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# Are We There Yet? A Family Travel Guide

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# Are We There Yet? A Family Travel Guide

## Getting There: Making the Journey More Enjoyable

Family vacations are one of the best ways to make memories that will last you and your kids for a lifetime. But no matter how long you are staying at your chosen destination, when traveling with children the longest part of the trip can be your journey there.

Long rides in a car or airplane can seem endless for young kids who can not wait to get to their vacation destination. It can also seem endless for parents who have to listen to choruses of the infamous line, "Are we there yet?" However, by keeping in mind a few kid friendly travel tips, parents can make the travel time fly by for their kids and themselves.

For kids, going away on a family vacation can be the highlight of their summer. No wonder they can be restless when the moment finally arrives and they are on their way to the beach, theme park or other destination. It is a given that children will be excited about getting to their vacation spot, but parents can make the trip seem shorter by preparing a variety of games and activities to keep their children occupied and keep their minds off of the journey.

For long car rides there are a number of games that can make the time fly by. Children typically get tired of playing the same games they play day after day, so why not spice things up by offering them games that are made for long car trips. One of these games involves finding the letters of the alphabet on road signs. For example, if you pass by a sign that reads "Albert's Chicken Restaurant" the letters A, B, and C are found. When you pass by the next sign, look for D. If there are two kids in the backseat make it a competition by only allowing them to use signs on their side of the road. Another car game for long trips on Interstate highways is the license plate game, where your children try to find cars with license plates from different states – see if they can find all fifty!

When kids get restless on car rides it can wear on a parent's patience. But when young children get restless on airplane rides, it can irritate an entire jet full of passengers. For every parent planning to fly with young children, particularly infants and toddlers, it is their worst nightmare to be the person walking up and down the plane aisle with a screaming baby. Flying on a large airliner for the first time can be intimidating for young children. And for babies who do not understand what is happening, the sensations of taking off and landing can cause distress. Like car rides, keeping kids entertained on airplanes is key. Activities on planes are somewhat easier since the ride is generally smoother and kids have the use of the pop-down trays to use as a table top for activities such as drawing or coloring.

Perhaps one of the most sensible but often overlooked tips is to provide your kids with a few new activities rather than bringing toys or games they have played with or used countless times already. Purchase a few new books, coloring books, or travel games. The novelty of the new items will keep kids occupied longer than their old toys will. When traveling with children too young to keep occupied with toys, your best bet is to keep them comfortable. Make sure your baby does not take a nap right before the flight; this will lessen the chance that he or she will sleep during the plane ride. Small babies should be given bottles while the plane is taking off. Feeding them during take-off usually prevents your baby's ears from popping. It is best to avoid your baby's ears popping as this will cause the baby discomfort and an unfamiliar feeling.

Parents will find that the key to traveling with children is to always have something ready to counter an, "Are we there yet?" It is the best bet to avoid arguments on long family car trips. A game, puzzle, coloring activity or book will provide a good chunk of time where parents can sit back, relax and enjoy the ride.

### **Tips on Traveling with the Whole Family**

When traveling, most would not agree with 'the more, the merrier'. But it can be! Well, it should be. Traveling with the family can be hassle-free and loaded with fun. There is no reason you shouldn't bring the kids and the entire family with you. Here are a few tips you can use for an easy, stress-free travel.

#### **Plan with the entire family**

Get each family member's opinion on which places to go. Kids love it when they get involved. Make a short list of the places they want to visit and get the majority's preference. Plan simple yet fun activities for the whole family to enjoy.

#### **Distribute tasks**

Help each other especially when packing. Give each one a responsibility. You can have your kids check on the first-aid kit, your husband to bring all bulky equipments and you take charge preparing the food. This way, your load can be lessened and everyone would feel the importance of each one's contribution.

#### **Travel light**

Since most of the space of your car would be for people, pack only the essential things you need. If possible you can hire strollers for the kids instead of carrying one. Transfer shampoos, mouthwash and the like in small plastic containers instead of bringing the entire thing. Remember that traveling light doesn't mean traveling incomplete. Carry all important stuff you need to bring.

#### **Secure your house**

Since all of your family members are with you on the trip, you can opt to hire a house sitter. If not, have a neighbor look out for the house for you. Unplug all electrical

appliances and be sure to secure all door and windows.

### **Be safe**

Always carry with you a medicine kit for emergencies. This should include aspirins, laxative, insect repellent, bandages, ointments and alcohol. More importantly, bring enough prescription drugs if any of the family members is on medication. Bring enough to last for the entire duration of the trip.

### **Bring in the fun**

Take pictures and videos to document your trip. Take turns in using the camera, this way everyone will get a memorable shot taken. You can take the pictures and put them in a nice travel journal when you get home. This way you can enjoy the fun memories as often as you want.

Remember that the entire objective of a family trip is to have fun. Follow the quick tips above and you can head your way to an enjoyable travel.

## **How To Really Enjoy Traveling with Your Kids**

### **Traveling with children tips**

Traveling with your children can sometimes be a little stressful and maybe even a downright nightmare. However, this does not have to be the case. There are ways for you to keep your children occupied while you are on the road or in the air. You can keep them happy and at the same time keep your sanity.

