

healthy kids, happy families

Parents®

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25 VACATIONS
FOR BIG KIDS

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TRAINING TIPS
THAT WORK,
WE PROMISE!**

20
**GREATEST
TOYS OF
ALL TIME**

↓
**DISCIPLINE
DO-OVERS**
EXPERT
ADVICE FOR
BETTER
BEHAVIOR

+

FUNNY HA-HA
**THE BOOKS
YOUR KIDS
WILL BEG FOR**

25 best vacation spots for big kids

Once you leave behind the world of strollers, naptime, and unpredictable tantrums, your family's travel possibilities explode. See where to seize the sunshine with your school-age kid. **by KAREN CICERO**



You'll see fab rock formations along the trails at Joshua Tree National Park.

➔ **The Ridiculously Cool Outdoors**

Finally, somewhere they'll put down their devices.

* Snow-tubing in shorts? Sign us up! **Keystone Resort** in Colorado, about 90 miles east of the Denver airport, brings the white stuff from its mountain peaks to its high-altitude

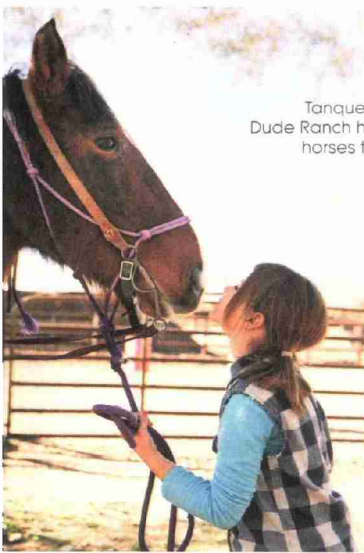
tubing trails (for kids 42 inches and up) all summer. The temps average 70°F, but there's still plenty of snow for sledding. Rooms are a lot cheaper than in ski season and adventures like biking clinics, fly-fishing, and white-water rafting abound. Rates start at \$135 per night for a room and \$179 for a condo. (All lodging sleeps four, unless otherwise noted.)

* If you're searching for an all-inclusive with a drop-off camp your tweens will look forward to, put the **Tanque Verde Ranch**, in Tucson, on your bucket list. "My four kids, ages 7 to 12, couldn't believe how much time they got with the horses—riding, grooming, feeding, and even helping to bathe them," says Amber Marmian, founder of the blog *Global*

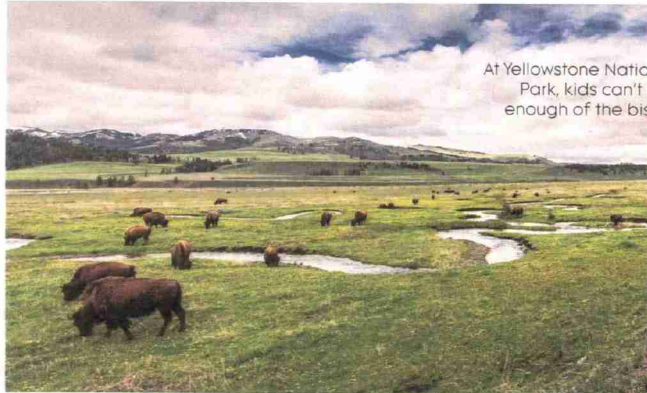
fun ● going places

Munchkins. “The wranglers are also excellent at matching the horse with the child.” While the kids are happy, you can ride plus enjoy tennis, mountain biking, hiking, and fishing. Rates start at about \$4,000 for a six-night stay for two adults and two kids ages 4 to 11, including all meals, the kids’ club, and most activities.

★ Take a family camping trip to a new level at **Rocky Mountain National Park**. The largest of five campgrounds, Moraine Park, is surrounded by a pine forest; it’s just a few miles west of the Beaver Meadows entrance on the park’s east side. “Your family will likely see elk and deer,” says public-affairs officer Kyle Patterson. The campground offers 244 sites, and can accommodate RVs up to 40 feet long. Electric outlets and solar shower stalls are available in the bathrooms (pick up a 5-gallon bag for water on amazon.com, \$9). Campers gather in the amphitheater for nighttime ranger activities. In fact, Rocky Mountain’s Junior



Tanque Verde Dude Ranch has 160 horses to love.



