

11 Dream Destinations That Are Actually Kid-Friendly

The places you've always wanted to go are *so* not off the table, even if your kids are super young.



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By Andrea Bartz May 3, 2017

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here]...when my kids are older." It's easy to feel like homework and soccer practice (or diapers and strollers) have shunted far-flung vacations way, *way* off the table. But the truth is, Disney World and [family-themed cruises](#) are not your only options.

"It's really not that hard, and it's actually important to treat yourself to visiting places *you* want to see," says Anna Davies, a New York-based writer and mom of 2-year-old Lucy who shares her travel tips and adventures on [Instagram](#). She was terrified before her first flight with Lucy, she says, but now they've gone on more than 30 flights and hit up six countries and about 15 states together. "What I've realized is kids — even young ones — love traveling for the same reasons we do: They get to have a new routine, spend time with the people they love, and eat fun snacks!" she says. And on the road, *she* gets to experience places she loves, which makes her a happier mom. In Costa Rica, she hired a friend-of-a-friend to babysit Lucy for a few hours every morning while she surfed or took yoga. "Then we could really enjoy the rest of the day together," she says. Dreamy, no?

These 11 destinations will give you some [#travelinspo](#) [beyond the traditional "family-friendly"](#) — you'll love them, and they also offer benefits for young kids. Get ready to start Pinning to your Travel Board...

Rome, Italy



"So much history!" might not be a selling point for your offspring, but try "gory battles, backstabbing gods, and bone-crushing weapons" and you'll begin to see why the Eternal City holds so much appeal for the younger set. Read them an age-appropriate book about Ancient Rome before you go ([Amazon](#) has some ideas), or start them off with [gladiator school](#), where kids will learn about life in the imperial city — plus how to fight like Maximus. The Colosseum, Roman Forum, Pantheon, and more will feel cool in context. Consider a stay at the sprawling [Rome Cavalieri, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts](#), which leads kids on a special myths and heroes tour, organizes treasure hunts in Villa Borghese, and arranges a curated family shopping trip through some of Rome's most renowned designer's shops.

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Dubai, United Arab Emirates



The city isn't all fancy cars and glittering skyscrapers (although there's plenty of both). It's also home to non-cheesy adventures your kids (and you!) will love, from feeding a three-foot-wide turtle at the [Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project](#) to catching a free show at [Dubai's massive musical fountains](#). Once you venture outside the city limits, there are camel rides, sand skiing (think of it as hot-weather sledding!), and dune-bashing (where your Jeep guns it over sand hills, so you feel like you're on a rollercoaster) through the Arabian desert. Check in at [Atlantis The Palm](#) for loads more family-friendly activities: There's the Middle East's largest [waterpark](#), an [aquarium](#) holding more than 65,000 creatures, and evening programming for kids age 3-12 (so you and your partner can enjoy date night).

3 Amsterdam, The Netherlands



In this picturesque, walkable city, kids aren't coddled or kept away from "grown-up" restos or bars; even teeny little things bike confidently next to their parents, and many restaurants have a corner set aside for kiddos, with a basket of toys or just some space to play. There are cool playgrounds everywhere and tons of family-friendly attractions, such as the [NEMO Science Museum](#), the [ARTIS-Amsterdam Royal Zoo](#), and the surprisingly cool [National Maritime Museum](#). The [Pulitzer Amsterdam](#), a hotel stitched together from 25 traditional canal houses, offers curated amenities (like natural bath products for babies and activity books for toddlers), a labyrinthine interior for mini explorers, and a 13,000-square-foot courtyard with a giant swing, hand-carved rocking horses, and wide-open garden areas for tag or tummy time. Just don't be one of the creepy parents walking through the Red Light District with your kids...

4 Melbourne, Australia



Admit it: You've always wanted to visit Australia. If your kids are old enough to make it through the long plane ride out there, now's the time: There's plenty to make you feel like a giddy little kid, from being blown away by the [Scienceworks Museum](#) to checking out the march of the penguins at [Phillip Island](#) to seeing the forest and fern gullies from the century-old [Puffing Billy Steam Railway](#). Book a room at [The Langham Hotel Melbourne](#), a stylish spot that also caters to little ones with Children's High Teas.

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5 Monte Carlo, Monaco



Touring the famed Monte Carlo Casino might not be your kids' idea of a good time, but you'll all get a kick out of the [Oceanographic Museum](#), [Exotic Gardens and Observational Cave](#), and [Zoological Gardens](#). Also, considering Monaco's location and size (the entire country takes up about as much space as NYC's Central Park), you can easily visit Italy and France all in one day: three trips in one! The [Hotel Metropole Monte-Carlo](#) has tons of cool kids programming, including daily games and workshops in KClub (for ages 4-12) and a Little Chefs dessert-making lesson in the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant.