Before you even begin your trip, a good tip is to include your children in the planning of it. Ask their opinions. If they are actively involved, they will be more excited and feel more important and probably be in better spirits during the traveling period.

### **Bring along some snacks**

The one thing you can always depend on is your child getting hungry. They are always asking for a snack or something to nibble on at the worst possible times. These times are when you are busy or when you have nothing for them to snack on. One good way to prepare for this situation is to bring along a variety of their favorite things. Another good idea is to have some drink boxes on hand for them. You know if they are hungry then the next thing they are going to say is they are thirsty. Think ahead and get a list of the things they like and pack them along with you.

Another reason you might want to include some of your kids' favorite foods in a travel pack is that children can be choosy when it comes to food. You may want to try out the local delicacies, but kids prefer to eat something they are familiar with. If you have

come prepared, you needn't be overly concerned whether or not every restaurant you stop in along the way has a kid's meal on their menu.

### **Entertain them**

If your children are occupied, chances are you will have a better trip with less aggravation. If you keep their minds entertained, then they will leave you alone and you can concentrate on other things, like the road. Bring along travel games, puzzles, coloring books, or even books for them to read. If you are lucky enough to have a portable DVD player, bring it along too. This will be a life savor on those long trips.

### **Sing along**

If you forget to bring along the games and things, do not worry. You will still be able to keep the kids entertained, it just may be a little more work than you had planned. You can get the kids to sing songs together or with you. If you do not want to sing, play car games or find some sort of fun thing for you and your kids to do while you are driving or riding along. This will keep them from fighting and misbehaving.

### **Avoid motion sickness**

Most children complain of being dizzy and sick while traveling. If on the road, you can prevent this by planning several stopovers. Open your car windows to let in some fresh air. Before the trip, be sure that your children eat a snack. You can also check with your doctor for appropriate anti-nausea medicines like Dramamine.

If travelers' diarrhea is the problem, you can avoid child dehydration by bringing plenty of distilled water. Also stay away from street foods, avoid raw fruits and vegetables, sea foods and rare-cooked meats.

### **Air travel**

If you are traveling with children on a plane, remember to arrive at the airport early. Make sure that you allow yourself plenty of time to get you and your children checked in and not to mention leave yourself some time for bathroom breaks. You know how kids can sometimes slow you down and you want to make sure that you have enough time for the unexpected things that can come up at any given time.

Overall, the most important tip is: be patient. Traveling with your children can be a memorable experience in your life and with a little planning and thought; you can make that memory a great one.

## **Traveling with Pets**

When you are taking your pets along with you on your vacation, there is some preparation that you should do. You should make sure that your pet is as comfortable as you are when traveling. Remember a motion sick animal can make a trip miserable for you and everyone else that is traveling.

### **Staying with family or friends**

If you are going to be staying with someone while you are away, be considerate. You may want to find out in advance if the pet is able to come. Make sure that is OK with them before you bring your pet along. This rule is also good for hotels, parks and certain camping areas.

### **Leaving your pet alone in the hotel room**

If for some reason you have to leave your animal back at the hotel room, make sure that you place the DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door and make sure that you tell the hotel supervisor or maid what is going on. It may be appropriate for you to bring your kennel with you on your trip for these times. This is especially good if you are staying with someone house that does not want your animal running freely around the house.

### **Tag your pet**

It doesn't matter if you are traveling by car or plane, be sure to have your pet properly identified with a current tag on them. Groom your animal before the trip so they are nice and neat for everyone. Have the animal's favorite toys, food and dishes with you. This will make the animal feel more at home and relaxed.

You might want to also bring along a copy of your animals most recent shots and medical history. You will need to have this when you are crossing state or international borders. Before taking your animal anywhere, make sure that you get the OK from your vet. This way you know that your animal is healthy and there should be no problems with them while you are traveling.

### **Trips in the Car**

If your animal is going on a long trip with you in a car, there are some things that you can do to make the experience a better one. If your animal is not used to riding in a car, you can break them in by giving them short rides in the car with you first. You can gradually increase the rides as you go. This will break the animal in for the long trip.

Stick to your regular feeding routine and give the big meal when you have arrived at your destination. Dry food is more convenient while traveling. Never let your animal ride on your lap when you are driving a car. This is dangerous for you and for the other motorists on the road.

## **Family Travel Deals**

Traveling with the entire family can be expensive and a little hard to plan. There are some places that you will find all the help and great family deals to make your vacation planning a lot easier. To find these great deals, all you have to do is take a little time and do some research. You will find what you are looking for.

### **Cruises for the family**

Cruises are a great choice for family getaways. There are plenty of different deals that you can locate if you look in the right places. Search the 'Net to find cruise line websites and you may stumble upon a great deal for the whole family. Some cruises will offer discounts for certain age groups. These are the deals that you want to look for. There are also package deals that include tours for the whole family, like Disney cruises.

### **Florida family deals**

If Florida is your idea of a great family vacation, then check into finding great family deals. There are certain packages that you can get that include tickets to places like Universal Studios or other theme parks for free. Some of the hotels that are advertised in these packages also include free meals for kids. This is a huge savings. The hotels that have these great savings are usually kid friendly and have different activities for the kids to enjoy.

