

**Q** My wife and I once went on a hiking tour of southern Italy, which we both really enjoyed. Since having children we haven't been able to pursue this kind of holiday; however, now our offspring are a little older, we were wondering if there are any walking tours for families? They are aged six and nine and are pretty energetic and affable so group trips aren't out of the question. We would be interested in any European destinations that aren't overly hot during summer. Can you help?

*D Glover, via e-mail*

**A** The hiking needn't stop now that you are a family of four – it's time to put your walking boots back on. Many travel companies that specialise in walking holidays are now opening up to families and putting together programmes suitable for both adults and children as well as hardened hikers.

The point-to-point formula (where turning back is not an option) is not recommended unless you have a couple of budding Sherpas for children. For families with younger children, a less demanding option is a centre-based holiday, where you are stationed at a base from which to do out-and-back walks. However, if your children are energetic, a trip that combines both types of walk might be the best option. Often backup, in the form of the four-legged variety (donkeys), or vehicles, is included.

If you prefer not to walk with a group, Upland Escapes (01367 851111; [www.uplandescapes.com](http://www.uplandescapes.com)) offers independent walking holidays. For reasonable temperatures and fresh mountain air, its package to the Julian Alps in Slovenia is ideal. Families can travel whenever they like. You can fly to Ljubljana on easyJet (0905 821 0905; [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) from Stansted, on Wizz Air (00 48 223 519 499; [www.wizzair.com](http://www.wizzair.com)) four times a week from Luton and from Birmingham, Manchester and Gatwick on Adria Airways (00 386 1 369 1010; [www.adria-airways.com](http://www.adria-airways.com)).

Upland Escapes provides a hire car from the airport so you can make your way to your hotel in the traditional village of Kosec on the edge of the Triglav National Park; it is approximately a two-hour drive away. This little-known

corner of the Julian Alps is where Italy and Austria meet Slovenia, combining spectacular mountain scenery, history and gastronomy from each country. Waiting for you on site is a handbook of walks and suggestions of other activities to do in the area from fishing, white-water rafting, canyoning, canoeing and swimming in the stunning ice-water Soca river to local farmers' markets.

An Upland Escapes manager based in the village will help plan your stay and is on call 24 hours a day. Three escorted walks are included in the price; with more than 20 to choose from, there is something to suit all ages and interests. These include a one-hour walk down to the town of Tolmin, crossing ravines on suspension bridges and visiting the cave that supposedly inspired Dante's vision of hell.

For a full day out, leave the car behind and take a train through the mountains to Lake Bohinj, Slovenia's largest lake, fringed by the Julian Alps. Once there you can take

a boat trip across the lake or cool off in the water before returning to the village. With children in mind, Upland Escapes has devised a treasure hunt for young walkers enabling them to find out about the local community in and around the hamlet of Kosec, including such questions as which fruit and vegetables they grow, the language they speak, and so on. All the ingredients are certainly there for a healthy and stimulating family holiday.

A week's holiday for a family of four travelling in July costs £2,152 (children pay 75 per cent of the standard price of £615 per person). This includes car hire, B&B accommodation, three escorted walks, packed lunches and the services of the Upland's manager, but not flights.

*Send your family travel queries to The Independent Parent, Travel Desk, The Independent, 191 Marsh Wall, London E14 9RS or e-mail [crusoe@independent.co.uk](mailto:crusoe@independent.co.uk)*