6 Ubud, Bali, Indonesia



Ubud may be where Elizabeth Gilbert had the final leg of her *Eat, Pray, Love* journey, but you don't have to embark on a solo spiritual quest to fall in love with this scenic region. Kids will dig the area's hippie vibe and rich cultural traditions (think handicraft markets and traditional dance performances). To take full advantage, stay at [Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve](#), where the Kids' Hut is an educational farm, complete with the resort's cow, chickens, rabbits, and ducks. It's also the home base for activities like foraging and tasting veggies and herbs, crafting Jamu, a Balinese herbal drink, tie-dyeing, rice planting, and more. Worth noting: The Kids' Hut is open to parents, too.

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7 Paris, France



OK, maybe your kids don't appreciate foie gras or classical art (yet!). They'll still find plenty to love in the City of Light. [Le Jardin du Luxembourg](#), for example, is a little one's dream, with ice cream stands, sandpits, pony rides, vintage miniature sailboat rentals, and puppet shows (called Guignol — kids under 8 or so will be into it). [Ile de la Cité](#) flower market (near Notre Dame) is full of lively chickens, ferrets, parrots, and rabbits, and Le Marais neighborhood is home to a famous carousel at Place Saint-Paul and a quirky [Magic Museum](#) hidden in a vaulted cellar. Traveling with un bébé? Take a bus instead of the metro (much easier with a stroller!) and camp out in a bakery when you need a rest; the chewy bread makes an awfully good teething toy for little mouths. Hotel-wise, [Novotel Paris Les Halles](#) is centrally located, and up to two kids under age 16 stay free.

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8 Cape Town, South Africa



This capital city is known for its jaw-dropping hikes and scenic overlooks. If you want some alone time on the trails, pick a hotel that'll keep your brood busy; The KidsOnly program at [One&Only Cape Town](#) will cart your kids on field trips to [Butterfly World](#), [Two Oceans Aquarium](#), [Boulders Beach and Penguin Colony](#) (where they can freaking *swim with African penguins*), [World of Birds](#) (the largest bird park in Africa), and more. The resort is happy to lend you complimentary baby items (like a high chair, bottle warmer, and bottle sterilizer), and offers babysitting services.

9 Machu Picchu, Peru



Kids love exploring the citadel of Machu Picchu — it's packed with hidden forts and structures. The nearby natural hot springs in [Agua Calientes](#) and the [Andean Bear Rescue Center](#) (a nonprofit rehabilitating the native animal and bringing it back into its home environment) make worthy stops, as well. [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#) offers an Explorer Kit (complete with a flashlight, magnifying glass, cap, and more in a child's backpack), nanny service, and a daytime treasure hunt on hotel grounds, with riddles and handicrafts sneakily teaching kids about the local flora and fauna.

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10 Punta Cana Dominican Republic



Nothing ruins a tropical vacation like a kid rolling over on his beach towel and announcing, "Mooom, I'm boooored." Eliminate that possibility by staying on an island where activities abound. The massive [Puntacana Resort & Club](#) has you covered, with lagoon-hopping in the [Ojos Indigenas Ecological Reserve](#) (there are platforms for your little daredevils to jump from), kiteboarding lessons in Playa Blanca's super-safe, waist-deep water, kids' tennis clinics, and beachside horse rides at El Rancho. Golf, hit up the spa, or just lounge on the white-sand beaches, then meet up at dinner and watch your sun-tanned kids breathlessly tell you about their day.

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// Chiang Mai, Thailand



This dreamy city offers something for the kid in all of us: Elephant sanctuaries abound (look for one that, like the [Elephant Nature Park](#), doesn't allow visitors to ride the animals — it hurts their backs), where travelers can feed, bathe, and hug the gentle giants; [ziplines](#) are strung over jungle's emerald treetops; and the ancient, walled city itself blends old and new, with beautiful temples steps from kid-friendly fro-yo shops. Stay away from the hustle and bustle at the stunning [Four Seasons Chiang Mai](#), a resort built around a working rice field, where little ones can bathe a water buffalo, take a kid-friendly cooking class, and learn the art of Muay Thai boxing — or just hang out by the gorgeous infinity pool.