### **Air travel**

Some of the Airlines may have deals for traveling too. You may be able to find an airline that has special deals like *buy one ticket and get one half off or free*. They may also charge special rates for children under a certain age. These are great deals that really add up when you think about how much everything else costs – especially when you are on vacation.

Lots of airlines and travel agencies even have promotional periods when they will send you and your entire family for one great price. These companies usually do things like this once or twice a year to promote their businesses. You will want to ask if the companies that you use have these promotions and when they are available. This may help you decide where and when you take your vacation.

If you are not sure where you want to go and what kind of savings you can get, then one thing that you can do is get online and find out where the deals are and when the deals are good. Simply type the words "great family vacation deals" (in quotes) into Google or your favorite search engine, and you are off and running!

If you did not know where you would be vacationing before, let the deals that you find lead the way to great family fun at a great price.

## **Top 5 Kid Friendly Vacation Spots**

Traveling with your children can be a difficult thing to plan. When searching for the perfect vacation spot for your family there are a number of factors to take into consideration. Finding a family-friendly vacation destination can be the difference between a fabulous vacation for everyone to remember and a complete disaster.

1. The top family vacation destination in the world has long been located in **central Florida**. **Walt Disney World** is filled with fun for everyone from toddlers to grandparents. Staying in a Disney Resort gives you and your family a chance to feel as if you are in another world during your stay. Walt Disney World offers your family a chance to have breakfast with Mary Poppins or lunch with Cinderella. Watch the faces of your children light up as they meet Mickey Mouse for the first time or experience their excitement as they enjoy their favorite ride in the theme park. Walt Disney World in Florida offers guests four theme parks (the Magic Kingdom, Epcot Center, MGM Studios, and Animal Kingdom) and two water parks (Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon) that are open year-round. The Walt Disney World Resort also offers a host of other activities such as Pleasure Island for adults, shopping at Downtown Disney, and a multitude of restaurants and cafes.

2. If you are looking for a tropical family vacation, look no further than the **Atlantis Resort** located on **Paradise Island in the Bahamas**. The resort offers a wide variety of attractions to keep everyone in the family having fun. The resort features eleven pools and a number of water slides and rides from kiddie pools to the Mayan Drop which plunges riders down a six-story slide into the water. The resort offers golfing, snorkeling, sailing excursions and other outdoor activities that allow you to enjoy the beautiful tropical landscape that surrounds the resort. Children under twelve years of age can visit the Discovery Channel Camp, which includes lessons about indigenous sea life, arts and crafts, aquarium visits, and guided expeditions. It is guaranteed to be a favorite of any child visiting the resort. For older guests the resort is home to a full casino, shopping, a comedy club and two dance clubs. Everyone is sure to find something to do at Atlantis.

3. If your family enjoys snowy slopes rather than sandy beaches, then be sure to plan a visit to **Snowbird Resort in Snowbird, Utah**. Children under twelve years of age ski free at Snowbird but the amenities do not stop at the slopes. Families can enjoy a range of activities in the winter months such as snowshoeing, snowboarding, lugging, snowmobiling, ice skating and snow tubing. The resort offers live music concerts year-round and also hosts a number of competitive skiing competitions and races. Ski schools and camps are offered for children and child care services are offered for children under twelve. For adults, the resort offers a spa and fitness club.

4. For the adventurous family, the **Treesort in Takilma, Oregon** is the perfect family vacation destination. The Treesort offers a Swiss Family Robinson type of vacation high above the ground in the trees. The resort offers 18 different tree houses for your family to discover. The resort also includes swinging bridges, wooden swings, forts and platforms for climbing and fun. The highlight of the resort for many is the rope course that includes a 160 foot long zip-line. Families can enjoy the fresh water swimming pool,

one of few attractions located on the ground, and the campsite area as well.

5. For a vacation that offers both activities and educational value, families may want to consider visiting **Williamsburg, Virginia. The Kingsmill Resort** offers family vacation packages that can be put together to suit any family. The resort offers both golf and tennis courses, as well as a marina. At the resort's Kids Camp children will enjoy activities like swimming and yoga, as well as time in the resort's game room. The resort is located within driving distance to both Busch Gardens theme park and historic Colonial Williamsburg. The resort is also located close to both Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia. The city of Williamsburg and the Kingsmill Resort offer a family vacation full of relaxation, activity, excitement and education.

### **Best Theme Park Destinations**

Amusement Business Magazine has revealed the top ten theme parks in North America for 2004 based on attendance figures. As expected, six of those ten are owned and operated by The Walt Disney Company. Although no numbers were released for theme park visitor count elsewhere, it's safe to assume that the brand also dominates internationally, as its newest theme park HongKong Disneyland just opened. Here is how the list looked with a short overview of its attractions.

#### **1. The Magic Kingdom at Disney World (FL)**

Disney World's Magic Kingdom opened in 1971 and is located 30 minutes south of Orlando. Cinderella Castle, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Space Mountain are just some of its popular attractions. Kids will be thrilled getting autographs from Disney characters at Mickey's Toontown Fair.

#### **2. Disneyland (CA)**

The world's most famous theme park recently celebrated its 50th anniversary called the "Happiest Homecoming on Earth" which was attended by, among others, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Indiana Jones Adventure and Haunted Mansion have been hailed by critics to be the parks best rides.

