

20 best holidays with toddlers

From a hotel with swimming lessons for babies to a resort with its own petting zoo, **James Ellis** picks Europe's best breaks

Greece

1 **Westin Resort Costa Navarino** Messinia

There's a kids club with bells on at this superlative resort set in rolling olive groves in the southwest Peloponnese. Its Navarino Dunes recreational park has a playground with climbing frames and ropes, a water park, a sports hall and an American diner-restaurant with a cinema, games consoles and a bowling

alley for older children and adults. While the children are occupied there's a Bernhard Langer-designed golf course, a raft of watersports and 11 restaurants to enjoy. Rooms at the hotel have a contemporary feel with marble floors, a pale ochre colour scheme and balconies, and they can be stocked on request with baby paraphernalia, including bottle warmers, changing tables and pushchairs.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £1,925 for a family of three in September, including flights to Kalamata (01204 821730, destinology.co.uk)

2 **Sani Resort** Halkidiki

Parents with water babies need look no further: this luxury resort, consisting of four different hotels backed by a 1,000-acre ecological reserve on Halkidiki's Cassandra Peninsula, offers baby and toddler swimming

lessons until the end of September. Children between six months and four years can take part in the 30-minute daily programme, while there is also a free "babywatch" service on the beach that

allows mum and dad to escape while the kids are looked after by trained staff. **Details** Seven nights' half-board is from £2,149 for a family of two adults and two children, including flights and transfers (01244 355527, itluxurytravel.co.uk)

3 **Mousses Villas** Lefkada

Lefkada is one of the Ionian coast's lesser-known islands (to Brits at any rate) — and when Greeks finish their own holidays at the end of August it becomes gloriously peaceful and perfect for exploring. This hotel with just 12 villas surrounded by olive groves and a short walk from idyllic beaches is a great place to stay. Not only is the accommodation spacious and well-equipped, there's also a new kids' club run by the UK holiday firm Simpson Travel. With National Nursery ▶



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Examination Board-qualified nannies, it takes children from six months old — and bookings in September and October come with a week's complimentary half-day childcare, including an evening crèche so parents can enjoy a night out. **Details** Seven nights' room-only is from £531pp including flights from the UK and car hire (0845 322 8767, simpsonstravel.com)

Cyprus

4 Almyra Paphos

Set in eight acres of landscaped gardens with incredible views across Paphos Bay, this luxury hotel makes travelling with babies a cinch. The Baby Go Lightly programme provides everything from car seats at the airport to sterilisers, meaning parents can say goodbye to excess baggage. For slightly older children there are free swim nappies, wipes, purées and special meals, as well as a Twilight Zone evening crèche and the Globetrotters kids club. Mum and dad don't miss out either thanks to an adult-only pool, three restaurants and a water sports centre.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £2,320 for two adults and an infant including flights from the UK and transfers (020-3582 4990, originaltravel.co.uk)

5 King Evelthon Beach Hotel & Resort Paphos

Kids will have a splashing time at this new hotel on Chlorakas beach. There's an on-site waterpark with slides and splash pools that's free for children under

three (adults pay €15), as well as a playground, family pools and babysitting services. Family rooms have a contemporary design, with ceramic or wooden floors. A number of "swim-up" rooms will amuse slightly older children. **Details** Seven nights' all-inclusive is from £1,295 per adult and £499 per child, including flights on September 17 (0844 576 2386, OlympicHolidays.com)

Spain

6 The Lodge Ronda Ronda, Andalucia

Pick up the pals (and their parents) from playgroup and head to this lovely self-catering holiday home for a real house party. Sleeping up to 14, it's a stylish,

rural retreat in a 28-acre estate with chickens to feed, woods to explore and an expansive lawn. Inside there are seven bedrooms, some with canopied beds, styled with touches of Africa and Asia, plus a state-of-the-art kitchen — not that you need to cook as rentals come with a chef. The garden is home to a lovely infinity pool.

