



Pack the
KIDS
and Off You Go

FAVORITE FAMILY
VACATIONS

- BY -

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Does the phrase “family vacation” cause you to shudder with fear? It shouldn’t. Think of it as a play date with your brood, a simple far-flung foray for folks who live most of their days in urbanity’s fast lane. To embark on a jaunt with kids in tow cements bonds and promotes teambuilding. It spikes curiosity, opens hearts and broadens minds. Getaways with the gang incite laughter, increase confidence and build memories. Like a laboratory, family holidays provide a safe place for experimentation, research and inquiry. Thankfully, they vanquish the stress and stolidness of those pesky daily routines. We all need that, right? So, grab the mob and trudge the road with gusto. Throw in a third generation, and the party only increases in value.

THE SAFARI

Cheetahs. Topi. Hyena. Oh my! Step in to the pages of a storybook when you take your kids to Africa on a safari. It's the sort of trip that touches people way down to their core and bores in to their souls. Ernest Hemingway put it like this: "I never knew of a morning in Africa when I woke up and I was not happy." It has that effect on travelers. And kids, the tabula rasa that they are, feel its ancient majesty most of all. Whether you tread to East, South or Central Africa, you'll be rooted in to something more profound than yourself. For families, this ultimate trip offers something for everyone.

"Pedal faster," says Kone, my Maasai guide. He dons a red plaid blanket, wound around his torso to create a kilt-like garment. I'm not sure I comprehend how he can pedal his bike through the black volcanic sand mounds that carpet the road we ride through the Chyulu Hills of Eastern Kenya wearing that. I sport shorts, and still, I struggle to cycle through the morass. But effort's not an issue when the bush offers so much distraction. I crank it up just to not be ensconced amid a flock of ostriches hoofing it past me as if a farmer's ringing a cow bell to call them for dinner. Moments later, a tower of giraffes galumph by and light-as-air

Thompson gazelle spin like ballet dancers in a pas de deux above the earth.

While exploring the open-fenced ranch reserve of Ol Donyo Resort, a Relais Chateaux 20-bed lodge pinched in to the slopes of the mountains, I also walk through the bush with a guide, ending my hike with a white-tablecloth picnic breakfast beneath Acacia trees, and ride horses across the bush. When not traversing the bush, I take a seat in Ol Donyo's branch-covered hide, positioned just feet from an elephant watering hole. Families love sitting here for hours to glimpse giraffes, warthogs and the parades of elephants in attendance. Kids learn about local culture with an immersion visit to the local Maasai village located nearby, learning to sing, dance and make local bead crafts.

While some might fear bringing children to Africa, a variety of outfitters will put those anxieties to rest with well-laid plans, bespoke services and 24/7 attentiveness. Micato Safaris, a family-owned and -operated outfitter based in Kenya, has tested their family safaris on their own grandchildren. Instituting an all-encompassing adventure called Family-to-Family

Safari, Micato personalizes itineraries, delivering families only to lodges approved and tested by their own kin. While there's no age requirement for a safari, children who wish to go on game drives should be old enough to sit still and stay quiet (if animals are spotted) on the two- to four-hour ventures.

"That depends from child to child," says Denis Simi, a Micato guide, "but, generally, we feel 7 is a great age to begin."

Kids disinterested in the sometimes arduous and occasionally unfruitful car outings can remain back at the lodges, rooting in to their surroundings. Micato's family safaris encompass pastimes such as junior guide training, African crafts, storytelling, local

music lessons and stargazing. Some of the lodges on Micato's family-sanctioned list even offer elephant- and camel-riding safaris

—the ultimate way to spy lions, cheetahs, leopards and other wildlife. But when the sun sets, its sundowner time, and the whole family convenes to share stories and salute their day well spent in Africa.

For more information, visit micatosafaris.com.

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