#### **3. Epcot at Walt Disney World (FL)**

Originally called EPCOT Center (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) when it opened in October 1982, the park was envisioned to be a futuristic city with controlled environs. Now, it is known to be a "learning-oriented" attraction in where science and international culture blend.

#### **4. Disney-MGM Studios at Walt Disney World (FL)**

The park functions both as a full-service production lot and theme park. Five major sections make-up the park: Hollywood Blvd., New York St., Mickey Ave., Animation Courtyard, and Sunset Blvd. Of all the rides here, Tower of Terror has been said to be the best of the modern-day attractions. The freefalling thrill ride is based on the classic television show The Twilight Zone.

#### **5. Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World (FL)**

This 500-acre theme park focuses on animals and dinosaurs. The people behind it are quick to point out, though, that it is not a zoo since there certainly is a lot more to see and do here than animals on display. It's Tough To Be A Bug and Tree Of Life are the top picks among the attractions.

#### **6. Universal Studios at Universal Orlando (FL)**

Universal's Revenge of the Mummy ride is widely proclaimed to be among the best rides ever with coasters reaching top speeds and gut-displacing drops. It also gets props for effectively incorporating story into an action-filled ride with stunning special effects. Another reason for its success is the family-oriented approach Universal chose which means it's relatively docile compared to its predecessors.

#### **7. Islands of Adventure at Universal Orlando (FL)**

Undoubtedly, The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man is the number one reason visitors keep coming back to this theme park. Merging 3D graphics with the most advanced motion base simulation technology, this ride takes visitors on a whole new level of fun and excitement that even the most jaded ride enthusiast will come out totally blown away.

#### **8. Disney's California Adventures (CA)**

Soarin' Over California is the perfect attraction for anyone who has always dreamed of flying. This attraction simulates a hang glider "soaring" over California's best known locations such as the Golden Gate Bridge, San Diego, Lake Tahoe, Los Angeles, and even Disneyland itself. It has become one of the most visited attractions in the two Disney parks it is featured in. Scents corresponding to the places shown on screen are incorporated into the wind effects for added realism.

#### **9. SeaWorld Florida (FL)**

Aside from the usual marine shows, SeaWorld also boasts its own roller coaster and making it floorless gives the ride an added thrill factor. It's also the tallest of its kind in Central Florida. There are motion simulator rides, a marine life exhibit, and, at Discovery Cove, visitors can swim with dolphins. Truly, a far cry from the whale-splashing attraction it used to be.

## **10. Universal Studios Hollywood (CA)**

The rides and attractions at Universal Studios are all tied with Universal's movies. There is also the famous backlot tour on a tram that visits famous film sets and complete special effects. The most recent addition to line-up is Steven Spielberg's War of the Worlds set. Guests can also be part of the studio audience at television show tapings. About 35,000 visitors come to Universal Studios daily, majority of them also from Southern California. It is also the largest film studio-theme park in the world.

### **Disney World Traveling**

Disney World is probably the most popular theme park in the world, attractions, rides, characters, the works, there is no doubt that nobody goes to Disney World to get headaches. To prevent unnecessary muscle and head pain, it is best to be prepared.

#### **Proper Season**

It is best to go to Disney World during off season, which is roughly around early January to mid February, or after Labor Day through mid December. During off season, there are less people, less congestion and less headaches. What's more, it rarely gets cold in Florida, even during winter season, and it gets swelteringly hot and humid during summer, so winter, really is the time to go.

#### **The Proper Lodgings**

Although it is cheaper to stay in hotels outside of Disney World, the extra cash you'll have to cough up if you stay inside is more than made up for by the comfort and convenience of an inside stay.

Imagine traveling from your room, then going through the 47 square mile area that is Disney World, then traveling back to your hotel... exhausting isn't it?

#### **The Proper Schedule**

Where to actually go once you get there is determined by your choice of companions, kids, teenagers or adults.

#### **Kids**

Go through Cinderella's Castle and Visit Fantasy Land or Mickey's Toon Town, the little tots will surely love all the characters roaming around that area. The rides in these parts are built for 6 year olds and below, but mommy or daddy can still squeeze themselves in if they want.

#### **Adults or Teens**

A trip to the Magic Kingdom may be in order if you're with big kids. You can go to Splash Mountain to get wet or to Space Mountain to get some indoor rollercoaster, and fun for the bumpy person, Big Thunder Mountain Railroad should be enough to satisfy their taste for adventure.

### **Rides for Everyone**

If you want something that everyone can enjoy, a ride in the Walt Disney World Railroad, can rest those tired feet and at the same time give you an enjoyable view of Magic Kingdom.

Haunted Mansion, although not really for very young kids, can be a thrill for toddlers, it's a ride not a walk through so there's no tripping or running involved.

For relaxing walks, try the Tiki Room Show or the Swiss family Tree House.

### **The Proper Dining Experience**

For cute snacks, try the Aloha Isle inside Adventureland, they conjure up creative drinks and snacks, a good place to try something cute and different.

Cosmic Ray's Starlight Cafe provides a cool indoor dining area between Fantasyland and Tomorrowland where you can enjoy your food to your hearts content.