Details Seven nights' self-catering is from €7,581 (£6,038) for 14 people in September (0034 95216 56 08, thelodgeronda.com). EasyJet.com has return flights from Gatwick to Malaga from about £130 departing on September 1

7 Princesa Yaiza Suite Hotel Resort, Lanzarote

This hotel set between Playa Blanca and the stylish Marina Rubicon has a huge soft playroom for toddlers and a separate outdoor play area with three children's pools, as well as entry to Kikoland, the children's entertainment programme, with visits to the resort aquarium and tapas-making workshops.

Adults are well catered for too, thanks to six swimming pools, two hot tubs, eight restaurants and an expansive sports centre.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £525pp in September including return flights from Gatwick (020-7666 1234, westernoriental.com)

8 Villa Son Morey Gran Muro, Majorca

Children will love the mini petting zoo with ducks and goats that comes with this super-spacious villa on Majorca's north shore, with views over the Bay of

Alcudia. There's also a children's playground with a baby-football pitch and a terrace with a pool and covered barbecue. Inside there are four bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen,

all with a chic-country feel.

Details Seven nights' self-catering costs from £1,741 for nine people in September (020 3384 7066, spain-holiday.com). Skyscanner (skyscanner.net) has return flights to Majorca departing September 16 from about £75

9 Hotel Barcelo La Bobadilla Andalucia

One of Andalucia's finest hotels, this country estate in the Sierra de Loja Bobadilla has more than 350 acres to explore. Under-threes go free and toddlers get a kids club with all manner of activities, English-speaking babysitters and an extensive (and healthy) children's menu including ravioli, chicken breast and swordfish. The hotel has soaring brick arches, terracotta rooftops and a chapel with a bell tower. Explore the estate on horseback, bike or quadbike.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £1,793 for a family of two adults and one toddler in September (08 000 211 256, barcelo.com). EasyJet has return flights from Gatwick to Malaga from about £130 departing on September 1

Portugal

10 Conrad Algarve Quinta do Lago

A week-long holiday at this upscale Hilton-brand hotel on the Algarve could see the children picking up dozens of new skills, including mini yoga, mocktail

making and mini baking. There's also a bespoke kids' club that sends them on "secret missions" and a new family clam-picking experience in the Ria Formosa Natural park that culminates in learning how to cook them. The rest of the family gets to stay in a contemporary hotel with five restaurants, a spa and swanky rooms with 42in TVs and Nespresso machines.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £2,449 for two adults and two children, including flights in September (01244 355527, itluxurytravel.co.uk)

11 Monte da Quinta Quinta do Lago

The family travel website Tots to Travel says more families are looking for hybrid

resorts with self-catering villas in a hotel-style environment than ever. The pick of the bunch for September is this five-star hotel, which has two or three-bedroom suites with large open-plan dining areas, kitchens and terraces or balconies. Booked through Tots to Travel, each comes with a pack of baby amenities, including cots, high chairs, booster seats, baby monitors, changing mats, sterilisers, potties and black-out blinds. The resort also has bookable crèche facilities and drop-in kids clubs.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £865 for a two-bed suite sleeping four people (0800 0142770, totstotravel.co.uk). Skyscanner has return flights to Faro from about £100 on September 15

12 Martinhal Beach Resort and Hotel Sagres

If you're looking to make baby's first holiday a super-memorable one for the whole family, this luxury resort on the southernmost tip of Portugal could be the place to go. The hotel, named Portugal's best family resort at last year's World Travel Awards, has teamed up with the famed teddy-bear makers Steiff to create a special first-holiday package that includes a four or seven-night stay, a baby welcome-pack with nappies and wipes, a Steiff teddy, two hours of

childcare a day, a baby swimming experience and a romantic dinner with babysitting thrown in. Mums also get a free spa treatment.

Details A seven-night Baby's First Holiday package is from €2,445 for a family of two adults and one baby in September (00351 282 240200, martinhal.com). Skyscanner has return flights to Faro from about £100 on September 15

France

13 Mas Neuf Provence

Make light of on-arrival supermarket shopping with a stay at this stylish two-bedroom townhouse on the luxurious Pont Royal Golf & Country Club estate. A phone call seven days in advance enables you to order nappies, formula and special treats, while on-site baby

gear includes cots, high chairs and stair gates, plus bath toys, books and child-friendly DVDs. Guests also get use of the facilities at the neighbouring Pierre & Vacances holiday village, a ten-minute walk away, which has a crèche and an action-packed waterpark.

