

## 20 Family-Friendly Ideas to Get You Going

In December, my son, Seth, scored Massachusetts as No. 40 on his running list of states visited. At 15, his travel list includes 22 countries and five continents. Perhaps it's no surprise that an atlas permanently resides on our kitchen table. Traveling with him from the pliable stroller-and-sippy-cup stage to the opinionated teenage present, my husband and I have learned that the rewards in education, bonding and entertainment vastly outweigh the temporary pains of jet lag, flat tires or moody exhaustion. Trips as short as one day have allowed us to temporarily escape daily routines, mandated by work, school and household chores, that tend to separate us even when we're in the same home. Offering inspiration to pack the car and board the dog, the following 20 suggestions represent new tips and fresh attractions around the country designed to appeal to a range of travel styles, from action-filled to back-to-school.

[[AINE GILLESPIE]]



MAINE SAILING ADVENTURES

Sailing on the Isaac H. Evans in Maine.



MISSION POINT RESORT

Kite-flying at Mission Point in Michigan.



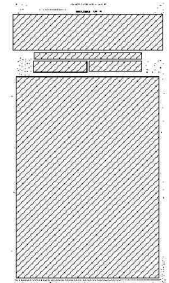
WILD DUNES RESORT

Photo tours from Wild Dunes in South Carolina.



TYLER WENDT COURTESY OF O.A.R.S.

Rafting in Utah's red rock canyons.



## Northeast

## Midwest

## South

## West

### Active

#### VERMONT

This summer, Trek Travel will introduce a family bike trip to Vermont. The six-day itinerary makes a circuit from the Lake Champlain Valley to the Green Mountains in Stowe. Except for a day of kayaking and canoeing, each day schedules a regular bike ride (up to 36 miles) as well as a short option (7 to 10 miles) and one for avid riders (up to 54 miles), with shuttles for anyone who gets tired. Out-of-the-saddle visits include a horse farm, Elmore Mountain Fire Tower and Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Factory. From \$2,299 per person; trektravel.com.



#### WISCONSIN DELLS, WIS.

Water parks drive traffic to the Wisconsin Dells, home to the greatest concentration of splash pools in the country, but this season it adds a land-based attraction in Heightened Adventures at Chula Vista Resort. The new six-acre woodland park features an aerial obstacle course using zip lines, high ropes and suspended planks in four different routes, escalating in difficulty and in height from 10 to 45 feet off the ground. Two-hour admission from \$45; heightenedadventures.com.

#### BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY, N.C.

Stretch your legs at two new attractions along North Carolina's section of the Blue Ridge Parkway. In Blowing Rock, the new High Gravity Adventures aerial park offers three adventure courses that progress in difficulty at 20, 35 and 50 feet above ground, and feature suspended bridges, platforms, rope webs and tightrope walks (\$19 to \$49; highgravityadventures.com). In Asheville, Navitat's Blue Ridge Experience opened last spring, with side-by-side zip lines offering sky-high views of the Blue Ridge Mountains; \$89; navitat.com.

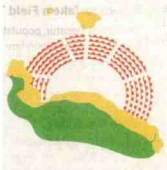
#### GREEN RIVER, UTAH

Raft the Green River in Utah through red rock canyons with a new five-day trip offered by O.A.R.S. The frequency of Class II and III rapids (there are more than 50) keeps the thrill level high. From a series of shoreline camps set up en route, rafters can explore ancient petroglyphs, Native American ruins and the ranch where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid hid from the law. Five-day trips start at \$995 for ages 6 and up, and \$1,395 for adults; oars.com.

### Culture

#### CATSKILLS, N.Y.

New this year, the Kaaterskill Clove Experience maps a series of self-guided road trips in the Catskill Mountains gorge area that inspired Hudson River School painters. Four multiday itineraries feature one devoted to adventure, including hikes and camping overnights, and another pegged to families that combines wilderness attractions, camping and zip-line thrills with visits to the former homes of Thomas Cole, the painter, and John Burroughs, the writer; greatnortherncatskills.com.



#### CHICAGO

Explore the design for which Chicago is famous in playful, hands-on style in the Chicago Architecture Foundation's ArcelorMittal Design Studio @ CAF. Every Sunday the studio provides children with the opportunity to build with Lego bricks on a monthly theme, such as "texture," with open drop-in hours during the week. Hyatt Chicago Magnificent Mile is offering a package with the nonprofit group that includes a walking tour, a Lego building session and daily breakfast from \$219; chicagomagnificentmile.hyatt.com.

#### POVERTY POINT, LA.

Comprising six concentric curving mounds that hug a central plaza on the Mississippi River floodplain, Poverty Point in northwestern Louisiana is an archaeological mystery, made by American Indians over 3,000 year ago. Last summer, the 400-acre earthworks were designated a World Heritage site by Unesco. Explore them via hiking trail or tram tour; crt.state.la.us.

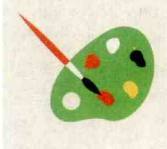
#### SAN FRANCISCO

Visit the city that inspired the animated "Big Hero 6" with a new long-weekend itinerary in San Francisco designed by Adventures by Disney, including visits to the Walt Disney Family Museum and Lucasfilm as well as Muir Woods. From \$2,669 per adult, \$2,549 per child; adventuresbydisney.com.

