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# travel

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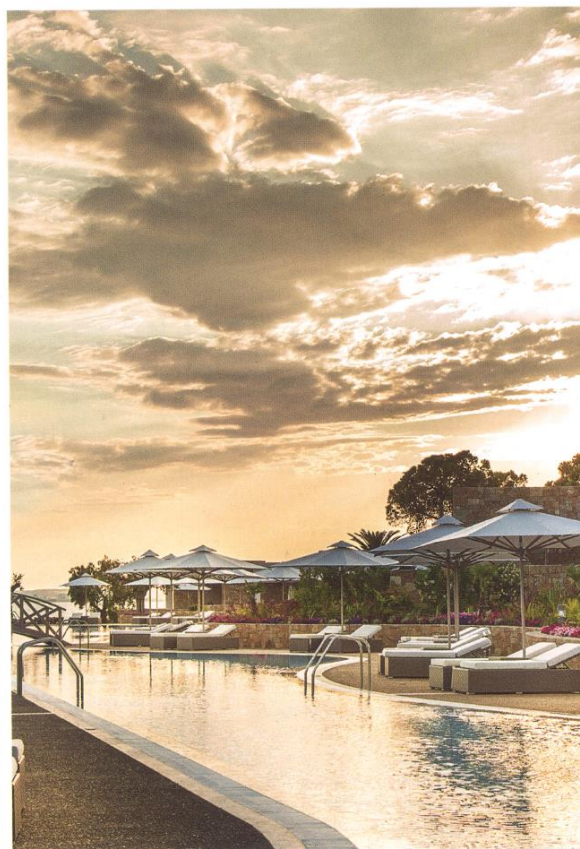


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ALL-INCLUSIVES  
WITH SOUL

# Six of the best

Banish notions of bloaty buffets, diluted cocktails and enforced entertainment. Instead think heaven — with no hidden charges



## 1 Ikos Olivia, Greece The family-focused one

**Why's it soulful?** Perched on the glittering Aegean seafront between the second and third fingers of the Halkidiki peninsula, Ikos Olivia is a rare thing: a family-focused all-inclusive that doesn't feel like a school playground. Sure, kids are kept busy with football games and beachside *crèche* sessions, but solitude often pervades in the whitewashed restaurants, the sandy beach isn't over-crowded, and shore-facing villas are spacious. Overall, it's more 'pampering' than Pampers.

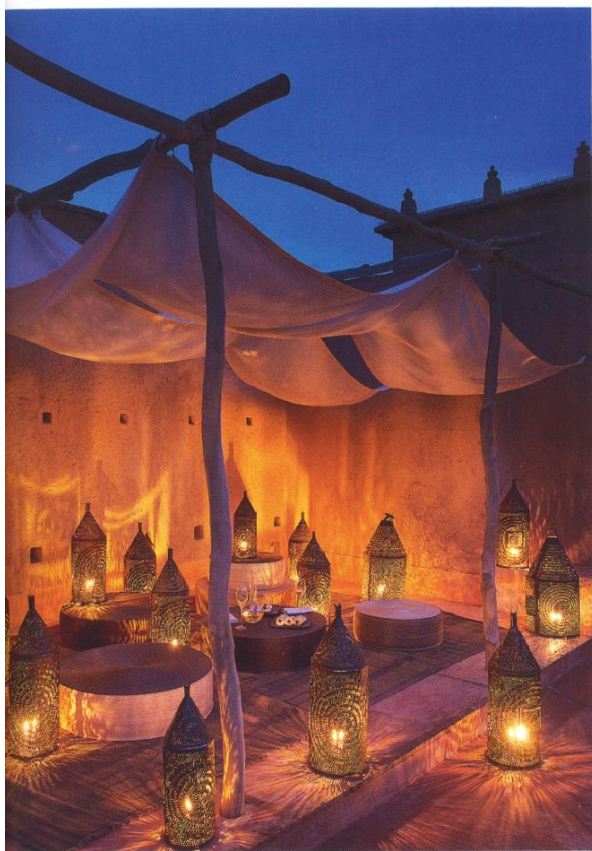
**What's there to do?** Shaded by olive trees, Ikos Olivia is the perfect size for little 'uns — small enough that they won't get lost, big enough that they won't get bored. Older kids can hang around the sports centre, borrowing bikes

or playing table tennis, or hit the beach for paddleboards. Grown-ups are free to down cocktails at poolside bars, eat tender octopus from Michelin-chef-designed menus (paired with any one of the 300-or-so wines included). Attentive lounge service lets you *really* relax — there's even a man who comes by to polish your sunglasses.

**Travel's tip:** Itchy feet? There are daily excursions for £9pp, and a resort deal with the local restaurants means you can eat dinner off-site at no extra charge.

