

California's Mammoth Lakes puts families in adventure mode, with fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and creek-leaping.



7 Tailored Trips FOR THE MODERN FAMILY



The family vacation, like the concept of family itself, has evolved. Kids are traveling with grandma or a single parent or an indulgent uncle (or all three). However you define your kin, we have an itinerary that's all relative

MAMMOTH LAKES, CALIFORNIA

Just Add Water

A mom-and-son (plus dog) fishing trip

WHY GO Fishing's a big part of the summer lure at pooch-friendly Mammoth Lakes, in California's eastern Sierra, but families will find much more than fins to occupy them. Thirty-two miles south of Yosemite National Park, Mammoth Mountain and Mammoth Crest tower above the town and a basin with nearly two dozen glassy lakes. Many a father and child have come here for some one-on-one time while waiting for a bite on the line, but why not mom?

THE PLAN After arriving at Mammoth Yosemite Airport and renting a car for a week at the lakes, mom and son can throw up the tent at Coldwater Campground near Lake Mary, pick a cozy cabin at Tamarack Lodge along Twin Lakes, or go comfy at Westin Monache Resort, which also provides a "Heavenly Dog Bed" for the family pet.

Get your bearings with a sweeping panorama of the dramatic Sierra at **Minaret Vista**. At the Main Lodge, take the Reds Meadow Shuttle Bus down to **Devils Postpile**, a weird wall of multisided volcanic basalt columns 60 feet high. Kids love sliding down broken columns at the base. For noontime rainbows, hike two miles to 101-foot-tall **Rainbow Falls**. Later, **Mammoth Fun Shop** is a must-stop for a root-beer float, gummy bacon, and air freshener redolent of popcorn.

The free **Lakes Basin Trolley** hauls visitors and their gear from town up to trailheads in the Lakes Basin. Choose among five one-mile trails to trout-stocked lakes. Bike level paths and then coast five miles downhill back to town. If Rover gets muddy, **Tailwaggers Gourmet Dog Bakery & Boutique** has a self-serve dog wash. Its best-selling doggie treat is the peanut-butter-and-bacon bone cookie.

Another day, take a kayak tour on **Mono Lake** with Caldera Kayaks, gliding past bizarre gray tufa spires jutting



A horse-and-buggy tours New Orleans' French Quarter.

like ghouls out of the water. Continue driving to **Bodie**, a gold-mining ghost town so well preserved that it looks as if everyone got spooked and fled one afternoon. Alas, no nuggets got left behind. Snap dizzying selfies next to cockeyed buildings, outhouses, and gravestones.

Mom starts the next day with a strong cuppa at **Looney Bean**. Then it's off to the **Adventure Center** across the street from the Main Lodge to zoom on a 100-yard-long zip line, go bungee-trampolining, and scale a 30-foot climbing wall. Tonight's dinner is tacos at **Gomez's Restaurant & Tequileria**, where dogs sit on the patio next to kids playing in a sandbox—while mom samples one of 150 tequilas.

Drive to **Rock Creek** the following day and hike a nearly flat trail at 10,000 feet in wildflower-filled **Little Lakes Valley**. The challenge: who's first to spot a chipmunk, ground squirrel, marmot, or deer. Stop at **Pie in the Sky Café** to indulge in a slice of mud pie: chocolate crust with mint-chocolate-chip ice cream, fudge sauce, whipped cream, and nuts. (There's apple or blackberry for mom.)

DON'T MISS Ride the gondola to the summit of 11,053-foot Mammoth Mountain for a 360-degree view of where you've been playing. Ambitious older kids can hike or mountain bike down, although you might want to avoid bike trails named Skid Marks and Kamikaze. —*April Orcutt*

NEW ORLEANS

Bayou and Me

Play date with a favorite uncle

WHY GO Bourbon Street may be restricted to 21 years and older, but an indulgent uncle (or aunt) seeking to spoil nieces and nephews in New Orleans can find plenty of lively attractions for young people. "The city's very friendly," says 12-year-old Brynn, who can walk to the famed St. Charles Avenue streetcar from her Carrollton neighborhood home. "There are parks everywhere." And you need only one packed day to get the good times rolling.

THE PLAN Breakfast begins with beignets—the uniquely New Orleans, deep-fried pastry topped with powdered sugar—at **Café du Monde** in the French Quarter's heart. After breakfast troop across Jackson Square, past Andrew Jackson's statue and the fortune-tellers, and up to the **Louisiana State Museum's** second floor in the historic Presbytere to discover both bejeweled costumes and the stories behind the city's Mardi Gras festivities at the permanent exhibit "It's Carnival Time in Louisiana."

