



11 Fantastic Family Travel Adventures

Amazing Family Vacations Will Leave Your Children Screaming for More

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When you hear about family vacations, the first thing that often comes to mind are kids screaming, "Are we there yet?" But with these [incredible trips](#), don't expect to hear any complaints or moments of boredom. From jungles to mountains to the high seas, we have scoured the earth for 11 fantastic family adventures.

[Winter](#) might be just around the corner but, hey, it's never too early to be thinking of your summer getaway -- many of these specialty trips have limited numbers and fill up months in advance.

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We start off with plenty of wildlife on our first family adventure:

A Kenyan Safari. For the family that loves nature, this is a must-see destination. The trip includes visits with local Maasai and Samburu tribes and opportunities to swim, ride camels or go on a treasure hunt at your lodge. And, of course, it includes some of the finest wildlife viewing in Africa, with abundant lion, elephant, zebra, giraffe and species unique to the region.

Travelers on this [Abercrombie & Kent trip](#) also get to visit a sanctuary for orphaned chimpanzees and black rhinos and see baby elephants at Daphne Sheldrick's Baby Elephant Orphanage. There is also a stop at a giraffe center.

The trip includes a lesson in the art of Maasai beadwork and leatherwork at tribal workshops and walking tours with game scouts who help look for lions, elephants and the endangered African wild dog.

The 11-day trip starts at \$5,825 a person with children under 12 sharing accommodations with two adults, \$4,395 extra, per child.



Amazon Jungle Adventure: The most biologically diverse wildlife on earth is sure to spark children's innate curiosity about the wonders of the natural world. During International Expeditions' [10-day Amazon Voyage](#) aboard a 28-guest riverboat, aspiring naturalists can view more than 100 kinds of birds, pink river dolphins, eight species of monkeys, sloths and endangered giant river otters.

The tour starts in Iquitos, Peru, the world's furthest inland seaport. Then the boat travels upstream along the Amazon's tributaries, going deep into the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve, the largest wetland reserve in the world.

Families will have the rare chance to get acquainted with the native residents when they visit a local schoolhouse. They can bring along and give out school supplies to the village kids and join a game of soccer.

A rain forest canopy walk and an afternoon excursion through lush gardens to learn about medicinal plants are among many highlights.

Prices start at \$3,148 per person.



Rafting Utah's Majestic Canyons: Once a refuge for outlaws, a trapper's hunting ground and home to ancient tribes, the canyons along Utah's Green River are now a family playground of roller coaster rapids. Raft through Class II and III rapids. At one point in the trip, the canyon walls tower more than 5,000 feet from river to canyon rim, deeper than the Grand Canyon.

When off the river, the guides on this [Abercrombie & Kent trip](#) will set up a lavish camp on the river's sandy beaches. The tents are big enough to stand in. Enjoy a cool beverage on the riverbank in comfortable camp chairs. At sunset, dine on a delicious dinner prepared by your river chefs and served on linen-clad tables.

There will also be time to discover 1,000-year-old petroglyphs and explore places where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid hid out. At night, gather for a marshmallow roast over open-fire storytelling sessions.

The trip is limited to 20 passengers and the minimum age is 5. The six-day trip starts at \$2,170 per person.

Best Family Vacations



Swimming With the Whales: The Canadian province of Manitoba is one of the best places in the world to see large congregations of beluga whales, with more than 3,000 belugas following the tides making the return journey from Hudson Bay to the river every few hours in the summer.

They swim right up to tour boats, beside, beneath and around the boats & it's the ideal family experience, and allows family members of all ages to get in on the activity.

When the whales show up in July and August in Churchill, travelers 12 and older can snorkel and kayak with the famous happy beluga babies through [Sea North Tours](#). Everybody else can watch from the boat.

Three- to 12-year-old kids will marvel at the beluga chirps from the underwater hydrophone on the boat and at seeing the white backs of the whales surfacing again and again. And a walk on the beach offers the possibility of seeing our other famous white animal, the polar bear.

The cruise costs \$90, kayaking is \$120 and snorkeling is \$170.



Roman Gladiator School: Abercrombie & Kent offers the chance to learn ancient gladiator skills as part of its nine-day [Italian Adventure](#) trip.

One morning while in Rome, the trip stops by the Colosseum, originally home to many public spectacles that included gladiator fights and chariot races. After lunch, travelers take part in an exclusive training with Roman "gladiators."

After a brief introduction to the history and world of gladiators, participants are given a tunic, belt and a wooden sword to learn the basic techniques of gladiatorial sword fighting. After the group has mastered this, try on the heavier gladiator armor used in Roman times. The session ends with a gladiatorial tournament between the participants using rubber swords: The winner of the tournament receives a prize and all the participants get a certificate.

After working up an appetite, that night's dinner is at a pizzeria, including a hands-on pizza-making demonstration. (Earlier on during this trip, there is a lesson in gelato-making in Florence.)