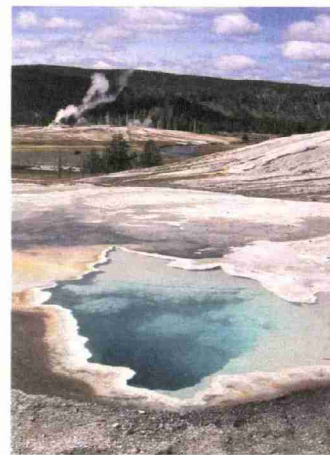
At Yellowstone National Park, kids can't get enough of the bison.

➦ Got a fourth-grader?

Your whole family can enter national parks for free all year long. Print out a pass at everykidinapark.gov.

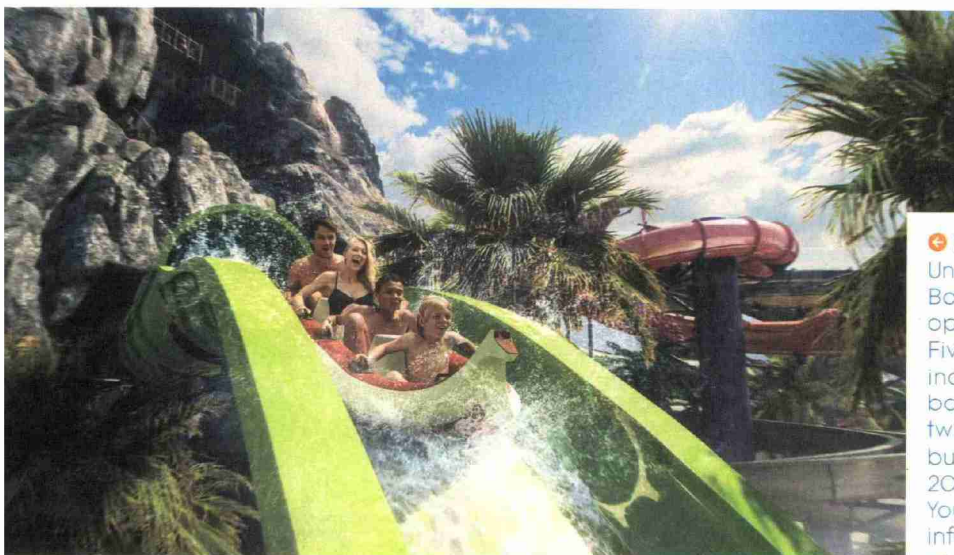
Ranger program for 6- to 12-year-olds is one of the most extensive of the national-park system, offering opportunities to earn a pin plus astronomy and firefighting badges. Camping reservations are accepted six months in advance.

★ Ease your reluctant adventurers into a national-park trip by spending the first night or two in **Jackson Hole, Wyoming**. They won't be able to resist lasso games, mechanical-bull rides, and sheep chasing (yep, that's a thing) at the Jackson Hole Rodeo (\$15 to \$30). White-water rafting down the Snake River with Mad River Boat Trips (ages 6 and up, starting at \$59 to \$79) will also help them forget about the YouTube videos they're missing. Then drive about 125 miles to **Yellowstone National Park**, where the earth is oozing, bubbling, or bursting along practically every hiking trail. “If that doesn't motivate kids to forget about how long they're walking, the animals will,” says Suzanne Rowan



Yellowstone has many hot springs.

Kelleher, the family-vacations expert at About.com. “My kids were so excited when they saw elk, bison, prairie dogs, eagles, and even vultures.” Her family stayed at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel (it's closed for renovations now but hopes to reopen by July); other options include four reservation-only campgrounds and the Fishing Bridge RV park near the Yellowstone River. The park offers about 340 sites with full hookups for electricity, water, and sewer for hard-sided RVs up to 40 feet long.



➤ Erupting Soon!
Universal's Volcano Bay water park opens on May 25. Five attractions, including two body slides with twin trapdoors are built into the 200-foot volcano. You can find more info and rates at parents.com/volcanobay.

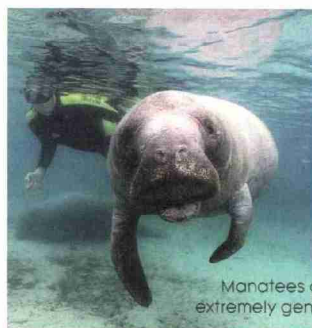
➔ Epic Water Activities

Bye-bye, baby pool. Families with solid swimmers can plunge into these trips.