### Enrichment

#### NEW YORK CITY

Broadway embraces families this summer with the new musicals "Gigi," featuring the "High School Musical" star Vanessa Hudgens, and "Finding Neverland" based on the "Peter Pan" author J.M. Barrie. The luxury tour operator Cox & Kings' new "Behind the Scenes of the Big Apple" package includes a meeting with an undisclosed Broadway actor for a backstage tour, as well as other V.I.P. experiences like a private chef-led tour of a restaurant run by a "Top Chef" alumnus and a progressive feast by bike in Brooklyn. \$5,400 per person, double occupancy; coxandkingsusa.com.



#### URBANDALE, IOWA

On the outskirts of Des Moines, Living History Farms, a 500-acre outdoor museum featuring three working farms devoted to Native American, early pioneer and horse-plow techniques, will offer hands-on activities in historic building, decorating and cooking practices throughout the summer. Demonstration events on the calendar include baseball games using 19th-century rules and grain harvesting by hand. Admission, \$9 to \$14.75; ihr.org.

#### CHARLESTON, S.C.

Instagram fans can see Charleston through a photographer's lens, literally, with new photo tours offered by Wild Dunes resort with the photographer Tiffany Briley. The two-day tour introduces shooters to the area's bridges, shrimp boats, plantations and driftwood-strewn beaches from photogenic vantage points. Rates are \$610 per night per person, including tours; wilddunes.com.

#### SANTA FE, N.M.

Go back to school — together — in Santa Fe. The cultural destination features a number of educational attractions like the new Santa Fe Art Classes, which offer two-hour painting classes where beginners are welcome (\$45; santafeartclasses.com). Learn the basics of Southwestern cuisine in hands-on family cooking classes at Santa Fe School of Cooking (\$75; santafeschoolofcooking.com). Attend skateboard Skate School (\$25; skateboardsafety.com). Or make adobe bricks at Adobe in Action, a nonprofit group that provides them free to community projects (adobeinaction.org).

### Nature

#### MAINE

Set sail on the Isaac H. Evans, an authentic 19th-century tall-masted ship known as a windjammer. Based in Rockland, the 22-bunk ship runs overnight cruises, from one to six nights. The new Bastille Day itinerary, including fireworks and a meeting with a French frigate in July, is nearly sold out, but other available departures focus on astronomy, lighthouses and lobster. The three-night pirate adventure allows guests to dress as swashbucklers, fire a cannon and defend the ship. One-night departures from \$250 per person; isaacevans.com.



#### BLACK HILLS, S.D.

Sign up for daily trail rides and nightly campfires at the Ghost Canyon Dude Ranch opening in May just east of Custer State Park in the Black Hills. Three paneled bunkhouses can accommodate up to 16 guests, who are free to poke around the 63-acre property, which includes an original homestead from the 1870s. Five-night stays feature visits to area attractions including Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse. Rates from \$1,565 per person for five nights, all-inclusive; ghostcanyonduderanch.com.

#### FORT MYERS, FLA.

Around Fort Myers, learn a little about the Gulf Coast ecosystem between swims and sand castle construction sessions. Hit the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum on Sanibel Island for a weekly beach walk with a marine naturalist. Stay at the nearby Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina on Fort Myers Beach, which employs a naturalist to lead morning wildlife walks and answer midday questions at the pool about the local flora and fauna. Rooms from \$204; pinkshell.com; shellmuseum.org.

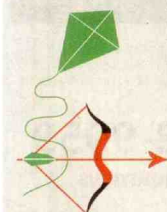
#### ESTES PARK, COLO.

Rocky Mountain Conservancy, a nonprofit organization in Estes Park, will celebrate Rocky Mountain National Park's centennial throughout the year with new classes in subjects including art, survival skills, photography, sketching and environmental studies. Most are one-day courses, with a few, including one on wildflowers, covering two days. Classes are \$10 to \$250; rmconservancy.org.

### Resort

#### CAPE COD, MASS.

Confront a great white shark in "Jaws" territory with new research-focused excursions offered by Chatham Bars Inn with the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy. Guests 18 and older can participate in a full-day research trip with the conservancy's scientists (\$2,500 for two), but there is no age limit on one-hour scientist-guided boat trips, beginning in July, to areas frequented by great whites including sandbars where sharks prey on gray seals (\$50 per person). Researchers also give complimentary educational talks on the property twice weekly. Rooms from \$495; chathambarsinn.com.



#### MACKINAC ISLAND, MICH.

Wedge between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, Mackinac Island bans motorized vehicles, offering traffic-free biking on its many roads, including the popular 8.3-mile-circumference route. While the island's appeal is timeless, thanks to the landmark Grand Hotel and the auto ban, its second-largest resort, Mission Point, was recently acquired by new owners who have renovated rooms, installed a meditation maze in the garden and brought barrel-aged cocktails to the bar. An appointed "kite master" will lead twice-weekly kite-flying workshops on the 18-acre property. Rooms from \$109; missionpoint.com.

#### MEMPHIS

For sheer novelty, it will be hard to top a hunting-themed resort lodged in an Egyptian-inspired pyramid. The newly opened Big Cypress Lodge, along with an outlet of Bass Pro Shops, will anchor the former sports arena known as the Memphis Pyramid, with 105 rooms designed in homage to hunting cabins, with wood and corrugated metal walls, set in an indoor swamp. The building will also house 10 aquariums, a duck aviary, archery range, bowling alley and 32-story observation deck. Rooms from \$235; big-cypress.com.

#### OAHU, HAWAII

Oahu's North Shore is the epicenter of big wave surfing in winter, when the curls are best left to the pros. But in summer, the ocean is calmer and ideal for learning the sport. Book a room at the newly refurbished 410-room Turtle Bay Resort, which offers surf lessons as well as horseback riding, stand-up paddling and fishing on its 840 acres. Rooms from \$299; turtlebayresort.com.