The trip starts at \$6,540 per person.



Mongolian Nomadic Expedition: Adventurers both young and old can savor the fascinating culture of Mongolia on this trip from [Nomadic Expeditions](#). Experience the thrill of riding camels over massive sand dunes, explore mountain forests on horseback, discover legendary dinosaur fossil sites and visit nomadic families who herd sheep, goats, camels and reindeer.

Trips take families from the meadows and pine-forested mountains of the Central Mongolian countryside to the dramatic landscapes of the legendary Gobi Desert.

There is plenty of time for hiking, kayaking and horseback riding. Central Mongolia's nature preserves are a great place for spotting wildlife, including the world's last wild horses, while dinosaur lovers are sure to appreciate a visit to the Gobi Desert's legendary fossil sites and the dinosaur hall of the capital's natural history museum.

The tours run 10 to 12 days and are adjusted and customized to fit a variety of schedules, group sizes and interests. They run from May through October and cost \$238 a day for children, \$289 a day for adults.

Amazing Adventures



Diving to Blackbeard's Ship: Touted as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," [North Carolina's Southern Outer Banks](#) offers families a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to dive to Blackbeard's infamous Queen Anne's Revenge site. A recently implemented program allows 1,500 recreational divers over the course of five years, from 2006 to 2010, to view the remains of the Queen Anne's Revenge.

As the legendary tale goes, Blackbeard decided to ground the ship in 1718 and leave with a select few of his crew. Since its discovery, the underwater shipwreck has been off-limits to everyone except archaeologists and state officials in order to protect the integrity of the site.

If you are into pirates but not the water, consider the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, home to artifacts recovered from ships as well as hundreds of other items relating to the state's strong link to the sea.



Learn to Sail: There is nothing quite like escaping to the high seas for some quality family time. But before you set sail, you might want to learn the ins and outs of the boating world. Enter [Offshore Sailing School](#), which offers a five-day learn to sail course.

Mornings are spent in the classroom and out on the water learning sailing terminology, maneuvers and how to read the wind. Afternoons are left free for families to enjoy the beach, swimming, spas and local shopping. Students learn enough in the class to test for U.S. Sailing certification and, on your last day, you and your classmates chart a course and sail on your own, without your instructor aboard.

The class can also be done in three days, making for a more intense experience.

Classes are offered at three Florida locations -- South Seas Island Resort on Captiva Island; Pink Shell Beach Resort & Spa in Ft. Myers and Mansion House Bed & Breakfast in St. Petersburg -- year round. There are also seasonal classes at New York's Chelsea Piers, Liberty Landing in Jersey City, N.J., the Inn at Perry Cabin in St. Michaels, Md., and in Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

Resort sailing packages start at \$1,195 per person, double occupancy for the three-day lowest season classes in Florida. Through December, when two adults pay tuition, up to four kids sail for free.



Kids Treated Like Royalty: In Lausanne, Switzerland, the lakeside [Beau-Rivage Palace](#) hotel offers a "Kids are Kings" program. It starts at check-in when children are presented with a shopping bag with age-appropriate contents.

Children 3 through 11 are invited to participate in a treasure hunt where the clues take them throughout the hotel by following pictures and obtaining stickers as they progress. Once the board is completed, a surprise gift awaits children at the front desk.

For children 6 through 16, two different opportunities await. A one-hour children's cooking lesson is given by the hotel's pastry chef, with children participating in the making of cookies and cakes that are delivered to their rooms. And a one-hour, flower-arranging class is conducted by one of the hotel's three on-staff florists, culminating in the children presenting their creation to mom and dad.

Great Vacation Ideas



Lewis & Clark Montana Adventure: Why not add a little bit of history to your outdoor adventure? [Abercrombie & Kent offers an eight-day trip](#) that mirrors part of the legendary explorers' voyage.

This journey blends U.S. history, Native American culture and outdoor activity.

Explore Glacier National Park, then travel the Missouri River with your family on 34-foot canoes that replicate those used by the early explorers.

Journey into Blackfeet country and overnight in a tipi. (Don't worry, it's not quite roughing it. The tipis come with a fire pit in the center and off-the-ground cots, sleeping bags and pillows.)

Each trip is limited to 18 travelers with a minimum age set at 5.

Stops along the trip include: the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Museum of the Plains Indians and a traditional Blackfeet feast where families can sample local game, including buffalo and elk.

The trip starts at \$3,395 per person.



High Tech Treasure Hunt: Why just sit on the beach relaxing when you can get your kids off on an adventure. The [Ojai Valley Inn & Spa](#) in southern California offers children the chance to go on a treasure hunt.

But this isn't just any kind of old treasure hunt. This is geocaching, a kind of high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching can be enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment.

If this isn't quite right for you, no fears: The resort's children's program offers plenty of different options, including a history hike, bug and crazy critters hunts, arts programs and, of course, tennis and swimming.

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