## **A Whole New World: Things to See and Do in Disney World**

Going on vacation to Disney World does not have to be terribly expensive if the proper research and planning is done. There is a whole new world of things to do at Disney that are totally free. So before you make a reservation or commit to a resort or hotel, spend some time comparing vacation packages and weigh the pros and cons. After all, you want to make the most out of your vacation in the least expensive way.

The average vacation to Disney World is five to seven days. This is actually as much time it takes to see everything. Whether you are on your honeymoon or taking the kids to a whole new world, make the most out of Disney World and make it a trip to remember. But you don't have to go broke while creating these memories. Take for instance all the free things you can do in and around Disney World that won't even require park admission.

Downtown Disney has wonderful interactive exhibits such as the Lego Imagination Center, laden with some eye-catching Lego sculptures and a 3,000-square-foot outdoor play area filled with thousands of Lego blocks to play with. You don't have to be a child to have fun with Lego's, be creative and splurge.

The Interactive Fountains are amazing and fun and will make a great back ground for your vacation pictures. Jump in, splash around and make it a Kodak moment for your keepsakes. Check out the free magic shows at the Magic Masters. You can learn a few magic tricks to take home with you.

Pleasure Island is totally free during the evening hours. You can roam and revel in the shops and restaurants while you enjoy the entertainment and fireworks display. Admission is only required if you choose to go into one of the many night clubs on Pleasure Island, that is unless you have a pass, then entrance is free.

The Disney Boardwalk offers a nice variety of freebies as well. If you are lodging in a Disney resort or hotel, you can use Disney's transportation to get to the boardwalk. If you choose to drive to the Boardwalk, you can get a free 3-hour parking permit from the lot attendant.

Have fun strolling down the Boardwalk and enjoy the street performers. From jugglers to jazz musicians, take in the atmosphere and enjoy. For dancing and live bands with no cover charge, stop by the Atlantic Dance Hall.

Just being a Guest at a Disney resort offers an array of free activities. You can choose from multiple children's activities to swimming to free Disney transportation. Stop by the resort shops to see what clearance items are available as souvenirs. Resort Guests or multi-pass holders are eligible to ride the Monorail free of charge. The Monorail is a favorite of Disney Guests, offering a spectacular tour of many of the parks inside Disney. Also as a resort Guest you can take advantage of the nature trails and walkways.

Enjoy cruises from Port Orleans along the Sassagoula River to Downtown Disney and back. While you're in Port Orleans be sure to visit the Butterfly Garden located behind Acadian House.

You can enjoy a romantic cruise of Crescent Lake and visit Epcot, the Yacht and Beach Club, Swan and Dolphin, and MGM along the way. While you're enjoying the open water you can take the boat that visits the Magic Kingdom, Contemporary, Wilderness Lodge, Ft. Wilderness, the Polynesian, and Grand Floridian. At night you can watch for the magnificent Electric Water Pageant as it floats around the lake stopping at each of the resorts.

While Ft. Wilderness is open to all Walt Disney World resort guests, it would be a nice way to end a night by stopping in for roasting marshmallows on a campfire and a movie shown on a large outdoor screen. This is held every evening, near the Meadow Trading Post. The evening starts with a sing-a-long song and marshmallow roast. You can purchase food there or bring your own. Disney characters will be there to meet the guests, to sign autographs, and pose for pictures. There is seating available or you can bring along a blanket to lay on and relax while enjoying the entertainment under the stars.

Take advantage of everything Disney World has to offer and enjoy!

## **Kissimmee: Ten Attractions that AREN'T Disney World**

Florida is one of the most popular states to vacation in due to the fact that Florida has the most popular vacation attractions. Disney World, Universal Orlando and Sea World are the most popular and sought after vacation spots, but Florida's attractions go far beyond these. Kissimmee, Florida has multiple attractions in itself that are not related to Disney World.

Kissimmee has its own popular and family oriented attractions that entice thousands of tourists into returning each year. When planning your next visit to Florida, check out a few of these top rated attractions in Kissimmee that has had visitors boasting and eager to return.

1. **SkyScapes Balloon Tours** specialize in private hot air balloon rides for couples and groups. Advance reservations are required because they only schedule one flight per day. Flight amenities include a Champagne Toast, when you will learn about ballooning and how it all got started. The After Flight Celebration will include a light snack of fruit and cheese and a First Flight Certificate to commemorate your first flight. Weekends fill up fast so it's best to reserve at least two weeks in advance.

2. **Flying Tigers Restoration Warbird Museum** has a fabulous collection of restored WWII planes. There are many aircrafts on display and available for flight. Some of the aircraft's include: B-52, B-25 Mitchells, P-51 Stearmans, C-47 Dakota, a Vampire and many more. This would be a wonderful and educational experience for everyone.

3. **Reptile World Serpentarium** invites you into a world of creepy crawlies. Featuring a large collection of snakes from around the world and kept in their own natural environment. You can attend a venom harvest demonstration, where you can learn about the process of harvesting venom that benefits international medical research.

4. **Gatorland** is fun for the entire family and is located near the border of Kissimmee and Orlando. Come visit Alligator Island and observe the alligators as they live and nest in a natural environment on this 110 acre theme park and wildlife preserve. Gatorland is also home to several crocodiles, flamingos and a variety of other animals as well. Come enjoy the train ride, petting zoo, nature walk, shows and so much more!