* What's cooler than snorkeling? Snorkeling alongside manatees!

The Plantation on Crystal River, in Florida, about 90 miles northwest of Orlando, offers a three-hour family trip (\$65) to Kings Bay, where West Indian manatees hang out all year long. Kids must wear the loaner wet suit (available in size 6 and up) to take part. Stay awhile (rates start at \$95 per night) so you'll have enough time for other resort activities like kayaking and fishing and to explore Crystal River Preserve State Park.

* For wannabe surfers: The three-hour Keiki Waterman Adventure at **Turtle Bay Resort**, on Oahu's North Shore, gives 7- to 14-year-olds a chance to try tandem surfing,



Manatees are extremely gentle.

outrigger canoeing, and stand-up paddleboarding with help from pros. They'll head to Kawela Bay, a quiet area of the resort where *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Hunger Games* were filmed. Use your kid-free

time for mountain biking, golfing, or hanging by the pool. When you're all back together, drive to Matsumoto Shave Ice and then do it all again the next day. Rates start at \$349 per night.

* A floating water park in the Gulf of Mexico sounds like a kids' fantasy, but at **TradeWinds Island Resorts**, on St. Pete Beach, Florida, it's the real deal. The giant inflatables are about 60 feet from shore and contain a climbing wall, trampoline, balance beam, and side-by-side slides. Your kid can slide right into the warm gulf waters! Children need to be at least 40 inches tall to enter the floating park (they swim out) and 46 inches to go in without an adult. "The resort supplies life jackets—and lifeguards make sure the kids are wearing them—so I felt good letting my kids, ages 7, 11, and 12, play while I watched from the beach," says Marisa Langford, who blogs at *Adventures of TampaMama*. Pack lots of sunscreen because a 200-foot inflatable water slide on the beach,

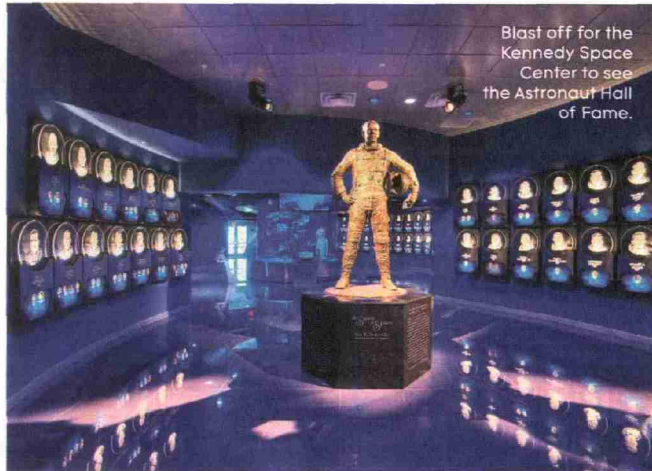
A PARK THAT'S SPECIAL NEEDS-FRIENDLY

Opening this month: one of the country's first fully-accessible water parks. At **Morgan's Inspiration Island**, in San Antonio, loaner waterproof wheelchairs make geysers, dumping buckets, and river boats fun for all. Buy a ticket (\$21 to \$27, free for guests with special needs) that includes admission to its accessible theme park, Morgan's Wonderland.

fun ● going places

stand-up paddleboarding, two ocean-side heated activity pools, and kayaking will keep your mini thrill seeker active for the entire trip. Rates start at \$249 per night (including the resort fee).

* Your big kid won't find anything lame about playing in the water at **Atlantis Paradise Island**, Bahamas. The massive Mayan Temple houses five wild water slides—two of which send swimmers (48 inches and up) through a clear acrylic tunnel that's submerged in a shark-filled lagoon. The other slides are perfect for riding with besties, sibs, or even you. "My 10-year-old liked racing her dad on the Mayan Temple's Challenger Slide—at the bottom, riders can check the time clocks so there's no doubt about who won," says Lisa Goodmurphy, founder of the blog *Gone With the Family*. Fuel up at the resort's Bimini Road restaurant—*Parents* helped create its healthy and fun kids' menu! Rates start at \$250 per night.



Blast off for the Kennedy Space Center to see the Astronaut Hall of Fame.

