

The Kids are Alright

Resorts and rentals in the UK and abroad ripe for the whole family. Edited by **Daisy Finer**



EUROPE



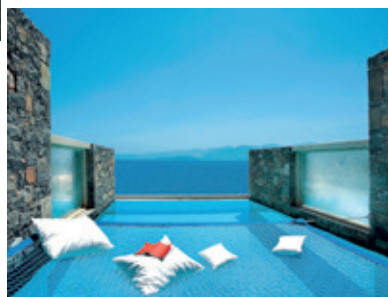
1 ELOUNDA PENINSULA, Crete, Greece

There's a rumour among the locals that Elounda's resorts like to keep their clientele within their four rather beautifully bougainvillea-clad walls. And when you're somewhere like Elounda Peninsula, enviably positioned with jaw-dropping views of the glittering Aegean just about everywhere you turn, and with a nine-hole golf course, Six Senses spa (always a massive bonus in our book), private beach and an impeccable kids' club (complete with pool and water slides), it would be easy to while away your time exclusively here, but it would be a mistake. Not because the all-suite hotel, designed in simple Cretan style (lots of wood, huge pots in corridors, textiles framed on walls with a large dose of naval influence), each with its own private pool, choice of ten restaurants and utterly charming staff (without exception pretty much), it's just that it's not really the real Crete. And while you might spot Charlize Theron, Lady Gaga and (while we were there) Lily Allen over your breakfast croissants, once you hit the open road you're more likely to be tucking into morning-caught fish, a big bowl of Greek salad and a local chilled white either with locals or travellers who want a bit more of an authentic experience. What you must do is take a boat trip to Spinalonga from nearby pretty Elounda town or Plaka, a few kilometres further along

the coast (both lovely spots for lunch or supper too with their proliferation of seaside restaurants). A perfect morning excursion, this former medieval fortress was also home to a leper colony from 1903 to 1957 and is the subject of Victoria Hislop's *The Island*. Children will love rambling along the ramparts and climbing up the rocky incline to the top with its amazing views. You can also walk to semi-deserted beaches with water as clear as gin (though go early before the party boats arrive) and drive the hairpin roads through Cretan villages where women in black sit outside on their porches under the shade to find tavernas with no menu, just the daily catch.

Kids will love it either way.

BOOK IT: Elegant Resorts offers seven nights from £8,930 per family, based on two adults and two children under 12 years, including flights with BA and transfers. elegantresorts.co.uk



2 MANDARIN ORIENTAL, *Bodrum, Turkey*

This is a hotel as high end, super smart resort. Polished and glamorous on the outside – with huge swathes of beaches, numerous lovely restaurants, a buzzy kids' club and giant bedrooms with views. Some have mini swimming pools out on a big veranda. While they don't get the sun all day, if you seek privacy be sure to bag two that interlink, because despite the incredible good looks, mothers need not panic; families are truly welcomed. The beaches and restaurants are properly bucket and spade kiddie friendly (chicken nuggets and ketchup galore) and your children will love a cupcake cookery lesson in the hotel kitchens with creations that end up looking worthy of a bakery. The spa is also lovely. A little bit Japanese, a little bit Balinese – lots of Bonsai trees, plenty of calming wood, mini teapots filled with fresh ginger tea – but it's the intuition of the therapists that truly brings it to life. They'll find those tired shoulders and bring them back to life. There's also a lovely indoor pool, a super swanky giant gym, steams, saunas and hydro pools. Honestly, what more could you want?

BOOK IT: Doubles from €625.
mandarinoriental.com/bodrum



TURKISH
DELIGHT



FRENCH
FANCY



3 CHÂTEAU LES CARASSES, *Languedoc, France*

This glorious 19th-century wine estate is a stroke of genius, cleverly mixing fabulous hotel facilities with the freedom of self-catering. Set among the glistening vineyards of the Languedoc, the 28 super spacious apartments and villas will make you weep with joy, made up of the original wine cellar, grape-pickers' lodgings, barns, blacksmith's house and gardener's cottage. There are studios but it's a family dream here, so pack up the little ones and book one of the four Maisons de la Cave, which sleep six. With distant views of the Pyrenees, it's all rustic chic with cream-licked walls, exposed beams and white muslin drapes plus your own private pool. There's a Smeg fridge, too, for piling with cheeses, charcuterie and other local delights. Alternatively, plump for the château's restaurant, serving modern Mediterranean cuisine complemented by the best regional wines. The massive garden is beyond lovely with ancient trees, olive groves and a pretty orangery, designed by Gustave Eiffel. Order a picnic and go for a long meander through the estate before flopping in the huge infinity pool. Further fun can be found on the tennis courts, in the kids' club or go all-out French and try your hand at a game of boules.