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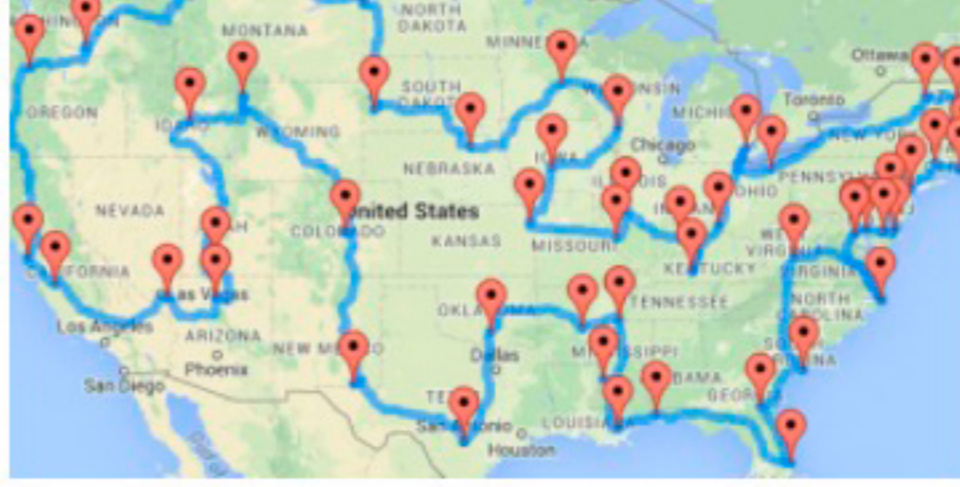


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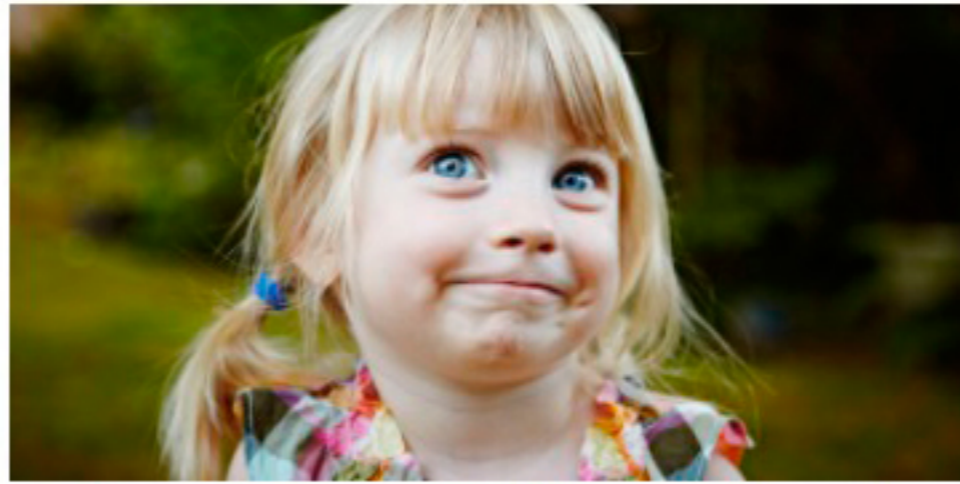
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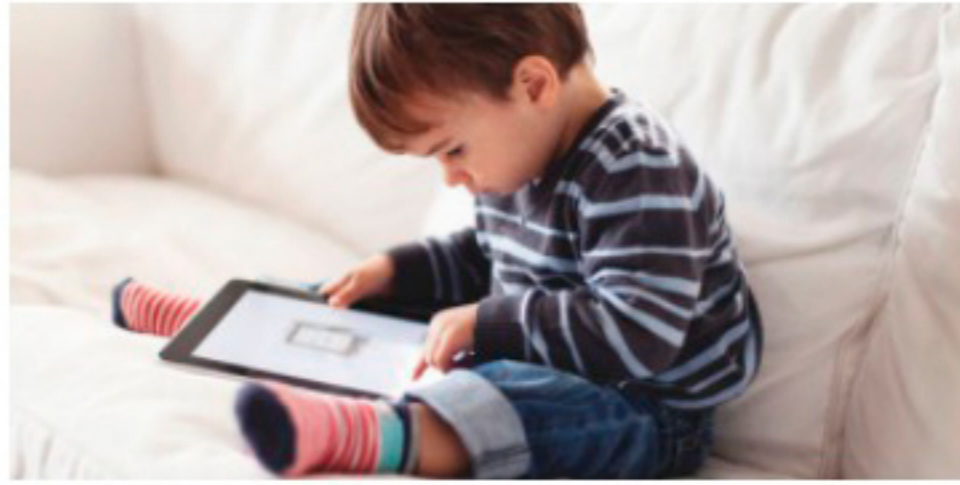
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