**Get me there:** Classic Collection Holidays ([classic-collection.co.uk](http://classic-collection.co.uk)) has a week for two adults and two children from £3,665, with Gatwick flights and transfers.





## 2 Dar Ahlam, Morocco

The exotic one

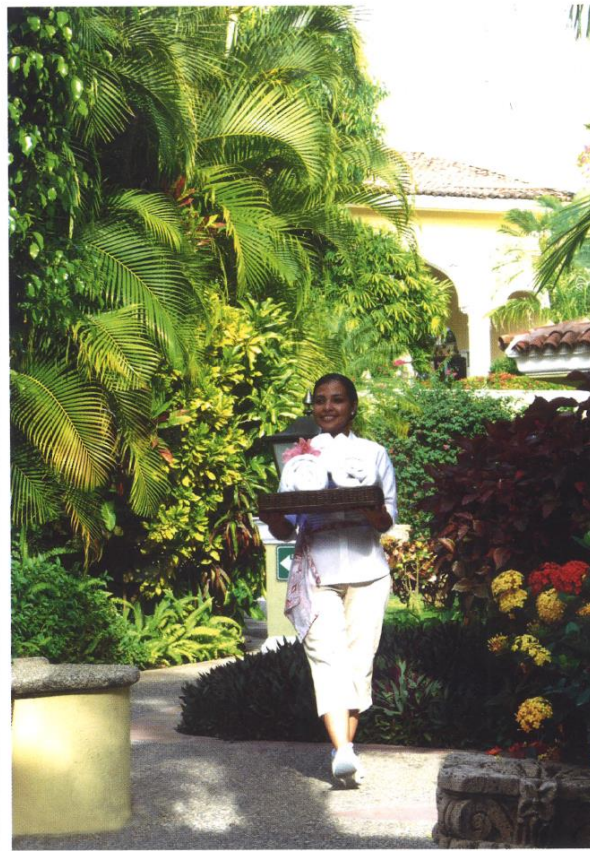
**Why's it soulful?** Life at this romantic old *kasbah* feels fully off-grid. Set in an oasis wedged between the Sahara and the Atlas Mountains, Dar Ahlam's earthy rooms (all clay-hued walls, floaty linens, no TVs) and date-palm-lined pool create the perfect setting for a screen-free unwind.

**What's there to do?** Plenty, not that you'll have to worry about it — staff curate your itinerary, so activities and meals are a surprise. Show up in the lounge when you want to eat (they won't bat an eyelid at a 1pm breakfast), and you'll be led to the garden or a sunny terrace to find a table laid and waiting. Later, the concierge will fetch you for your evening outing. The moment your dune-buggy reaches a barren hilltop —

revealing a butler and a picnic to devour as you savour the desert sunset — you'll realise that, even if you'd wanted to, you couldn't have planned this better yourself.

**Travel's tip:** The drive from Marrakech is spectacular, but the hairpin turns and barrier-free canyon drops make it pretty nerve-racking if you're at the wheel. So get a driver: the hotel will fix you a private transfer (£219 each way); independent, pre-booked taxis will cost around a third less.

**Get me there:** Scott Dunn ([scottdunn.com](http://scottdunn.com)) has 10 nights in Morocco, with three all-inclusive at Dar Ahlam, from £6,600pp, including Gatwick flights. Or for weekend breaks, book direct, from £408pp per night ([darahlam.com](http://darahlam.com)).



## 3 Casa Velas, Mexico

The adults-only one

**Why's it soulful?** On Mexico's Pacific coast, Puerto Vallarta is *mucho* pretty, but also *mucho* popular. That means giant all-inclusives of 500 rooms or more thrive here and dominate parts of the beach. Not so Casa Velas, with its spot in the leafy Marina Vallarta neighbourhood (where Mexico's pop stars have second homes). Peacocks strut about the botanic gardens and fellow guests are well-travelled Latin Americans. No kids allowed either, so it's quiet.

**What's there to do?** Imagine a five-star boutique hotel rather than an all-in high-rise. There are spa therapists at check-in to give chair massages, suites come with private pools or Jacuzzis, and your wristband is a stylish locally

handwoven number you'll want to take home with you. Unlimited golf on the 18-hole course is included, as are meals at every restaurant (even Emiliano's for gourmet Mexican) and Margaritas at the poolside Aqua Bar. Room service incurs no extra cost, either. It's also the only all-inclusive we know that offers a free designer-hanbag rental service.

**Travel's tip:** Casa Velas is not on the seafront, but there's a frequent free shuttle (often a fancy car or minibus) that takes you to the beach — with private sunbeds, free restaurant, free bar and infinity pool — in a few minutes.

**Get me there:** Expedia ([expedia.co.uk](http://expedia.co.uk)) has a week from £1,383pp, including flights from Gatwick. ➤