BOOK IT: Doubles from €219. lescarrasses.com

UK



4 THE GARDEN HOUSE, *Surrey*

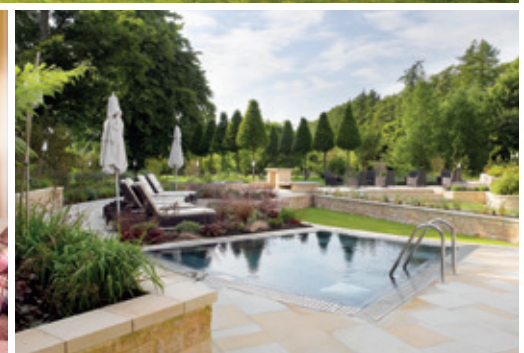
With woodland to ramble in, treehouses to play in and den-building and more with Sharky and George (literally little ones are whipped away for three hours, leaving you to kick back with the papers), children are brilliantly catered for at the Garden House, the 11-bedroomed first phase of the hotly anticipated opening of Beaverbrook, a new addition to the luxury country-house hotel market set amid 400 acres of privately owned Surrey countryside. While the grand main building (former home of media tycoon Lord Beaverbrook), which opens this month with a spa set to open later in the year, will appeal more to couples with its Susie Atkinson-designed interiors smacking of old-school glamour, the cute and cosy Garden House is the place to settle in with the kids. Wellie boots can be borrowed, board games played, babysitting arranged, brownie and cookie cooking lessons attended and, of course, there's plenty to explore out and about with horse riding, Bocketts Farm and the glorious Surrey Hills on the doorstep. And being just a 40-minute drive from the capital will no doubt ensure that the whole place becomes a weekend home from home for lucky Londoners and their tribe.

BOOK IT: Doubles from £280. beaverbrook.co.uk

5 LUCKNAM PARK, *Wiltshire*

Gorgeous, honey-coloured Lucknam Park near Bath pretty much has all bases covered when it comes to bringing the family along to stay. New this year though is The Hideaway, a beautiful cottage in the grounds of the hotel, which has been converted into a playhouse catering to children of all ages. From the sensory baby room and the fun-packed role-play to the messy play water wall and the games room for teens upstairs, there's plenty to keep them entertained, whatever the weather. While there is talk of introducing a childcare element in the future, at the moment it's stay and play... But who wouldn't want the chance to play Pat Sharp in your very own country cottage version of Fun House? All this alongside its swanky new relaunched ESPA spa (one of only three such in the UK) and excellent fine-dining options, there will be a chance for some me-time, too.

BOOK IT: From £650 per family per night. lucknampark.co.uk



6 MAYO LANDING, *Cotswolds*

This is like something out of a *Famous Five* novel. Your own little island in the middle of a 100-acre lake, reached by crossing a private bridge, where you'll find a wooden, two storey retreat to hunker down in with your gang (it sleeps 11). Sneak downstairs early in the morning for precious, peaceful moments looking out across the still water before everyone else wakes up. Then it's all action as youngsters go wild for kayaking and paddle-boarding, and spend hours exploring the nearby coves in the Irish rowing boat. For more laid-back downtime, there's a heated swimming pool, a private beach next to a sunken garden, a log sauna and a decked walkway that leads down to a steaming hot tub at the edge of the lake (exactly where you'll want to be as the moon rises). Rooms are cosy with Egyptian cotton linen on the beds, Aromatherapy Associates goodies in the bathroom and balconies with rocking chairs for playing board games or a snooze. There's a fully-equipped country kitchen and wood burner but if the weather holds, carry on the adventure outside with a BBQ supper, followed by a sing-song and toasted marshmallows around the crackling fire pit.

BOOK IT: From £1,125 (four nights mid-week).
loghouseholidays.co.uk



WATERSIDE ADVENTURE



VALLEY LIVING

7 REDFORD FARM BARNs, *Shropshire*

Hidden away in the folds of a Shropshire valley, the barns are the ultimate country getaway for families. Developed by interior design duo Jude and Rupert Hunt (creative director of Godrich Interiors), the two adjoining barns sleep four and nine respectively and ooze effortlessly stylish country living. Vintage mirrors hang on exposed brick, framed original Enid Blyton prints pop off Farrow and Ball walls, and upcycled furniture blends seamlessly with antiques from the nearby market town of Ludlow. 'The most beautiful town in England,' according to poet laureate John Betjeman, is a treasure trove of arts, crafts and independent food shops, so it's the perfect place to stock up on provisions. Yet the real USP is the access-all-areas approach to the family farm. Guests can help themselves from the veg patch and orchard, harvest fresh eggs from the chickens and run free (or roll) through the fields. There's an old caravan for kids to play in, converted stable with dart board, vintage toys and top hats hanging from the rafters, plus an outdoor kitchen for al fresco cook-ups. Stoke up the wood-burning stove and plan your very own move to the country.

BOOK IT: Three nights in Tenbury Cottage (sleeps four), from £549. redfordfarmbarns.co.uk

