



50+ FAMILY HOLIDAY IDEAS

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travel
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NICOLA BRADY rounds up some of the best and best-value family holidays up for grabs this summer, with everything from beaches to bicycling, and cruises to safaris

€1,000 AND UNDER

SALOU

It can be hard to find sunshine on a budget, but you can get a family holiday for under €1,000 — Budget Travel has a week in the Spanish resort of Salou in a self-catering apartment for €959, including flights from Dublin on August 26.

The accommodation may be basic, but it has everything you'll need, and there's a swimming pool to keep the children entertained. The beach is only 100m away, and you'll be able to pick up everything you need in the town of Salou. There's a bar on-site too, with a games room for shooting a few frames of pool.

See: Budget Travel, (01) 435-0022, budgettravel.ie

ALGARVE

If you can manage to get away just before the school holidays start, you can find some real bargains. Low Cost Holidays has seven nights in the 3-star resort of

Praia da Rocha in a self-catering apartment working out at only €652.

The beach is huge, so there's ample space for sand castles, and there's plenty to do nearby, from the waterfront to the local waterpark. A boat tour is a great excursion too, whether you want to head out fishing or just explore the local area. The trip departs from Dublin on June 9.

See: LowCostHolidays, (01) 485-3835, lowcostholidays.ie

€1,500 AND UNDER

FUERTEVENTURA

The Canary Islands are a firm favourite for summer holidays, and with good reason. The climate is comfortably warm year-round, but reliably sunny in the summer.

Fuerteventura is a popular choice — it's a bit quieter than the neighbouring islands and there's a lively watersports scene for the more adventurous families, with activities from kitesurfing to diving.

Budget Travel has a week for €1,059 at the Castillo Beach Apartments in Costa Caleta, a 10-minute walk from the beach. Popular with families, the resort has a swimming pool on-site, complete with a children's section. The trip departs from Dublin on August 12.

See: Budget Travel, (01) 435-0022, budgettravel.ie

ALGARVE

The Algarve has come up trumps, with a holiday for four fitting comfortably under €1,500. Clickandgo.com has a week in July at the 3-star Club Alvorferias resort, close to the fishing village of Alvor.

The beach is a short stroll away, but there's a good-sized swimming pool on-site. Seven nights comes in at €1,399, including flights with Aer Lingus and transfers. Until the end of January, you can book any holiday with Clickandgo.com with a deposit of only €1 per person, with a second payment of €100pp due four weeks later and the remainder payable

10 weeks before your departure date.
See: Clickandgo.com, (01) 637-1699

MAJORCA

Majorca is shedding its image as a party haven. The biggest island in the Balearics, it's home to pretty coves and sandy beaches, with warm temperatures all summer.

If there's a cyclist in your family, they can keep themselves occupied in the mountains where top athletes go to train. For the rest of you, a sun lounger is calling. Budget Travel has a week in Aucanada, departing August 13 for €1,189. Nearby is the Bay of Alcudia, and the seafront Alcanada golf club.

See: Budget Travel, (01) 435-0022, budgettravel.ie

€2,000 AND UNDER

LANZAROTE

All-inclusive holidays can be a godsend for families. Choose wisely and you won't

have to worry about endless requests for ice creams and cold drinks. And while buffets might not offer the most exciting meals, they're usually a sure-fire way to please fussy eaters.

Speaking of sure-fire hits, Lanzarote is another fail-safe holiday resort. Sandy beaches, almost guaranteed sunshine and warm waters make for happy families all summer long. Be sure to sample some of the local wine while you're there — vineyards on the island produce some excellent varieties that are rarely exported. Low Cost Holidays has a week in the 4-star resort of Playa Blanca for €1,768, departing from Shannon on June 18.

See: Low Cost Holidays, (01) 485-3835,

lowcostholidays.ie

FRANCE

There's nothing like a holiday in the French countryside for pure relaxation. Days are spent wandering through a village in search of bread and cheese, and evenings on a balmy terrace with a glass of the delightful local red.

Add in a holiday rental with a bit of character and you've got a perfect family getaway. Oliver's Travels has an unusual property in the Vendée and Charente region with good availability this summer. Tour St Therese is a stunning medieval tower in a pretty village. There's not much in the way of entertainment, but if you're looking for peace and quiet it really can't be beaten. If you book

before February 28 there's a 20pc discount available, with a week's rental (sleeping up to six guests) in July costing from €1,053. You can fly to nearby Nantes with Ryanair — at the time of writing, fares are around €900 for four people in July, but are likely to rise.

