

Travel

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'As dawn swallows the night, painting the sky pale orange, we head off to spot leopards'

Louise Roddon enjoys an adventure in Sri Lanka



2 A church in Oia, Santorini

50 best holidays in Greece

From chic hotels in Corfu to cycling breaks in Rhodes and ancient sites on the mainland, **James Ellis** knows where to go

Best for families

1 Family activities in the Peloponnese

Those with teenagers looking to let off steam should head to the Peloponnese for a family activity holiday, including white-water rafting on the Lousios River, sea kayaking around Kalamata and gorge walking through deep ravines. There's a free day to pack in a bit of history too, from the ancient stadiums at Olympia and Nemea, through learning about the fearsome warriors of Sparta. Accommodation is in three-star hotels in the towns of Tripoli and Nafplio.

Details Seven nights' B&B costs from £637pp (01273 823700, responsibletravel.com), including activities. Flights to Kalamata cost from £74.98 return (easyjet.com)

2 Island-hopping in the Cyclades

Give the children a first taste of Greek island-hopping with this superb nine-night family holiday covering Athens, Santorini and Mykonos. Accommodation is in typical whitewashed hotels on the two islands and four-star hotels in Athens, while additional activities can include trips on traditional fishing boats, with the chance to stop-off at remote, hidden coves and swims in hot springs.

Details Nine nights' B&B costs from £2,095 an adult, with children under 18 paying half-price. The price includes three dinners, some sightseeing and flights (0800 5335619, trafalgar.com)



Ekies All Senses Resort, Halkidiki

3 Kid-friendly Halkidiki

Get a traditional hotel-resort holiday with a touch of barefoot boho-chic styling at the lush Ekies All Senses Resort on secluded Vourvourou Bay on the leafy Sithonia peninsula.

The family suites feature rainfall showers, Nespresso machines and iPod docks. Children's offerings include everything from English-speaking babysitters to a kids' club, playgrounds and treehouses. There are five restaurants and an expansive spa.

Details B&B family suites (sleeping four) cost from £322 a night; certain dates have 20 per cent off seven-night stays (i-escape.com). Thessaloniki flights cost from £116 (ryanair.com) ▶



6 On the beach at Sani Resort, Halkidiki

4 Young archaeologists in the Peloponnese

Set against the rugged mountains of the south Peloponnese, the Westin Costa Navarino is already one of Greece's most family-friendly hotels thanks to SandCastle, an activity hub for kids aged 4 to 12. Activities include wakeboarding, go-karting, diving, sailing and cycling. This year they have added a Young Archaeologists programme that offers children the opportunity to discover the region's ancient Greek history. Airy family suites can sleep up to six people. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from £4,299 for a family of four, including flights (01306 747008, kuoni.co.uk)

5 All-inclusive on the Peloponnese

The family-friendly Greek chain Grecotel is refurbishing its Lakopetra Beach hotel on the Peloponnese for 2018. In April the hotel will reopen as Casa Marron, a new all-inclusive family resort with all-day restaurants, earth-toned suites and a range of sports facilities, set on a 20-acre beachfront property backed by pines and olive trees. **Details** All-inclusive doubles start at £150 a night (00 30 269 305 1713, grecotel.com)

6 Teenagers' club in Halkidiki

Sani Resort in Halkidiki, consisting of five hotels clustered around a marina, is a perennial family favourite. Much of this is down to its Mini Club and Babe Watch beach babysitting service that allows parents to take a refreshing

dip while the young ones are being looked after. The resort now also has a teenagers' club and activity centre and is working with Chelsea Football Club at its soccer school. Porto Sani is right by the marina in the centre of the resort. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from £1,190pp, including flights (0161 492 1357, carrier.co.uk)

7 Stay at an aqua park

Grecotel's Riviera Olympia Resort on the Peloponnese has a new mythology-themed aqua park. The park will be one of the biggest in Greece when it fully opens (it partly opened last summer), with more than 20,000 sq m of adrenaline-pumping water slides, rides and aqua towers. The resort is home to three hotels, including the all-inclusive Olympia Oasis, which also offers football camps and 11 restaurants. **Details** All-inclusive family bungalows start at £192 a night (00 30 269 305 1713, grecotel.com)

8 Top villas in Paxos

For a pair of families looking to go on holiday together Sea Breeze Villa, above the beach at Kioni Gouli on Paxos, is ideal. Featuring contemporary decor and a private pool, it is just steps from the beach and can sleep ten people in two interconnecting apartments, one with three bedrooms, the other with two. The beach has complimentary sunloungers and umbrellas, as well as a small café. **Details** Seven nights' self-catering costs from £531pp, including flights and car hire (020 8459 0777, ionianislandholidays.com)

15 Shipwreck Beach, Zakynthos



Best new hotels

9 Ikos Dassia, Corfu

Set over 89 acres of prime beachfront, Ikos Dassia will be the third property in the luxury brand Ikos's portfolio when it opens in May. The resort features contemporary rooms, suites and villas, and there are six restaurants, a private olive-fringed beach and dozens of activities, from cycling and yoga to Greek dancing. The innovative "Infinite Lifestyle" all-inclusive service includes a dine-out programme at local tavernas, as well as activities. And if you upgrade to the deluxe accommodation, you'll get free-flowing Taittinger champagne at no extra cost. **Details** Seven nights' all-inclusive costs from £825pp, including flights (0161 492 1357, carrier.co.uk)

