

A woman with long dark hair is lying on a wooden lounge chair on a beach. She is wearing a patterned bikini with orange, white, and black designs. Her head is tilted back, and her eyes are closed, suggesting she is relaxing or sunbathing. The background shows a clear blue sky and a calm body of water.

Missing, presumed lost: the sun,
last seen over Britain some time
in May. But don't fret — **Rob Ryan**
knows where summer's hiding,
and how to get there

FEEL

airlines flying to Palma include BMI (0870 607 0555, www.flybmi.com); EasyJet (www.easyjet.co.uk); Flybe (0871 522 6100, www.flybe.com); Flyglobespan (0871 271 0415, www.flyglobespan.com); Jet2 (0871 226 1737, www.jet2.com) and Ryanair (0871 246 0000, www.ryanair.com).

FAMILY LIFE

Penha Longa, an estate hotel situated in Sintra, 16 miles from Lisbon, has an excellent and varied pay-as-you-go programme of children's activities (a full day with lunch costs £31), with cookery classes, football coaching and horse-grooming/riding as well as the usual pool games. Evenings bring movie and dinner packages for kids (£17). The hotel sits in 545 acres and there is a shuttle to the nearby beaches. It costs from £135 per room, B&B; one child aged up to 12 can share a room with two adults free of charge. Book through Ritz-Carlton (0800 234 000, www.ritzcarlton.com or www.penalhalonga.com). Flights are extra: Lisbon is served by BA (0870 850 9850, www.ba.com), TAP (0845 601 0932, www.flytap.com), Monarch (0870 040 5040, www.flymonarch.com) and EasyJet (www.easyjet.co.uk).

One of the worst things about taking children to smart hotels is the disapproving tuts of childless adults as your kids splash them with their dive-bombing. The cool and fashionable

Azia Resort & Spa in Paphos, Cyprus, ensures that such conflicts are few and far between with a subtle touch of apartheid. The Azia Blue wing was built with families in mind, meaning all rooms can be interconnecting. There is also a smart mini-club for 2- to 12-year-olds, a large children's pool and baby-sitting. Argo Holidays (0870 066 7070, www.argoholidays.com) has late-July packages from £880 per adult, £399 per child, B&B, with Gatwick flights and transfers. The hotel is currently offering free child places if you book direct: see www.aziaresort.com.

For active families who take their sport seriously, few places can compete with La Manga in Spain, which offers tennis, cricket, football, rugby and even karate coaching — you must book the appropriate academy beforehand, however. Seasons in Style (01244 202000, www.seasonsinstyle.com) has seven nights at Hyatt Regency La Manga from £925 per adult and £295 per child, B&B; kids under five eat free. BA flights from Gatwick are included, but sporting activities and coaching are extra.

If you're not bothered about being bang on the sea, then Le Marche's I Calanchi, an Italian country hotel built around a former agricultural estate, has a lot to offer. There's a clubhouse for music and games, huge grounds, an outdoor restaurant, and horse-riding and quad-biking

available locally. If you must have a beach, there is one at San Benedetto, 30 minutes away. A week in August with Real Holidays (020 7359 3938, www.realholidays.co.uk) costs £746pp, which includes Ryanair flights from Stansted to Ancona, a week's hire of a family-sized car, and half-board accommodation in two interconnecting double rooms (based on four sharing).

If all you're after is a pool, a decent beach and other families around, consider Sunvil Greece (020 8568 4499, www.sunvil.co.uk), which has seven nights, self-catering, at the spacious Afrodite Apartments, which have a good-sized pool, in the seaside village of Kalives on the northwest coast, from £483 per adult and £463 per child (aged 2-11), based on four sharing, including flights from Gatwick and transfers.

THE HIGH LIFE

What could be more luxurious than a skippered yacht? Dalmatian Destinations (020 7730 8007, www.dalmatiandestinations.com) has a 65ft boat available from July 21 to 28 and August 18 to 25, suitable for two families with children. You embark in Split and the recommended itinerary includes the islands of Brac, Vis and Hvar along the Dalmatian coast, as well as some lesser-known isles. There will be snorkelling, fishing with the captain, canoeing and kayaking. The

boat costs £7,920 a week on a full-board basis, including all drinks, local taxes and transfers (flights are extra; from £150pp). This is based on four adults and four children under 12 sharing four double cabins, all with ensuite bathrooms, and includes a 50% reduction on all the children's food and drinks.

The vast Kempinski Resort Bahia Estepona, Spain, is one of the glitziest on the Costa del Sol, more Krizia than karaoke, with a long beach and excellent pools and gardens. There's also a kids' club, a wellness centre and three restaurants. ITC Classics (01244 355527, www.itcclassics.co.uk) has seven nights, B&B, from £1,185 per person, with BA flights from Gatwick.

At the top end of family house rentals, Scott Dunn (020 8682 5080, www.scottdunn.com) offers Quinta da Varzea in the Algarve, Portugal: a fully staffed luxury villa that sleeps 14. Ten minutes from the beach, it has a tennis court, infinity pool, and a large playroom with plasma TV. It comes with a private chef, villa host and two nannies/activity specialists, plus all meals on five days of the week. It's available for the weeks beginning August 1 and 8, at £10,950 per week, a saving of £4,500. Flights are extra: fly to Faro with TAP (0845 601 0932, www.flytap.com), BA (0870 850 9850, www.ba.com) or Monarch (0870 040 5040, www.flymonarch.com).

THE HEAT

