

It's Summer – Got Kids?

Written by Connie Valimont
Tuesday, 24 May 2011 14:47



The kids are out of school for the summer – now what? Gone are the days of packing everyone in the family station wagon and heading for grandma's . . . today's kids are so connected to their world thanks to electronics that they want to hike in the Rockies or ski in South America (remember, it's winter down there now) or order room service at midnight while cruising the Caribbean. Ah, to be a kid again!

Here are some travel tapas that may fit into your summer calendar:

Release Your Inner Cowboy or Just Enjoy the Wild West: For a rip-roaring good time that your kids will rave about for years to come, consider a Dude Ranch. The entire family can get outdoors for horseback riding, fishing, hiking, and swimming in ponds and streams, and then

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gather nightly around the campfire for stories and S'mores. River raft beneath the Grand Tetons, witness the eruption of Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone and be on the lookout for herds of bison & elk -- the kids will definitely have fodder for their "what I did on my summer vacation" paper when summer's over.

So Long Harry: This summer, the last Harry Potter movie will premier, ending what has been an epic nine-year run of movies from the much-loved J.K. Rowlings series. Make it an extra special farewell with a visit to *Universal Studio Orlando's The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*.

Ships As Destinations: While favorite family destinations include Alaska, Europe and Hawaii, some ships have become destinations in themselves, such as those from Disney and Royal Caribbean. Perfect for multi-generational travel, there's something for every age, both onboard and on shore, to guarantee precious family memories. For example, Royal Caribbean's newest ships – the *Oasis of the Seas* and the *Allure of the Seas* -- are feats of architecture and imagination designed around seven "neighborhoods." These two ships sail the Eastern & Western Caribbean from May-September, 2011 and ports include St Thomas, St Maarten and Nassau

OR

Labadee (Haiti), Costa May (Mexico) and Cozumel. Why not take back-to-back cruises and see them all? Disney Cruise makes its first visit to Alaska this summer. Renowned for being family-friendly, their Alaska trip aboard

Wonder

will be filled with Disney characters, kids' clubs and activities, and uber-kid-friendly adventures at ports like Skagway and Ketchikan.

Channeling Clark Griswold: Okay, I had to at least mention road trips – my dad loved to drive and our summer vacation included visiting relatives "up north." Those were the days before DVDs and MP3s – good thing I can read in the car. Load up the family and let the drive

be the vacation for other drive-worthy destinations including the Pacific Coast Highway in California; Alligator Alley in FL spanning the Everglades Eco-system; and Cape Cod's Historic Route 6A.

Some Historic Anniversaries: The first shots of the Civil War were 150 years ago and even 150 years later, the war that divided our country remains an important part of American history. Give your school-aged children an up-close and personal history lesson by visiting one of the sites close to us locally: Charleston. In addition, Lady Liberty turns 125 this year – visit NY,

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ferry over to Ellis Island and, if the legs are in shape, make the climb! This year also marks the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese and our entry into WWII. The *USS Arizona* memorial is constructed over the remains of this sunken battleship in the harbor in Oahu, and is part of a tour managed by the National Park Service.

Single Parent Pricing: The times are changing and so is our concept of the family unit. As such one hotel chain is offering their single parent pricing program. All single adults traveling with one or two kids receive the same double room adult price that a couple would receive, meaning these guests no longer have to pay a single supplement.

Summer Sans the Kids: Last but not least – leave the kids with grandma and take a romantic getaway for just the two of you. Sail Oslo to Le Havre in August for 7 nights on the *Wind Spirit* (Windstar's tall-masted sailing yacht and one of my favorite cruise lines) and explore the Baltics from the canals of Amsterdam to the ancient Medieval architecture of Bruges. Experience the romance of being at sea under sail.

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