co.uk

UK SWAP

One of Lonely Planet's top 2017 destinations, head to North Wales and board the toddler-friendly Llangollen Railway – hop on the train and chuff contentedly through the stunning Dee Valley countryside. There are themed Thomas and Peppa days too. Tickets from £15; under-threes free. llangollen-railway.co.uk



FISH FANS

How to spot one: a goldfish can keep them entranced for hours

Europe's largest freshwater aquarium, the Aquatis Aquarium-Vivarium, opens in Switzerland this summer. With two million litres of water in 50 tanks, it will be home to species from five different continents, and brand new digital technology is promising visitors an immersive view of everything from crocodiles and piranhas to plants.

What's the damage?

From £123 per night in a Junior Suite, sleeping four. aquatis-hotel.ch/en



Something fishy going on here...

UK SWAP

Discover The Deep, one of the biggest aquariums in the country, in Hull, the UK City of Culture. The aquarium has undergone a big refurbishment this year, and you can see up to 3,500 fish, including young zebra sharks. Plus there are penguins for the 'aw' factor. From £10.80; under-threes free. thedeep.co.uk

DINO DUDES

How to spot one: they can tell an ankylosaurus from a euoplocephalus

Head to the Dinosaur Isle – which is both the nickname for the Isle of Wight and the actual name of the island's main dinosaur attraction, with its huge, roaring, life-like models to gawp at and activities for children to take part in. It also offers regular guided fossil and geology walks, where families can hunt for relics on the beaches.

The newest accommodation in Whitecliff Bay at Away Resorts is, thankfully, much less prehistoric, and has spacious boutique-style Tribeca caravans. Kids will love the jungle-themed bedroom where they can sleep dreaming of dinos, plus there's an open-plan living room and adult bedroom with a standalone bathtub.

What's the damage?

From £580 for seven nights in a Tribeca caravan at Whitecliff Bay, sleeping up to five people. You can also find these caravans at Tattershall Lakes Country Park in Lincolnshire. awayresorts.co.uk



You're going to hear me roar...

SWAP

Watch 30 animatronic dinosaur models – from a pterosaur to a diplodocus – roar and snarl in the new Jurassic Kingdom experience, touring the UK until October. Tickets from £9.50; under-threes free. jurassickingdom.uk



It's a jungle in there... bedrooms in the Tribeca caravan



The spectacular Isle of Wight coastline

Don't let the insects spoil fun in the forest – pack some deet-free repellent that's suitable for all the family

BOOK WORMS

How to spot one: they can recite the entire plot of every known fairy tale

The fastest way to step into fairyland isn't by wishing upon a star but by heading to the south of Holland, to Efteling, a fairy-tale theme park. Its attractions and rides are inspired by Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm, and stories will magically come to life in the Fairytale Forest. Try out the thrilling new ride Symbolica, which explores hidden rooms in a royal Palace, and there's also new accommodation launching this year, with a 75-room hotel and 65 holiday houses at Holiday Village Efteling Loonsche Land.



What's the damage?

Two nights from £406 for two adults and two children, including three early entry park tickets. efteling.com



Find the fairies at Trentham

UK SWAP

Hunt down fairies at Trentham Estate in Staffordshire, where 15 magical wire creations are dotted around the grounds. As you follow the trail, don't miss the new play area. Entry from £8 for adults, under-fives free. trentham.co.uk



Hansel and Gretel's house in Efteling's Fairytale Forest

A small slice of heaven for Lego fans



LEGO LOVERS

How to spot one: you're forever dodging teetering Lego towers

A love of Lego can be a good excuse for a holiday in the sun. The new Legoland Dubai boasts 15,000 models, 60 million bricks, interactive rides and attractions across six themed lands. There's also the tallest Lego model of a building in the world (in true Dubai record-breaking fashion), in case they need more inspiration. Stop off at Miniland, where kids get the chance to create their own city skyline. Got brick overload? The waterpark includes mini slides for little ones at the Duplo Splash Safari.

What's the damage

From £5,249 for a family of four staying four nights at the five-star Lapita Hotel in the Dubai Parks and Resorts complex. thomascook.com Legoland day tickets cost £65 for adults, £55 for kids. legoland.com/dubai



A wannabe wizard's dream room

UK SWAP

Legoland Windsor's Castle Hotel, is opening in July and it has a magical knights and wizards theme. Themed family rooms sleeping four cost from £572, including park tickets for two days. legolandholidays.co.uk



Tots can build endless Sardinian sandcastles

BEACH BABES

How to spot one: they are happy as Larry hanging out for hours on the sand

If you had to design the perfect beach for kids, the golden crescent of Chia Bay on Sardinia's south west coast would come pretty close: pristine sand, gently lapping turquoise waves and a nearby lagoon with pink flamingos – not to mention family-friendly hotels nearby.

Hotel Baia has had a complete facelift for 2017, with cool minimalist rooms overlooking the sea – plus, aside from its own pool, guests have access to the facilities of the luxurious Chia Laguna

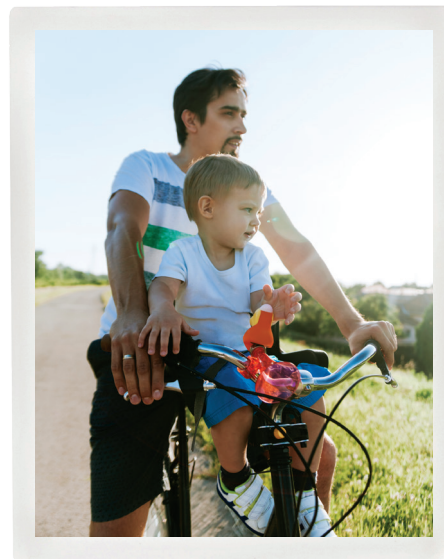


Azure sea hugs the island's coastline

resort where there's a free kids' club for over threes, a welcome kit, a children's play area with a pool for little ones, soft play and kit such as pushchairs and baby baths on request, plus there's a babysitting service and a crèche for a fee.

What's the damage?

From £1,100 per person for a week, based on a family of four sharing a Baia Junior Suite, including flights. justsardinia.co.uk



LIVE WIRES

How to spot one: 'I like to move it' is their signature tune, 24/7

If an inability to remain in one place runs in the family, you need a holiday where you're on the move. So saddle up and head on a family cycle break around the shores of Lake Constance, travelling through Switzerland, Germany and Austria. See all the sights (castles and mediaeval towns) from the lake path and best of all, let Freedom Treks whisk your bags from child-friendly hotel to hotel.

What's the damage?

From £359 per night for a family sharing a quad room, excluding flights. Bike hire from £35 (child trailers and tagalongs available). freedomtreks.co.uk



UK SWAP

Nobody's bored at Lancashire's Ribby Hall Village. The luxury self-catering resort has a new animal experience, a pool with slides and an adventure playground. From £624 for three nights for a family of four. ribbyhall.co.uk



A British beach with the wow factor

UK SWAP

Voted one of the world's best beaches, Barafundle Bay Beach in Pembrokeshire also won the UK's top award for water quality. It has soft golden sand and gentle waves, making it perfect for little paddlers. visitpembrokeshire.com