5. **Old Town** is home of the largest weekly car cruises with over **300 classic cars**. Old Town is a great place to visit for shopping at 75 specialty stores, taking on 18 thrilling ride and dining at 8 delicious restaurants. Old Town has had visitors raving about their phenomenal experiences and eager to come back.

6. **Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament** where you can experience life as it was in the 11th Century. Enjoy feasting on a hearty dinner that is served to you by a wench, as you watch a Princess profess her love for her Knight and a betrayal is unveiled as the King addresses his audience. During intermission you will see an outstanding performance of horse tricks and falcon show.

7. **Arabian Nights**, the most honored dinner attraction in the world. You are invited to a wedding of a Prince and a Princess. Come into the Palace of Horses and meet your humble servant that will cater to your every desire. Enjoy a bountiful meal as you watch the story unfold as the wedding is threatened by an uninvited guest. The show is filled with many surprises and full of majestic costumed horses and riders.

8. **Fun 'N Wheels Fun Park** provides the best value for go-cart racing and arcade fans of all ages. There is a snack bar loaded with food and beverages. Best of all the admission is always free.

9. **Water Mania** is a water park full of fun for the whole family. Attractions include swimming, rafting and golf. This water park is great for the younger children in your family.

10. **Green Meadows Petting Farm** is a fantastic place to take the kids for a two hour guided tour through the farm of over 300 animals. Milk a cow, ride a pony or go on a hay ride. Expect plenty of fun and education for all ages.

All these attractions are suitable for families and are deemed very affordable. You can always make the most out of a vacation in Florida without going to Disney World. Kissimmee is truly a wonderful place to be all year round.

### **Planning Your Own Educational Trip**

If it's just for school, for your kids or for the neighborhood kids, it's nice to have a purposeful educational trip that will surely be enjoyed by the children as well as teach them. Of course there is the usual trip to the museum or the so-so factory, but educational travel doesn't necessarily end with the destination, one should also consider the preparations as well as the child before you uproot them from their playgrounds.

#### **Who should plan the Trip?**

If the trip is an out of school activity, whether organized by you or the neighborhood parents, there should always be somebody or a group of people willing to dedicate a snippet of their time to organizing, everything, destination, transportation, food, lodgings (if any) as well as the children involved.

#### **What to Bring**

A pack list is also essential before a trip. Here are a few things that should be in your or your child's bag when you go on an educational trip.

- *Snacks* – there should be lots of drinks and walk foods that you can eat even while walking.

- *First aid kit* – an accident can easily happen, a small trip or a scratch should be mended easily. A medicine pack can also be handy for parents who develop headaches, or for children with stomach upset.
- *Extra clothes* – children are very active, and sometimes even parents can be over-active, so it is necessary that both bring a set of clothes for those unexpected spills.
- *Walkie talkie* – If your child can handle it, a walkie-talkie or a cellular phone can be very useful if he gets lost.
- *Name tag* – Attach a name tag to his shirt or to his bag containing your contact number (without a name) so that whoever finds him can contact you.
- *One of his favorite toys/games* – A good thing to distract a child when he gets uneasy during travel would be one of his favorite toys/games.
- *Wipes and tissue* - For that easy cleanup whenever you need it.

### **When you get there**

Fall in line, and make travel buddy's of two or three; the one buddy should be responsible for the other so as to prevent anyone getting left behind. This is best done with kids who don't normally play together so they can bond and get to know each other more.

### **On the trip home**

Encourage sleeping; after a long walk children can get cranky when tired, so bring some milk with you so they can sleep through the trip home.

## **Take a Trip Back in Time: Historic Vacation Destinations in the US**

Ever get the feeling that your friends and family are constantly finding excuses to get away from your getaway? Maybe it's time for a different perspective and try something new for the next summer outing. Why not embark on a backpedal journey around the country.

History-themed holidays are a creative way to directly augment your child's education while inspiring enjoyable family time. Whether they're as imposing as buildings or as subtle as its markers, coming in contact with historic relics provokes a deeper sense of appreciation for people, places, events, and ideas that shaped who we are today. It yields a better understanding of human values and the part it played in their daily lives.

What's great is you don't even have to head out far to experience these treasures; just start at your local town square. For those of us up for a road trip, the National Park Service has listed the top 10 most visited national historic parks and their visitor count from 2004.

1. Great Smokey Mountains National Park - 9,167,048

2. World War II Memorial - 5,382,498
3. Grand Canyon National Park - 4,326,234
4. Independence National Historic Park - 4,087,918
5. San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park - 4,055,079
6. Lincoln Memorial - 3,988,650
7. Vietnam Veterans Memorial - 3,789,889
8. Statue of Liberty - 3,618, 053
9. Korean War Memorial - 3,610,796
10. Colonial National Historic Park - 3,327,573

However, to get off the beaten track and avoid the crowds, we present a few other interesting historic places worth including on your next vacation itinerary.