See: Oliver's Travels, olivers-travels.com; ryanair.com

GRAN CANARIA

Gran Canaria is the third-biggest island in the Canaries, and a popular destination for Irish holidaymakers. Thousands flock to the sunny beaches every year, and there's plenty to keep even the fussiest kids occupied.

Clickandgo.com has a week in July at the 3-star Cordial Mogan Valle, near the fishing village of Puerto Mogan, for €1,599. The entire resort is car-free, and as well as the usual swimming pool and kids' area there's a spa that parents can sneak away to. It's your holiday too, after all.

See: Clickandgo.com, (01) 637-1699

€2,500 AND UNDER

SICILY

Nothing says summer holiday like the scent of a barbecue on a warm evening. At the beautiful Casa Raffaele villa in Sicily, there's a second kitchen in the garden equipped with not only a barbecue, but a wood-burning oven for your own pizza-making adventures. There's also a sheltered dining area, ideal for lazy lunches as well as alfresco dinners. The good-sized swimming pool is in the middle of a large private garden, ideal for playing.

Best of all? The region is known for its wine and olives, so you'll feast like royalty. Casa Raffaele sleeps four and costs between €1,453 in June and €1,756 in August. Ryanair flies to nearby Comiso

on Thursdays and Sundays, with rates around €82.99 one way, bringing the total to just under €2,500.

See: The Sicilian Villa Company, 0044 202207-0785, thesicilian-villacompany.com; ryanair.com

FLORIDA

Ask children what their ideal holiday would look like, and you'll likely be met with a deafening chorus of "Disney World!"

For most, the prospect of meeting Mickey Mouse, Cinderella and the gang is almost too much to bear. There's no escaping the fact that it's a holiday very much for kids (and the young at heart), but you definitely won't have to worry about keeping them entertained, with theme parks as far as the eye can see.

The good news is that it's possible to get to Orlando without breaking the bank. Clickandgo.com has a week in Florida in June in a 4-star hotel for €2,299, including flights and transfers.

See: Clickandgo.com, (01) 637-1699

€3,000 AND UNDER

SARDINIA

Sardinia is a dream in the summer — balmy temperatures, blue skies and delicious seafood from countless pretty restaurants along the waterfront. The beautiful coastline flits between wide, open beaches and tiny hidden coves that are perfect for snorkelling.

Alghero is an ideal destination, with a long, clean beach and a beautiful old town with plenty to explore. Just Sardinia has a week in a two-bedroom apartment at the seafront Baganvillea Apartments, departing Dublin on July 13. It's only a short walk to the town centre, and the price is €2,811 for a family of five.

See: Just Sardinia, 0044 1202-484858, justsardinia.co.uk

PORTUGAL

Have you ever tried to drag children away from a waterpark, only to have them begging to go back the next day? Well, this holiday may be for you. The 4-star Aquashow Park Hotel in Quarteira on the Algarve is located next to the Aquashow Theme and Waterpark, and guests get unlimited access to the slides, flumes and more. Direct Holidays has a family sale running throughout January, with discounts of up to €500 on holidays or free children's places. A week's B&B at the Aquashow, departing from Dublin on August 24, costs €2,899.

See: Direct Holidays, (01) 514-0341, directholidays.ie

MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE

If you don't want to be pinned down to one

location, a family-friendly cruise could be the answer — you'll shift location every day, with time to head off to explore. But on an MSC cruise, you might find it hard to coax children off the ship, with clubs, games rooms and pools on board.

Under-18s cruise for free when sharing a cabin with two fare-paying adults. A seven-night Mediterranean cruise on board MSC Musica starts from €949pp, including return flights from Dublin and transfers. Meals are included, but drinks packages are extra. The trip departs from Civitavecchia, so you'll need to book flights to Rome for the children. Aer Lingus has return flights for €200 to €300pp in July, depending on departure date.

See: MSC Cruises, 1800 932-499, msccruises.ie; aerlingus.com

€4,000 AND UNDER

CYCLING THE CAMINO

Do you want more from a holiday? To get active and have an adventure rather than sit by the pool? A pilgrimage may be the answer — cycling the beautiful final 100km of the Camino de Santiago in Galicia.

Covering 20km a day, you'll make your way through the diverse landscape, from farmland to quaint villages. Caminoways.com will transport your luggage, and each afternoon you'll pitch up at a hotel in plenty of time for dinner. It's a good idea to get going early — some of the hotels have a pool and plenty of space to relax, so you'll want to get there for the afternoon.

