

K I D

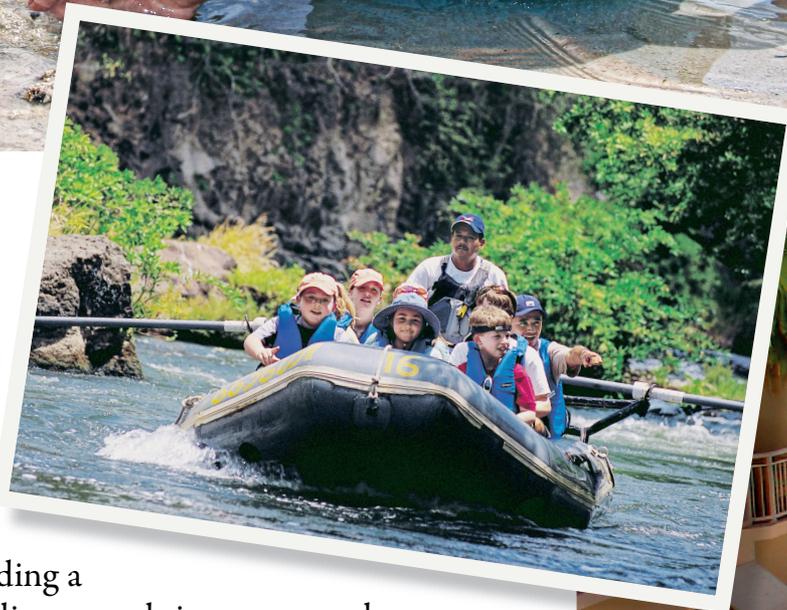
FRIENDLY TRAVEL SPOTS



BY LISA ARCELLA

It might be easier to negotiate a lasting peace in the middle east than it is coming up with a vacation plan the whole family is excited and happy about. That's an exaggeration of course, but you know the drill... If you have young kids, it's finding a place that's going to be accepting of diapers and sippy cups and still make you feel like you're having a grown-up getaway. If you have teenagers, it has to be a spot that's sufficiently cool - where they can't get into too much trouble if they're out of your sight for five minutes.

But there is a solution! *Toy Box* has come up with these get-aways that will meet all of a parent's needs - some are affordable and some are that one trip to build a lasting memory on. But all include that most important of requirements - relaxation and family togetherness.



Jumby Bay, Antigua

Jumby Bay is actually on an exclusive 300-acre private island off the coast of Antigua. The island is renowned for its *Hawksbill Turtle Program*. Each year, from June through November, families can sign-up to be part of Jumby Bay's "Turtle Team." While on *Turtle Watch*, guests are instantly informed of sightings, and escorted to the moonlit beach where kids will wonder at the sight of turtles crawling onto the sand to begin nesting. Jumby Bay's Turtle Watch pro-

gram guarantees that kids catch all of the reptilian action and get closer to nature. What better way to pull your kid away from the video games - at least for a little while. Of course there's everything else that comes with a top beach resort too, including beautiful beaches and impeccable service.

Topnotch Resort and Spa, Stowe, VT

While the kids wear out their batteries with all there is to do at this popular winter