### **Canterbury Shaker Village**

In Canterbury, New Hampshire is Canterbury Shaker Village, a 694-acre patch of land with forests, ponds, and grassland. It opened in 1969 with the goal of preserving the customs and traditions of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as Shakers. Restored buildings depict their function and placement within the grounds, just as if one were to visit it a century and a half ago. Guided tours are offered, each tackling a specific subject about the Shakers or a building within the village. Be sure to drop by the Village Farm Stand for in season produce that are always garden-fresh. The Museum Store has books, oval boxes, and many other items showcasing the remarkable Shaker craftsmanship. The village is open daily beginning May 14 through October 30, except on Thanksgiving and Christmas..

### **Boston National Historic Park**

Well-known to be the setting of many important events in American history, Boston is as progressive as it is reverent of its past. In its desire to ensure the public gets the most from visiting this city, the Freedom Trail was established. This walking tour extends 3 miles and takes about 90 minutes, with 16 stops that include Faneuil Hall, Paul Revere House, and the USS Constitution-"the oldest commissioned ship afloat." Likewise, don't forget to check out the Black Heritage Trail, a 1.6 mile walking tour winding through Beacon Hill and includes 15 sites essaying a 19th century African-American community.

In addition, there are special events held from time to time like the Institute of Contemporary Art artist-in-residence program. This is located at the Charleston Navy Yard, part of the Freedom Trail, and is open from noon to 5 PM. Currently featured is "The Secret Ark of Icon Park," an interactive outdoor exhibit running through October 10, 2005. Visitor assistance is available by calling (617) 242-5642 or through the website at <http://www.nps.gov/bost>

### **Ellis Island National Monument**

If the Statue of Liberty is viewed as the shimmering gateway to America, Ellis Island was, from 1892 to 1954, the stern-faced security guard that evaluated immigrants before they're allowed to enter the US. Walking through the rooms of the redbrick

building, visitors can follow the immigration procedure step by step which starts at the Great Hall or Registration Room. Photographs, clothes, posters, ship logbooks, and luggage are displayed across three dozen galleries as well as interactive multimedia presentations that tell of the island's history.

The American Immigrant Wall of Honor, built behind the Main Building, lists the names of some 600,000 immigrants from various ports of entry. It is said that about 40% of all Americans can trace their family history to a man, woman, or child who entered the United States through Ellis Island. The park has free admission and is open daily except on Christmas day. For park inquiries, call (212)363-3200 or go to <http://www.ellisland.org>

### **Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site**

One of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, the Cahokia Mounds located northeast of St. Louis, Missouri, is described as "the largest pre-Columbian settlement north of Mexico". There are over 100 documented mounds built by what are known to be the Woodland Indians around 800 A.D. and was the urban center of Mississippian culture. Monks Mound is the centerpiece of the 14-acre site. It is the largest man-made earth formation in the Western Hemisphere. Public tours last for one hour and available on weekends at 1:30 PM. A good jump-off point would be <http://www.cahokiamounds.com> which contains extensive information on the site both as a cultural and archeological resource.

There is no shortage of monuments and parks no matter what part of the country you live in. As long as you have a well-planned itinerary, factor in each individual's interests, and have an appetite for adventure, a vacation with history will be as fresh and exciting. This is going to be more evident when instead of cramming into the station wagon, you find yourself loading up the van!

### **The Grand Canyon: 10 Things to Know Before You Go**

The Grand Canyon is located in northwest Arizona and arguably the worlds most popular and natural tourist attraction. The massive Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, 18 miles wide, and at its deepest point, is more than a mile from rim to river. Most of the Canyon lies within the Grand Canyon National Park and is managed by the National Park Service. It incorporates three geographically separated areas: the South Rim, the North Rim and the inner Canyon. As you plan your vacation to the Grand Canyon, be prepared for everything.

1. You must decide how you will get there. Will you drive across country as a family road trip or will you fly to save time and money? Taking in mind the rising gas prices across the nation, and decide which one will benefit you more, both physically and economically?
2. Self vs. Travel Agent. How much time do you have to properly research and plan a vacation? You must decide if you should find a travel agency to help plan out your vacation to the great wonders of the Grand Canyon. Travel agencies can save you both time and money, because planning the best vacations is what they do for a living.

3. Child friendly environments. Depending on the ages of your children, you need to know that your destination is suitable for children. With babies, find out if the hotel or resort where you will be staying offers cribs or childcare during your visit. Is a Grand Canyon vacation the right choice for your children?

4. Pets care. Many people enjoy taking their pets along with them on vacation. If you do, make sure your hotel or resort allows pets on the premises. Also be sure some of your destinations are pet friendly too so you aren't leaving your pet locked up in a room all day while you are out having the time of your life. If you decide not to bring your pet, find a pet sitting service or boarding facilities with a good reputation. Most animal hospitals offer boarding, but if yours does not, then ask your veterinarian for a referral to a reputable pet care provider.

5. Protect your home. A visit to the Grand Canyon averages four to seven days. Those are days that you will be away from your home. Talk with your neighbors and ask them if they can keep an eye on your house while you are gone, or ask a family member or friend to check in on your house every now and then. You want to prevent your home from being targeted by burglars.

6. Pack appropriate clothing, such as: a bandanna or a hat (for sun and weather protection), cut off pants for hiking, gloves, jacket, pants (heavy duty), rain coat or poncho, shoes (suitable for hiking), socks (cotton or wool for hiking), sweat shirt or sweater.

