

TRAVEL

■ Gran Hotel Bahia del Duque Resort



late breaks

► SAVE 25% and receive an upgrade to half board on five star family Tenerife holiday.

Sovereign Luxury Travel (0843 770 4526, www.sovereign.com) has a seven night Tenerife holiday for a family of three with a saving of £853. Departing September 15, the holiday costs from £2,389 and includes a free night, a complimentary upgrade to half board, return flights from Birmingham with Thomson, airport lounge access, private transfers and seven nights at the five star Gran Hotel Bahia del Duque Resort.

► THOMSON has seven night family holidays to Ibiza staying at the 4T Thomson Family Resort Hotel Presidente on a half board basis, from £414 per person, (saving £140 per person).

Price is based on a family of four sharing, and includes flights departing from Manchester airport on September 13 and transfers. To find out more about this holiday or to book visit your local Thomson travel shop, thomson.co.uk or call 0871 230 2555.

■ Sydney



► TAKE in Sydney and the Great Barrier Reef for less than £1,000.

Austravel (0800 988 4834, www.austravel.com) is offering a seven-day Sydney and Reef holiday from just £995 per person with a saving of £235 per couple. The holiday includes three nights at the Mercure Sydney, four nights at the Blue Lagoon, Trinity Beach and return flights from London Heathrow with British Airways, based on selected departures November 2013.



This is the life!

YOU may not know the name but there's a chance you'll recognise the place.

The family-friendly Luabay Costa Los Gigantes hotel in Tenerife is the location for a long-running TV ad by all-inclusive specialist First Choice.

Featuring the Flo Rida track Good Feeling, the minute-long promo aims to sell the "feelgood" factor you get when going all-inclusive.

A family goes from home to plane to hotel in a dream-like celebration amid much high-fiving and cheering from friends, fellow customers and First Choice staff.

Having spent a week at the Luabay Costa Los Gigantes with my wife and two-year-old daughter, I can see why it was chosen to illustrate all that's good about the holiday company.

Located on the fringes of the dramatic Los Gigantes cliffs, the hotel has been rated as "excellent or good" by 96% of First Choice guests.

Every one of its 500 rooms is a spacious suite with a twin/double bedroom and living area with sofa bed, plus a balcony or terrace with sea views (some of them better than others).

The view from our balcony was almost identical to the closing scene in the TV ad – across a pool to the neighbouring island of La Gomera.

All the suites have two satellite

TVs, a safe and a minibar which is refilled every couple of days with two Cokes, two beers and bottled water.

The sprawling hotel complex boasts three heated pools (one of them with a water slide) plus two paddling pools and there is a daily activities programme.

Guests are able to help

themselves to beer, sangria, wine, pop and tubs of ice cream at the poolside bars, one of which also serves up late breakfasts, hot lunches and snacks.

There are two more pools in the impressive spa and beauty centre, the larger of which features several "stations" for neck and back massages.

TENERIFE TOP FIVE

1 MOUNT TEIDE

THE one million-year-old volcano is the third largest in the world and at 12,000ft is Spain's highest peak. You can walk through the lunar-like lava fields to the summit or cheat and catch the cable car.

2 SIAM PARK, PLAYA DE LAS AMERICAS

ONE of the biggest waterparks in Europe, it's bursting with exciting slides, lazy rivers and beaches, with a Far East theme. One vertical slide takes you through a shark-filled aquarium.

3 LORO PARQUE, PUERTO DE LA CRUZ

ORIGINALLY a parrot park (there are still 1,400 of them) the tropical

gardens are now home to gorillas, tigers, giant tortoises, an acclaimed Orca whale show and the largest population of penguins outside Antarctica.

4 PYRAMIDS OF GUIMAR

THESE three mysterious, six-stepped stone structures are more Mayan than Spanish yet they were built before the Americas were even on the map.

5 LA GOMERA

TENERIFE'S nearest neighbour, this unspoilt island boasts a UNESCO-protected national park, an historic capital city and jaw-dropping views of Mount Teide.

I found the smaller, saltwater flotation pool wonderfully relaxing, especially as I was the only one in there and could lay back, eyes closed, without fear of bumping into anyone.

Less relaxing was the "bucket speciality shower" which involved the automatic filling of a bucket with ice cold water which was then emptied over my head.