Next stop: an hour-long tour of the **French Quarter** conducted by French Quartour Kids, designed for children

up to age 13 by former elementary school teacher and historian Jill Dresser. Hear about pirates, ghosts, and how kids lived in the 1830s. Then visit the **New Orleans Insectarium** and its bug buffet, serving up mealworm salsa and chocolate chirp cookies made with crickets.

Those not enamored of six-legged entrées may instead tuck into the fare at **District**, with a menu of homemade sliders and "extra fancy" doughnuts in exotic flavors like Vietnamese coffee and miso bacon praline. No need to quit munching at the newly opened **Southern Food and Beverage Museum**, where you can snack while touring the exhibit halls.

Work off the meal with a four-hour kayak tour along the **Bayou St. John** waterway and spot some of the southern Louisiana wildlife—turtles, egrets, pelicans, and maybe an alligator. If you can't find a representative of *A. mississippiensis* in the wild, the **Audubon Zoo** features them, as well as the new get-wet attraction, "Lazy River Gator Run," where visitors can float in inner tubes past the exhibits.

DON'T MISS John Besh's **Pizza Domenica** on Magazine Street features gourmet pizzas and garlic-bread knots with a dipping sauce of melted aged provolone. End your day with a traditional New Orleans snowball at **Hansen's**. The fluffy mound of shaved ice (never crushed) is flavored with homemade syrups. Locals adore the cool treats. And so did the James Beard Foundation, which named Hansen's one of "America's Classic" restaurants in 2014.

—*Andrew Nelson*

DODECANESE ISLANDS, GREECE

Our Big Fat Greek Sailing

A multigenerational odyssey

WHY GO From the windy Cyclades islands to the calmer Ionians, isle hopping in Greece is a great idea for a multigenerational holiday. But avoid the hassles of ferry schedules, flight connections, and multiple hotel bookings by chartering a crewed boat. On the *Calypso* (www.calypsoadventure.com), an elegant sailboat that sleeps ten, captain Dave Sidwell teaches kids to snorkel or spearfish. Or try Incrediblue, a Greek start-up that matches would-be sailors with boat owners. It's basically Airbnb at sea.

THE PLAN The **Dodecanese**, 12 islands close to the Turkish coast, comprise castles, monasteries, colorful towns, and castaway coves. The regional capital, **Rhodes**, is most travelers' first port of call. Then set sail for **Symi**; mansions in every shade of peach line its horseshoe harbor. **Panormitis Monastery** contains Byzantine and folk art, as well as a collection of bottles retrieved from the sea containing offerings to St. Michael, patron saint of sailors, that will spark the imagination of young seafarers. The monastery operates a wood-fired bakery where you can stock up on fresh bread.

Next stop: **Nisyros**, a sleepy island with a smoldering volcano at its heart. Dock outside the fishing town of Pali, then clamber up to the sulfurous crater, tiptoeing among hot springs puffing out smoke rings. It's an easy hike for all ages. For white sand, cruise to the uninhabited island of **Yiali** nearby.

A sanctuary for over a hundred bird species (including rare Eleonora's falcons), **Tilos** is a throwback to Greece before tourism. The town hall houses Stone Age fossils of dwarf elephants discovered in a nearby cave. In the abandoned 15th-century village of Mikro Chorio, inhabited mostly by goats, a crumbling stone house has been converted into the island's only disco, where teens can dance under the stars. The final port is rugged **Astypalaia**, known for its windmills, antiquities, and lobster spaghetti. At **Vathy**, a hidden lagoon, hike over the headland to admire prehistoric rock carvings, then tuck into fried calamari at the only taverna.

DON'T MISS On **Kounoupes**, two tiny isles connected by a strip of sand, collect natural sea salt by the handful, a savory memento of your trip. —*Rachel Howard*



A brisk Aegean Sea breeze powers windmills in the Cyclades, Greece.

5 COOL PLACES TO SLEEP

GLASS IGLOOS

Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort, Finland. No night-lights or tech toys required: Kids lie in bed and watch the aurora borealis (mid-August through April) overhead. Igloos sleep two or four.

CONCRETE TEPEES

Wigwam Villages; Kentucky, Arizona, and California. The last roadside motels remaining of seven built from 1936 to 1949 offer 28-foot-high freestanding tepee rooms and a retro American vibe.