7. First Aid Precautions. Accidents happen, when they do, you can be prepared by keeping a personal first aid kit at hand. What you should take with you to meet an emergency situation depends on your family, where you are going and how long you will be staying. The minimum items to be considered would be: Antiseptic, Ace bandage, Band-aids, Burn ointment, Chap stick, First aid tape, Foot blister pads/powder, Gauze compresses, salt tablets, sharp knife and sun tan lotion.

8. Miscellaneous items. Compass, maps, water, ear plugs, eye wash, fire starter, blanket, flashlight (with new batteries), waterproof matches, paper/pencil, sewing kit, antibacterial soap, sun glasses, toilet paper, moist wipes.

9. Sun screen. SPF 15 or higher. Protect yourself and your family from sun burns.

10. Toiletries. Laundry bag, mirror, sleep wear, sanitary supplies, shaving articles, soap, tooth brush, tooth paste, wash cloth.

Never carry all of your credit cards with you or a large amount of cash. This can lead to excessive spending, theft or simply losing it. When traveling, your best bet would be travel checks or a travelers' debit card, that will replace funds if lost or stolen. Losing all your money or having your funds stolen can end a great vacation in a heart beat. You should prepare yourself for anything, even if it requires over packing, and don't forget to have a safe trip.

## Traveling the US: What To Do and Where To Go

**New York City** is perhaps the most diverse city in the world. When traveling the United States this is one city you must visit. Upon arriving on your New York City vacation, you and your family will be astounded at the millions of things there are to do and see in the city. One ideal stop to kick off your vacation is the Empire State Building. Now the tallest building of the New York City skyline, the Empire State Building gives tourists the opportunity to take in a spectacular view of Long Island and the surrounding area from its 86th floor observatory. If you continue on Fifth Avenue you will come to Rockefeller Center, another famous New York City vacation spot. If you visit during the winter months, you will find the famous giant Christmas tree here at Rockefeller Center and the ice skating rink in front of it.

Another site that you must visit during your vacation is Times Square. Times Square has long been one of the most well-known places in New York City. You will recognize it as the place where the famous New Year's Eve ball drops each year. If this is one of your first New York City vacations you might want to consider taking a guided tour, as finding your own way around the city can be overwhelming for newcomers. Whether you choose to tour by boat, bike, bus or helicopter, you will find a tour that suits your needs in New York. Whatever tour you choose, you will undoubtedly be astounded by all the sights to see on your New York City vacation.

Want to give your kids a history lesson and a fun family vacation all mixed into one? Try **Boston**, where an abundant amount of the country's history is right at your fingertips. Lodging and airfare to Boston will be your biggest expense because most of the city's attractions are within walking distance. If you stay inside the city make sure you are within a reasonable distance to the Freedom Trail, a two and a half mile walk takes you past and sometimes through the city's most historical landmarks. There is plenty to see and do in Boston from taking in a show at the giant Omni Theater within the city's Science Museum to watching a Boston Red Sox game at the historic Fenway Park. You will not find yourself bored in Beantown.

If you want to get away from the city try going deep into the **Great Smokey Mountains** of Tennessee where one of the best hotels in the nation can be found. Blackberry Farm is 4,200 acres of relaxation. Enjoy the beautiful mountain scenery of the Great Smokey Mountains right from your hotel room. The resort offers the Farmhouse Spa, where guests can relax while enjoying spa amenities such as hydrotherapy and massage. Guests are encouraged to head out to nearby Clinch River and partake in fly fishing. The resort prides itself on offering guests the best fly fishing east of the Rocky Mountains. The resort also offers a host of other activities such as horseback riding, hiking, canoeing and carriage rides. Guests are transported around resort grounds in Lexus vehicles and the resort offers Camp Blackberry, a full child care program parents are encouraged to take advantage of.

If you are looking for a posh resort where you will be treated like a star, look no further than The Peninsula in **Beverly Hills, California**. Set amidst the swanky mansions of Beverly Hills and against the backdrop of the skyline of Los Angeles, The Peninsula is the best choice for those who want a chic, modern vacation. Guests can venture off the

resort's grounds to visit the city of Los Angeles, tour Beverly Hills or visit the renowned Rodeo Drive for some shopping. The resort offers a number of restaurants and bars, including the Roof Garden, a rooftop patio surrounded by a beautiful array of flowers and plants and adjacent to the pool and spa. The spa offers a number of treatments such as Swedish massage, Reflexology, Shiatsu, and variety of body scrubs. Keep in mind, a Beverly Hills vacation is definitely not for the penny-pincher.

The ultimate US vacation destination for children is unquestionably **Orlando, Florida**, home of Disney World. Walt Disney World is perhaps the place that has put family vacations on the map. Disney World packages everything from lodging to theme park tickets to travel logistics and meals in their famous vacation packages. Guests can log onto the Disney World website, call their vacation hotline, or work with a travel agent to put together the perfect custom vacation package. With Disney's value saver vacation packages, guests looking to save money can select from the cheaper amenities offered by Disney World. For those looking to go all out, the deluxe resorts, restaurants and park tickets are available as well.

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