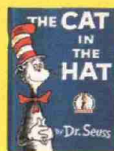
➔ **Places for Their Passions**

Find out how to turn these attractions based on your kids' interests into a long weekend at parents.com/weekend.

* Watch a real rocket launch, ask an astronaut a question, take an eight-minute simulated shuttle ride, and check out the space shuttle *Atlantis*—all on your family's trip to

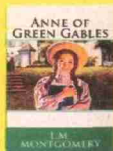
the **Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex**, in Cape Canaveral. If you have a true space junkie, you'll need at least two days to see everything (\$60 to \$75 for multiday admission).

➔ **Book It! Vacations Inspired by Their Fave Reads**



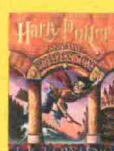
● Kindergarten & First Grade

VISIT **Springfield, Massachusetts**
SEE **The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum**, opening in June; it'll have interactive exhibits that encourage reading. Snap Instagram-worthy shots of your reader with *The Cat in the Hat*, *Horton*, and more at the free Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden.
STAY Hilton Garden Inn, starting at \$99 per night



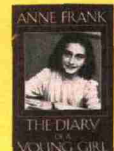
● Second Grade & Up

VISIT **Prince Edward Island, Canada**
SEE **Anne of Green Gables—The Musical** (runs from June 26 to September 23; tickets start at \$25); **Green Gables Heritage Place** (charming house and grounds that inspired the book; free) and **Avonlea Village** (meet costumed characters; free).
STAY Find a family-friendly vacation rental on airbnb.com or tourismpei.com.



● Third Grade & Up

VISIT **Universal Orlando Resort**
SEE **The Wizarding World of Harry Potter** *Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley* offer themed coasters plus rides through **Hogwarts Castle** (48" and up) and **Gringotts Bank** (42" and up). Hop on the **Hogwarts Express** with a "Chocolate Frog" to travel between the sections.
STAY Universal's **Cabana Bay Beach Resort** (on-site); starting at \$94 per night



● Fourth Grade & Up

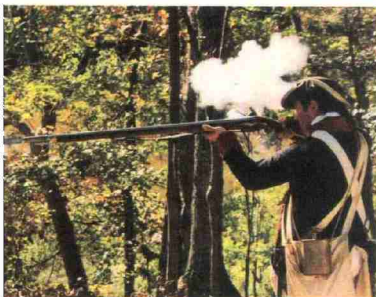
VISIT **Amsterdam**
SEE **The Anne Frank House** (\$5 to \$10), which includes the 15-year-old author's famous hiding place behind a bookcase and a display of the original diary she wrote in. Exhibits showcase the impact of her life and book.
STAY Pulitzer **Amsterdam**, a few blocks away, offering family suites with bunk beds. Rates start at \$295 per night

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★ Bring your Brownie or help organize a troop trip to Savannah, Georgia's **Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace museum** (\$10 to \$15). A recent remodel of the home of the Girl Scout founder has made it more hands-on, offering interactive tables, videos, and a Poe-Tree (a place to read and write poems) plus displays of past uniforms and cookie boxes.

★ The Atlanta Braves' new home, **SunTrust Park**, is the only Major League stadium with a concourse where kids can pitch, hit, and test their base-running speed plus zoom down a zip line and up a climbing tower. Use the Braves app to reserve a time slot. Get your tickets (starting at \$5) for a Sunday, when all kids are invited to run the bases on the team's infield after the game.

★ Is your kid obsessed with the *Hamilton* soundtrack? Show her where "the world turned upside down." At the **Yorktown Battlefield**, in Virginia (\$7 for adults, free for kids), families can take a 45-minute tour to see fortifications, tents, and canyons in the fields where the British surrendered. Then visit the **American Revolution Museum** at Yorktown (\$7 to \$12). You might hear, "Everyone give it up for America's favorite fighting Frenchman!" as your kid sees a bust of the Marquis de Lafayette. Stay at American Heritage RV Park or Anvil Campground.



See a reenactment in Yorktown.



A double-decker bus tour is helpful on the first day or two of your trip.

→ **Cities That Will Blow Their Mind**

Funky buildings. Giant parks. Eats on the street. No wonder they're infatuated.