Takes all sorts, I suppose.

Sporty guests can choose from tennis, table tennis, football, tenpin bowling and a gym where you can scan the ocean for dolphins while pounding a treadmill.

If children get bored of the pools there's a playground, a soft play area, a cinema, a games room and a kids' club.

Adults and children can also challenge themselves on the new high ropes course. It's no Go Ape but it was still too scary-looking for me.

I cowardly claimed it wasn't for someone who had scrimped on his family's travel insurance (a bargain £9 with Virgin, not including lost luggage cover!).

Evening entertainment was family-focused and during our stay included mini-discos, a parrot show, a birds of prey display and scaled down musicals.

But the star of the show was always Luby, the sun-faced Luabay mascot, who was hounded within an

► About five times more people visit Tenerife every year than there are people living there

CRETE GETAWAY

▶ ENJOY seven nights in Crete from £509 per person, based on two adults sharing, saving of £104 per booking. Stay at the 4-sun Vasia Beach & Spa in Sissi on an all-inclusive basis, flying from Manchester September 17. www.thomascook.com, 0844 412 5970 or visit a Thomas Cook or Co-operative Travel.



NEED TO KNOW

- ▶ ■ **ADRIAN CAFFERY** was a guest of First Choice at the Luabay Costa Los Gigantes hotel in Tenerife.
- **THE** hotel is a 40-minute private transfer from the airport. A seven-night, all inclusive, winter sun break in November, based on two adults sharing, costs from £499 per person. Visit www.firstchoice.co.uk for details.
- **FOR** general tourism advice go to www.turismodecanarias.com



■ Main picture: The view from Adrian Caffery's room at the Costa Los Gigantes. Above: Two scenes from the First Choice TV ad. Top: Cerys Caffery meets Luby.

inch of his life by hordes of screaming children every night.

Breakfasts, lunches and dinners were a daily delight but there was always so much choice that I spent an eternity deciding which dishes to try.

The solution was to have a little of everything then go back for some more.

Yes, my belly was experiencing the feelgood factor of going all-inclusive three times a day.

There was a no shorts rule at

lunch but this was largely ignored, and rightly so.

Speaking of rules, it was also forbidden to leave towels on sunbeds, yet most of the prime poolside positions were taken before breakfast.

Yes, the hotel was popular with German holidaymakers, but I have to admit that the main culprits appeared to be British.

Oh, the shame of it.

Having said that, even though the hotel was full during our stay there

were still plenty of sunbeds to choose from.

The nearest beach is in the small town of Playa de la Arena, just a five-minute walk from the hotel's gates, although the return journey takes 10 minutes because it's a pretty steep hill. Made of black volcanic sand, the beach is small – Usain Bolt could probably run its width in less than 20 seconds – and shelves steeply which makes for some dramatic, crashing waves.

The promenade features a variety

of shops and bars, including, inevitably, one called Paddy's – the obligatory Irish theme pub.

But I wasn't tempted to pull up a stool and sup a Guinness. Not when there was free booze back at the hotel.

Sadly, just when we were getting used to indulging ourselves, it was time to leave the Luabay Costa Los Gigantes.

But what a great week. And I've a good feeling you'll enjoy going all-inclusive there, too.



Get lost in Austen

▶ LEARN how to dance, sew, bathe, dress and eat Jane Austen-style in the annual festival taking place in the 18th-century city of Bath from September 13-21.

The Jane Austen Festival (www.janeausten.co.uk/festivalhome) celebrates the author's writing, her life in Bath and all things Regency. It features a packed programme of events including a grand costumed promenade through the city's elegant streets and squares by around 600 suitably-attired members of the public on Saturday, September 14. You can join them while staying in the heart of the city at the Georgian townhouse Abbey Hotel, above, (01225-461603; www.abbeyhotelbath.co.uk) which is offering two nights' B&B, with dinner one night, a two-hour session "taking the waters" at the nearby Thermae Spa and a specially-created Mr D'Arcy cocktail for £195 per person (based on two sharing a standard room).

▶ SAVE over 50% on this Latedeals.co.uk sizzler.

Take some time out and enjoy a week's holiday at the family-friendly Aparthotel Bonaire in Cala Bona for just £287pp.

Price includes return flights from Manchester on October 22. See late.deals.co.uk or call 0800 027 8302.