The package includes bike rental and half-board accommodation for €666 per adult and €601 per child (aged 10 to 17). Flights are not included, and would cost around €800 for four people in June with Aer Lingus, which flies to Santiago three times a week in the summer, bringing the total cost to around €3,334.

See: Camino Ways, (01) 525-2886, caminoways.com; aerlingus.com

TURKEY

If you want the freedom of all-inclusive without being stuck in a small resort, the 5-star Gold City Hotel and Villa Complex near Alanya is perfect. Taking up much of a hillside, the resort has numerous pools (including its very own water park), a private beach and a sports centre with a football pitch and tennis courts nearby. There's even a bowling alley and mini golf.

Direct Holidays has a week all-inclusive in a luxury two-bedroom villa, departing from Dublin on August 3 for €3,879. But be quick about it because the family sale ends on January 31.

See: Direct Holidays, (01) 514-0341, directholidays.ie

BLOW THE BUDGET

SOUTH AFRICAN SAFARI

An African safari is one of those once-in-a-lifetime holidays that a family will never forget. But a safari on horseback? Well, that's even better.

Imagine trotting through the South African countryside as giraffe peek from the trees and zebra graze nearby. Guides lead you through the reserve, so there's no need to worry about safety. And when you're tired of riding, you can relax in the plunge pool overlooking the gorge or rest on the veranda and see what creatures you can spot from afar. In The Saddle has

this break at Ant's Lodges for €9,204 for the last week of June, including flights via London, all meals and all activities. For the first week in July, the price rises to €10,248. See: In The Saddle, 0044 1299-272997, inthesaddle.com

ST LUCIA

Nothing says luxury like the Caribbean, and St Lucia is a great choice for families. The volcanic island is small, safe and

friendly, with pristine beaches and a fun atmosphere. A popular choice for families is Coconut Bay, which has a family wing with a waterpark and an ocean-front pool. Tropical Sky has an all-inclusive week in a deluxe garden-view room starting from €5,296 (a saving of €1,700), available from July 1 until August 23. Book by January 28 to take advantage of the saving.

See: Tropical Sky, (01) 664-9999, tropicalsky.ie

CHIESA DEL CARMINE

For those looking a holiday for a larger group, a larger villa is your best bet. Chiesa del Carmine is an Umbrian villa set among olive groves and vineyards.

It is technically two properties — an 11th Century church with an adjoining 18th Century farmhouse, both beautifully converted.

There's no shortage of bedrooms either, with eight sleeping 14 guests.

Weekly rates are €6,000 for most of June, going up to €8,000 in July and August.

You'll need to book flights — the villa is a two-hour drive from Pisa, served by Ryanair from Dublin.

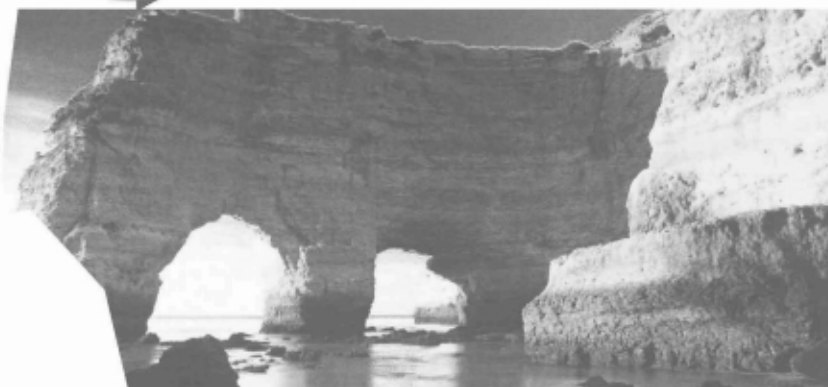
See: Chiesadelcarmine.com;

ryanair.com

NB: Unless otherwise stated, packages are for two adults and two children, with flights from Dublin. Prices correct at time of going to press.

GOOD HEALTH

You can renew your European Health Insurance Card or EHIC (formerly the E111 form) online provided you have your old EHIC number, your PPSN and your address is unchanged.



Above, Portugal's Algarve, a long-time favourite with Irish families (€1,500 and under); left, Sardinia is becoming an increasingly popular choice (€3,000 and under)

MAKING
ROOM

Big families will appreciate the accommodation options at roomfor5.co.uk. They offer information on larger accommodation solutions in Ireland and abroad.





Top, Tour St Therese, Vendee, France (€2,000 and under); above, South African Safari (Blow the Budget); top right, Chiesa del Carmine (Blow the Budget); bottom right, Coconut Bay, St Lucia (Blow the Budget)