Details Seven nights' self-catering is from £990 for four people (020 3603 1160, babyfriendlyboltholes.co.uk). BA (ba.com) has return flights from Heathrow to Marseille from about £120 per adult

14 Mas de Thau Montagnac

Fans of *Barney & Friends* will love a stay at this cluster of cottages in southern France: archaeologists found dinosaur eggs here and there are huge fields of wild flowers surrounding the property in which to hunt for more. The former winery, built in the Middle Ages, has been converted into four gîtes (sleeping four to six people) and the owners, Maryse and

Yvan, have poured in everything to make them as family-friendly as possible. Stays come with a welcoming dinner, continental breakfast, a table d'hôte dinner at the owners' home, five mornings in the onsite kids club and access to the resort's petting zoo.

Details Seven nights' B&B costs from £2,300 for four people (020 8816 8140, masdethau.com). Ryanair (ryanair.com) has return flights from Luton to Beziers from about £45 departing September 1

15 Country Kids Brenas

Stays at this complex of seven apartments in a rural setting outside Brenas come with two free nights' babysitting. Kids are spoilt for choice with art classes, animal feeding and treasure hunts, as well as a crèche, baby yoga and mini golf. Apartments (sleeping four to 12) are well designed.

Details Seven nights' self-catering is from £3,437 for four people (i-escape.com) with most activities

included. Ryanair (ryanair.com) has returns from Luton to Beziers from about £45 departing September 1

Italy

16 Borgo Santo Pietro Tuscany

Saddle up to explore the pretty Tuscan countryside with a stay at this boutique Relais & Châteaux hotel. Guests can borrow bikes with baby and toddler seats for days out, while there's also a playground, a babysitting service and special kids meals that include vegetables from the gardens and organic cow's milk. Adults will also love the stylish converted 13th-century mansion with exposed beams and copper baths.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £3,700 for a family of four including

17 Borgo Egnazia Puglia

This resort in the heel of Italy has limestone interiors, Conran-esque design and a slick spa. Children will love the kids club with its soft-play area, pool and craft and drawing sessions. Staff in the club — under the watchful eye of resident Scot Charmaine — have been highly praised by guests for their enthusiasm. No task seems too challenging for them, from topping up sun-cream levels to arranging lunches and naps.

Details Seven nights' B&B is from £2,051 for two adults and a toddler (i-escape.com). Ryanair has return flights from Stansted to Bari from about £90 on September 23

18 Masseria Torre Coccara Puglia

There's an eco-bent to September stays at this former farmhouse. Toddlers staying with parents and attending the Paradise Club for kids get to learn about the local area and help with the olive harvest in the surrounding groves. If they prefer to stay on resort, there are

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pizza-making classes and a playground. The hotel itself is a dreamy mix of rooms with whitewashed stone walls.
Details Seven nights' B&B is from £3,310 for a family of four including flights from the UK (020 3740 4746, blacktomato.com)

Turkey

19 Gloria Golf Resort Belek

The Very Important Minis programme offers a range of services from bespoke meals for babies to a 24-hour shopping service for any extra supplies. Toddlers get to play in the Gogi Kids Club, which has a jungle gym and a petting zoo with goats and ponies, while mum and dad can enjoy the golf courses and spa.

Details Seven nights' half-board is from £2,466 for two adults and a child under six, including flights in September (01425 480400, prestigeholidays.co.uk)

20 Hillside Beach Club

Fethiye

With three beaches and two spas, there's plenty for adults, but kids are well looked after, too. There's free use of cots, bottle warmers, wireless intercoms and sterilisers. For those aged four to seven, the KidSide part of the resort has two pools, four waterslides, sandpits, gaming areas and activity sessions.

Details Seven nights' full-board is from £4,700 for a family of four, including return flights from Gatwick in September (020 7722 2288, elixirholidays.com)



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