

Ask the operator

Travel Weekly challenges three operators to design a family holiday in the Red Sea

Every so often, a survey reveals the weird questions asked by customers looking to book a holiday. How many pairs of pants will I need? Will the hotel teabags be PG Tips or Tetley?

But these quirky questions are one-offs for a reason, as what most clients want to know is far more practical such as the kids' facilities or quality of the accommodation. And they expect their agent to have the answers.

Travel Weekly asked operators to delve deeper into a family holiday, to find out not only which hotel they would recommend, but why.

The challenge: Find a half-term holiday for a family of four to an all-inclusive Red Sea resort.

The details: The kids – eight and 12 – love water sports, while mum and dad would like a family suite or adjoining rooms, and details of what's included and what's on offer outside the hotel.

● SUNWING MAKADI HOTEL, HURGHADA



Jason Hilton,
deputy
managing
director, Red
Sea Holidays:

"This is without a doubt one of our best-selling family properties.

I take my children, also eight and 12, most years and they love it.

"Its main selling point for this family is the fantastic water park, which has everything from a wave pool and flow rider to a huge rain fortress, flumes and the floor-dropping Aqua Loop, if you're feeling brave. The parents will be happy to hear that all the kids' pools are supervised by Red Sea Hotels staff, who also put on a great kids' club for children aged four to 12, free of charge.

"When it comes to food there's plenty of choice, from a huge

international buffet to à la carte options including Italian and Mexican. There's also a great selection for kids, with special children's menus and snack bars to visit throughout the day – the crepe bar in particular is very popular with my two.

"Venturing outside the hotel is hassle-free. It's a short stroll to Makadi Mall, which has boutiques and a great shop for kids' toys and clothes, plus a small supermarket and more restaurants that are included in the all-inclusive package.

"The hotel also offers a great range of pre-bookable excursions. If they love history, there's a day trip to Cairo by air from £80, or if they are looking for a fun family day out, suggest an all-day snorkelling trip to find Nemo, or a Badawya Adventure in the desert for camel riding and a Bedouin barbecue.

"The rooms are spacious and practical for families. There are

Junior Suites that sleep two adults and two children, and Family Junior suites with a lounge area capable of sleeping four children on single sofa beds. The Family Star Suites in the annex have a master bedroom, living room with double bed and a partially screened sleeping area with two single beds. We offer fixed kids' prices of £369 for any duration – even in the school holidays – making it much more affordable for families.

"Our customer satisfaction for this hotel is incredibly high – 89% – and it's popular with return visitors."

Book it: A week's all-inclusive in a Junior Suite costs from £3,316, with flights from Gatwick on October 23, transfers, a 20kg luggage allowance and late checkout. A Family Star Suite is £175 extra and a Family Junior Suite £245 more.

redseaholidays.co.uk
020 7332 2660





Family suite, Sunwing Makadi Hotel



AQUA BLU SHARM, SHARM EL SHEIKH

Photis Lambrianides, commercial director, Olympic Holidays:

"To cater for this family's requirements, I would recommend the four-star Aqua Blu Sharm, a modern hotel with a cliff-top setting on the Ras Om El Seid Plateau, about 20 minutes from the airport and within easy reach of lively Naama Bay.

"This is a big, fun-filled hotel with 535 rooms. But that's no bad thing in a resort such as Sharm El Sheikh, where holidaymakers spend most of the time around their hotel. So generally, the bigger the property, the more there is to occupy them.

"The Aqua Blu scores highly on TripAdvisor and our customers love it. With Sharm's biggest water park, it's one of our most popular family properties in the Red Sea and, not surprisingly, we have families returning year after year.

"For the two children, the Aqua Park features masses of water slides – 44 in all – so that should give them a half-term week to remember. There are exciting water games that will keep them occupied all day, plus some hair-raising slides for the parents.

There are also 11 pools, including three just for children.

For a break from the Aqua Park, they can enjoy the free kids' club for youngsters aged four to 12.

"The family could book either adjoining rooms or a family room with bunk beds, or they can request a water bungalow that sleeps two adults and two children. Rooms overlook either the Aqua Park or the lake, but they all have nice views and are designed in a bright and contemporary style.

"This hotel has one of the most wide-ranging all-inclusive concepts in Sharm, with five restaurants serving English, Italian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian and Mediterranean fare – not forgetting ice cream for the kids. The package covers snacks and afternoon tea, plus mineral water, soft drinks, hot drinks, and local wine, beer and spirits.

"If they want to go out, many excursions can be booked in-resort. There's horse riding, camel rides and glass-bottomed boat trips nearby, but if the family is feeling adventurous, they could try a desert safari, watersports, or take the opportunity to visit historic Saint Catherine's Monastery and Mount Sinai on a day trip."

Book it: Olympic Holidays can arrange seven nights' all-inclusive from £5,557, with the family sharing two standard rooms. The price is based on flights from Manchester on October 24 and includes transfers.

olympicholidays.com
0844 499 4449



La Terrazza Restaurant, Stella Di Mare



Stella Di Mare Beach Hotel & Spa

STELLA DI MARE BEACH HOTEL & SPA, SHARM EL SHEIKH

Chloe Rowles, sales executive, Classic Collection Holidays:

"This hotel has a fantastic beachfront position with reefs for diving and watersports, but I would choose it for this family mainly because it's just a short walk to the resort centre in Naama Bay, which has shops, bars and restaurants to please everybody. This is one of our top-selling hotels in Sharm El Sheikh, and it continues to receive very favourable feedback from clients.

"There are two room categories that are popular with families: a

one-bedroom family room with a balcony or terrace offering delightful views of the garden or sea – you can request a preference but it's not guaranteed – and a separate sitting room with a sofa bed for the children. That gives parents privacy, as there's a door between the adult and children's sleeping areas. Depending on budget, there's also a two-bedroom Royal Suite with two king-sized beds and a sea view.

"Both children go free of charge when staying in either room category. The hotel can also offer interconnecting room, but this would mean forgoing the offer.

"The free children's club is for four to 12-year-olds, but there are also facilities for the whole family to spend time together, including two swimming pools,

tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, Padi dive centre and a timetable of day and evening activities. Of course, family time can also be complemented by some adult 'me time', so parents enjoy complimentary use of the outside Jacuzzi, gym, sauna and steam room.

"Stella Di Mare offers all types of board, but all-inclusive is great value for money, especially for families. It gives a choice of five buffet or à la carte restaurants, plus local branded drinks and a continuous supply of ice cream for the children. It also covers laundry for five garments per person, a free shuttle bus to Naama Bay, and a 10% discount

on diving and snorkelling.

"Classic Collection can pre-book excursions directly with our handling agent, such as dolphin shows, a pirate boat to Ras Mohamed and a camel ride with dinner under the stars."

Book it: A week's all-inclusive starts at £6,495 for a family room or £11,143 for the Royal Suite during the October half-term. The price includes flights from Gatwick and private transfers.

classic-collection.co.uk
0800 008 7299 TW



Aqua Blu Sharm



Family room, Aqua Blu Sharm