10 MarBella Nido Suite Hotel & Villas, Corfu

Also opening in May, also on Corfu and also with a private beach, the MarBella Nido is a high-end, adults-only hotel in a pine forest outside the sleepy hamlet of Agios Ioannis Peristeron on the southeast coast. Communal areas have high ceilings, chequerboard floors and picture windows, and there are 70 chic rooms and suites with sea views. Suites also have private whirlpool tubs. **Details** B&B doubles from £135 a night (00 30 266 107 1123, marbellanido.gr)



9 Ikos Dassia hotel, Corfu

features 152 airy, contemporary suites alongside 71 private pools, five restaurants and a swathe of high-end amenities, including a helicopter landing pad, yacht hire and an Elemis spa. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from £674pp, including flights (travelocity.com)

15 Lesante Blu, Zakynthos

Zakynthos — or Zante — has long had a reputation as a party island, but those preconceptions are changing thanks to a slew of chic, new hotels, including this offering outside the resort of Tragaki. Opened last year, it's an adults-only, all-suite affair offering contemporary rooms, restaurants and a spa. Make time to explore the island, including a trip to the marvellous Shipwreck Beach. **Details** Seven nights' half-board costs from £1,096pp, including flights (01293 832459, sovereign.com)

16 Euphoria Retreat, the Peloponnese

Mystras is a 13th-century Byzantine town and Unesco world heritage site in the Peloponnese. Set against a backdrop of mountains, citrus groves and a private forest is the new Euphoria Retreat — a destination spa that opens in May and blends ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies and treatments. The resort consists of 45 contemporary rooms, some with hot tubs or hammams, as well as a four-level spa with a 25m well at its heart. **Details** Seven nights' full board costs from £2,950pp, with flights and spa programme (020 8968 0501, thehealthyholidaycompany.co.uk)

17 Bella Mare Hotel, Corfu

Avlaki Beach, to the northeast of Corfu, is an almost perfect crescent-shaped stretch of sand backed by lush forests. Nestled along its shoreline is the Bella Mare Hotel, new to Simpson Travel for 2018. Set in tranquil gardens, it consists of rooms and suites set over three pastel-coloured houses. Each room

has simple, classic decor, as well as a kitchenette. There's also a pool and a restaurant, plus two good independent tavernas near by. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from £982pp, including flights and car hire (020 8003 6557, simpsonstravel.com)

Best on a budget

18 Cephalonia for less

The Karteri Apartments, overlooking the pretty Venetian harbour of Fiskardo, are a great way to take in the island that was made famous in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* without paying a fortune. The small complex has seven apartments with a colourful rustic vibe, as well as a small shared plunge pool and great views. The village beach is just two minutes away, as are shops and tavernas. **Details** Seven nights' room-only costs from £512pp, including flights (020 8459 0777, ionianislandholidays.com)

19 Symi on a shoestring

Tiny Symi is home to Greece's prettiest port. Lined with pastel-coloured neoclassical mansions built from the wealth of sponge and spice merchants in the 19th century, it is considered a national monument and is a favourite stopping place for Italian and French yacht owners. Bask in that laid-back charm for just over £400 for a week with a stay at the Opera House, a fine hotel in a traditional house on a slope that accentuates the views. **Details** Seven nights' B&B costs from €433pp, including flights (020 8492 6868, olympicholidays.com)

20 Athens short break

A new direct service from Bristol to Athens opened in November thanks to Easyjet. Stay at the Divani Caravel Hotel, one of the city's best-known hotels, with grand views over the Acropolis or Lycabettus hill. Rooms have classic styling; there is a rooftop pool. **Details** Three nights' room-only costs from £269pp, including return flights (020 3499 5232, easyjet.com/holidays)

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19 Symi, Greece

11 Canaves Oia Epitome, Santorini

The family-run Canaves group opened its first hotel in 1985, transforming a pair of caves into a luxury place to stay and simultaneously putting the sleepy fishing village of Oia on the path to becoming one of Greece's most prized destinations. In May Epitome will become the group's fourth hotel when it opens by the beach in the nearby village of Armeni. Featuring 24 luxury villas with private plunge pools and butler service, it includes a bar/restaurant from which to enjoy Oia's famed sunsets. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £474.90 a night (00 30 228 607 1453, canaves.com)

system and buildings with sloped green roofs that minimise reflection and are said to improve the surrounding microclimate. The hotel will offer 226 rooms, eight restaurants, three outdoor pools and a host of sports courts. **Details** B&B doubles from £223 a night (00 30 224 402 9200, gennadiresort.com)

13 Kensho Boutique Hotel, Mykonos

Opened last summer, Kensho's addition to the Mykonos hotel scene has been a huge success. Guests are lured by great views over Ornos Bay, a chic take on typical Cycladic architecture with 35 rooms, many with private pools or hot tubs. **Details** Three nights' B&B, including flights, costs from £1,278pp (expedia.com)

14 Abaton Island Resort & Spa, Crete

Overlooking Malia Bay, but far enough from the crowds that visit Crete's clubbing capital, this new resort is due to open in April. It takes its design influences from Greek antiquities and

12 Gennadi Grand Resort, Rhodes

Gennadi Beach on the southeast coast of Rhodes is one of the island's best stretches of sand and one of its least crowded. That may change when this new resort launches in May. To date there are only artists' impressions to go by, but the owner, Lindos Hotel Group, promises five-star hospitality with a minimal carbon footprint. This is thanks to innovations such as a water purifying

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