★ **London, England**

Your family's first trip across the pond will be more affordable this summer thanks to a good exchange rate. Check out the iconic London activities like **double-decker bus rides**, **the changing of the guard**, and **The London Eye**. Add a few free museums to the list: **The British Museum** (game-design workshops plus Egyptian artifacts), **Natural History Museum** (for your dinosaur fan), and **Tate Modern** (create digital drawings). Tour **Shakespeare's Globe Theatre** (\$10 to \$20) and when they impress their English Lit teacher in a few years, you'll thank us. See a show—even full-price tickets to *The Lion King*, *Matilda*, *Wicked*, *Aladdin*, and *School of Rock* cost far less in London than in New York City. Rent an apartment or stay at a hotel like the London Marriott Hotel County Hall, which has rooms that sleep four. Rates start at \$239 nightly.

★ **Los Angeles**

For tweens, Los Angeles is all about seeing stars and going to **In-N-Out Burger** for the first time. **The Hollywood Walk of Fame** is 1.3

unshaded miles, so go to **walkoffame.com/starfinder** to note the location of a favorite celebrity. From there, hop on a Starline Tour to see movie locations. Set aside several hours for the **Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood** (8 and up, \$52 to \$62). A guide will zoom your clan and other families around the back lot, pointing out where, for instance, *The Big Bang Theory* is filmed, and letting you off a few times to see a working set, a prop house, and memorabilia, like the Batmobiles. Try to snag tickets to be in the



Walk of Fame

Happy 150th, Canada! 🇨🇦

Our neighbors to the north are celebrating a milestone birthday, and we're getting treats: Not only is the exchange rate great for Americans, but Canada is giving free admission to all of its national parks for all of 2017. Consider these destinations (more at parents.com/canada):

Niagara Falls It's really not a tourist trap! The parks in front of the falls are gorgeous, rainbows

pop up all the time, and the Hornblower Cruise (\$16 to \$26) that takes you under the falls and gets your poncho-clad family soaked is selfie-worthy. Yogi Bear's Jellystone Campground offers cabins, tent sites, and RV hookups, or stay at the Sheraton On the Falls (from \$125 per night). Many rooms have fantastic views.

Stratford Its festival is the best place to introduce your kids to Shakespeare; *Romeo and Juliet* performs through October (from \$12.50).

Toronto You'd be hard-pressed to find a science museum in the U.S. that's cooler than the Ontario Science Centre (\$13 to \$22). Dinner at Skylon Tower's revolving restaurant will be a meal that your kids will tell their friends about. Stay at the Chelsea Hotel; kids have a check-in desk (from \$259 nightly).

Québec City "Artsy kids will love the cobblestone streets dotted with painters displaying their works," says Erin Gifford, of @KidVenturous.

audience during a TV show taping; tvtickets.com posts about two months in advance and notes the minimum age. Stay down the street from the *Brady Bunch* house at The Garland hotel; it offers family suites. Rates start at \$219 per night.

* New York City

The Big Apple will be #trending this summer thanks to new activities and eats. In Times Square, visit Gulliver's Gate with its 1,000+ model train cars and other miniatures (\$27 to \$36) and grab a flower-shaped gelato at Amorino Gelato Al Naturale. Take in a Broadway show like *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory* (age 6+) or *Anastasia The Musical* (age 7+). Hop on the ferry to Governors Island to see The Hills, a park with hill slides. Stay at The Westin New York at Times Square, which is connected to a movie theater. Rates start at \$260 per night.

* Raleigh, North Carolina

You know D.C. has fantastic and free Smithsonian museums. But Raleigh also offers Smithsonian options, focusing on natural science, art, and history. Highlights include slime-making, Egyptian art, and a sculpture-filled park. Stay at the Renaissance Raleigh North Hills Hotel (starting at \$179 nightly).

* Chicago

Attractions are close to each other so you can split up for a bit if your family has different interests. The **American Girl Place** store and café is near the **Art Institute of Chicago** (Impressionists galore plus Warhol, free for ages 13 and under) and the **Field Museum**, **Shedd Aquarium**, and **Adler Planetarium** are within steps of each other. Stay at Embassy Suites by Hilton Chicago Downtown; starting at \$199 per night.

Cut Long Summer Lines You'll save serious cash by using CityPass (for U.S. vacation spots, like Chicago or Philadelphia) or Leisure Pass (for European cities, such as London and Paris) and also receive the priceless advantage of bypassing the line at many attractions.