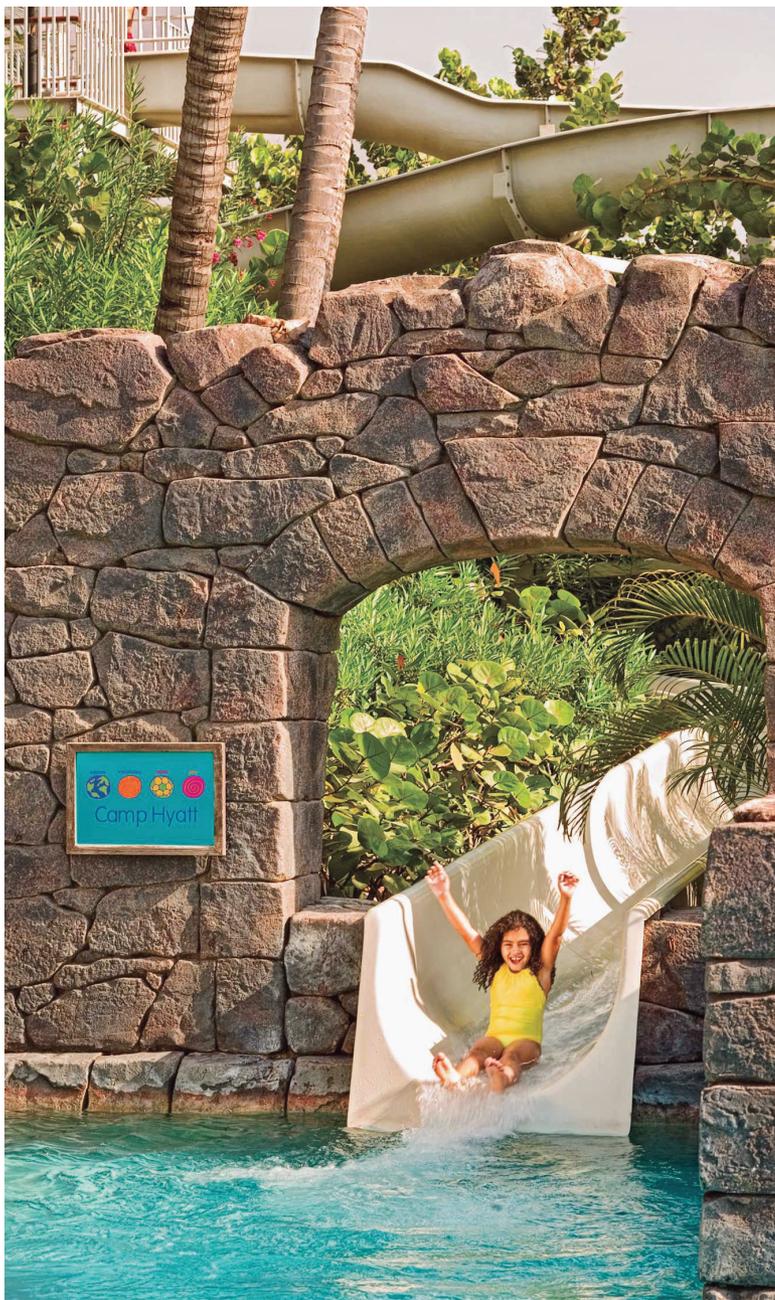
getaway spot - including skiing (cross country and alpine), snowshoeing, horse-drawn sleigh rides, indoor tennis, 2 pools (one indoor and one outdoor heated year-round) and more - you can unwind in the 35,000 square foot spa that offers more than 120 treatments. There are even spa treatments geared specifically toward teens. The *Total Teen Facial* and the *Super Sugar Scrub* are said to be big hits with the younger crowd. The resort also recently added a "Teens Only Zone," complimen-

tary for Topnotch guests ages 13-18 only. Located next to the resort's ice skating rink, the Teens Only Zone offers activities such as video games and board games, movies, internet access, ice skating with complimentary rentals, outdoor music & bonfires, hot non-alcoholic beverages.

Royal Madikwe Game Reserve, South Africa

If you are going to take one really exotic family getaway together, this lodge would be





it. For starters, the quirky looking lodge looks like it stepped off the pages of *"The Hobbit."* Inside, beautiful dark wood interiors offer sweeping views of the surrounding bush. This really is the place to become one with nature and the emphasis is on encouraging families to participate in the experience together. Game drives are designed to suit all interests and the knowledgeable rangers are ready to help kids spot lions, zebras, giraffes, wild beasts and feral dogs. Back at the lodge, there are also programs for kids including African beading and jewelry making; learning the

local language of Tswana; bush baking or heading out to identify animal tracks.

Hawks Cay at Duck Key, Florida

This resort is on a private island in the *Florida Keys*, and offers young kids and teens plenty of activities to keep them entertained and begging for more. Programs for every skill-level are tailored to teach young people their way around the water. They can learn about the environment on an Eco-Kayak tour, snorkel, scuba dive and SNUBA®. Other programs available include games, contests, arts and crafts, nature

lessons, water-sports, an exclusive pool, sport courts, and evening events just for teens and pre-teens. There are also groups for 4-11 year-olds so the younger kids can make new friends. There's a spa, and of course, some of the best fishing found in Florida and even in the world - for you grown-up types - is also made available to the more adventurous sea lovers.

Caneel Bay, St John, Virgin Islands

This 170 acre resort is located smack in the middle of *Virgin Islands National Park*, so you know there's tons for kids to see and do. A new program called Geocaching - a high-tech scavenger hunt where guests use GPS pocket navigators to search *Caneel Bay* and the island in pursuit of hidden geographic coordinates and memorabilia, has become a popular way to explore. For the younger crowd (3 to 12 years olds) there's *Turtle Town*, Caneel's children's center for kids, featuring creative arts and crafts and an array of other activities. Be warned parents: there are no televisions in the rooms here, but don't you want at least a few days when there is no one competing with you for your kid's attention?

Dinosaur digging in Mongolia

Ok, so this definitely isn't a week away at the beach house. *Nomadic Expeditions* offers a once-in-a-lifetime family trip to exotic Mongolia to dig for actual dinosaurs in what's known as "Mecca" for fossils hunters. It comes with a very steep price tag (\$3,845 per person), but your tiny Indiana Jones will remember the expe-

rience forever. *"Dinosaurs of the Gobi"* includes eight nights of camping in expedition-style tents and three nights at the *Three Camel Lodge*, Nomadic Expeditions' luxury camp near the *Gobi-Altai Mountains*. The itinerary includes an excursion to where the spectacular *"Fighting Dinosaurs"* fossil of a Protoceratops and Velociraptor locked in mortal combat, was unearthed and the *Flaming Cliffs of the Gobi*, where the first nest of dinosaur eggs was discovered in 1922. *Dinosaurs of the Gobi* runs August 13-28, 2008. Check out the website, because there are other adventures like the *Golden Eagle Festival* or the *Thousand Camel Festival* that might appeal to your family's taste for adventure.

Country Walker Adventures, Costa Rica

Costa Rica is known for its rich natural resources and amazing rainforests. *Country Walkers* is for the outdoor enthusiast willing to explore this amazing land by foot. Kids and adults will get a thrill on the skywalk through the rainforest canopy, walking below volcanoes and kayaking an Outrigger. In addition, naturalist guides share extensive knowledge of the natural wonders encountered along the way - everything from plant and animal life to the *pura vida* (pure life) Costa Ricans love. The country is one of the safest in Latin America; always a concern when you are traveling with kids. There is no minimum age for the walking tours, but you generally cover about three to six miles - which as anyone with energetic kids knows, could be a bigger problem for you than them!



The company also does walking tours of *Ireland*, *Yellowstone*, the *Grand Canyon*, *Hawaii* and *Italy*.

Le Méridien, Bora Bora

Bora Bora seems like one of those perfect places to go on a honeymoon. But if you weren't lucky enough to get there when you were first married, there's no reason to not go now that you have kids! Guest bungalows seem to float in the crystal blue waters - filled with marine life of course - and there's a world class Polynesian restaurant. There's also plenty for your kids to love, too,

including Polynesian outrigger canoes, jet skiing, sailing, shark feeding and scuba diving. *Le Méridien* recently opened a new outdoor playground, and additionally offers complementary kid-sized snorkeling equipment and special-sized children's kayaks and sailboats. The renowned *Turtle Sanctuary*, located in the resort's own private lagoon, provides much-needed protection to some of the *South Pacific's* most vulnerable creatures, while also educating children about the importance of marine turtles' survival. As the only effort of its kind in *French Polynesia*, kids are invited to

“adopt” a turtle and track their progress on a special website once they get home.

Hyatt Regency Resort & Casino, Aruba

The *Camp Hyatt* program in *Aruba* - known on-site as *Camp Watapana* - offers supervised activities and special programs for children 3-12 years old, with a focus on environmental awareness and Aruba's culture. Kids can learn why *Divi Divi* trees always point against the steady trade breezes, discover why an island can also be a desert, or find out why Aruba has windmills. Day and evening activities, led by

professional camp counselors, include nature walks, Papiamentu lessons, games, playground, pool swimming and beach activities. There's also a multi-level pool complex that kids and most adults will love. There's a three-story water slide and a fresh water lagoon complete with tropical fish and wildlife, including black swans and koi. This hotel (with a great casino and spa for grownups to play in while the kids are away at camp) is so anxious for you to bring your kids, when you book a room, you can get a second at 50% off for the kids! www.aruba.hyatt.com ☐