BARONIAL CASTLE

Glennapp, Ballantrae, Scotland. Families get the royal treatment at this fairy-tale castle overlooking the Irish Sea, and kids get to try their hand at the ancient sport of falconry.

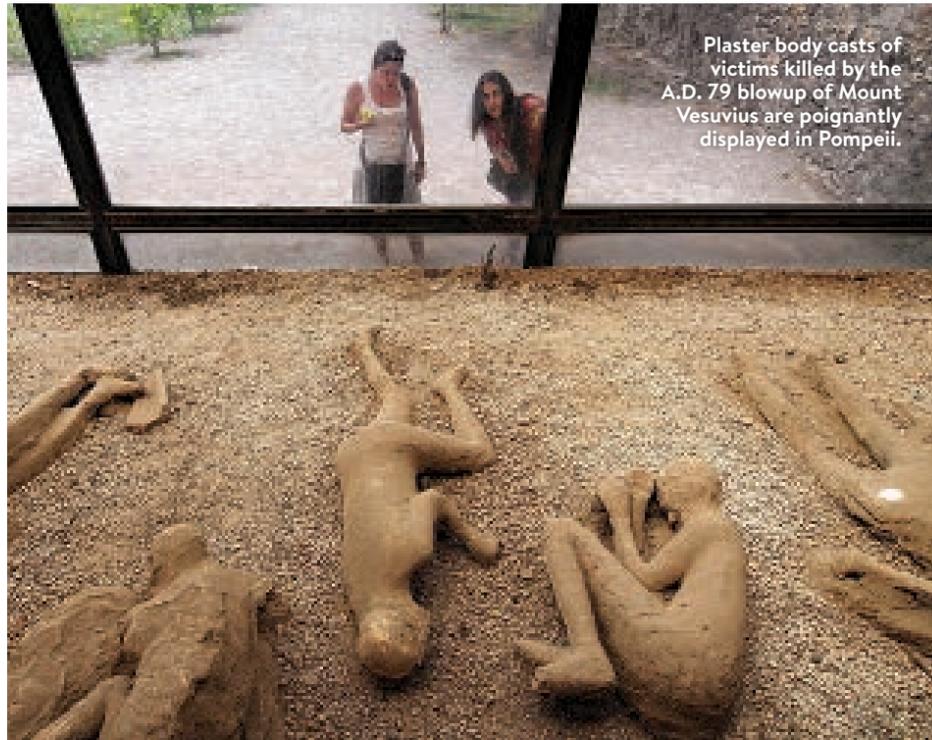
DRIVE-IN CINEMA ROOM

V8 Hotel-Motorworld Region, Stuttgart, Germany. Your crew can pile into an apple red Cadillac Coupe DeVille bed to watch their favorite flicks on the wall. The driving theme rolls on throughout the Motorworld complex, with its classic Lamborghinis, McLarens, and other vintage sports cars.

BEAGLE-SHAPED B&B

Dog Bark Park Inn, Cottonwood, Idaho. The big dog on the Camas Prairie—30-foot-tall Sweet Willy—is built for unplugged family vacations. Inside the beagle's head is a kid-size loft with books, board games, and puzzles. Visit the on-site chainsaw folk art studio, or meet wolves at the Wolf Education Center.

—Maryellen Kennedy Duckett



Plaster body casts of victims killed by the A.D. 79 blowup of Mount Vesuvius are poignantly displayed in Pompeii.

POMPEII

Once Upon a Time in Italy

Ciao time with tweens

WHY GO A deadly volcanic eruption. Gelato. Nudity. And pizza! That's how to sell this four-day southern Italian itinerary to tweens. What they'll also get is solid insight into Roman life in A.D. 79. That's when Vesuvius exploded in a superheated cloud of toxic gas and ash, killing some 16,000 people in Pompeii and neighboring Herculaneum almost instantaneously and preserving their towns in remarkable detail—until the buried cities were discovered some 1,600 years later.

THE PLAN Base yourself in gritty, sprawling Naples, capital of the Campania region and far sassier than the likes of Rome and Milan. The **Naples National Archaeological Museum** safeguards many of Pompeii's unearthed treasures, including a mosaic of Alexander the Great defeating the Persian King Darius. In the city considered the birthplace of pizza, dine at **L'Antica Pizzeria Da Michele**. Da Michele still serves only two classic styles of pie: *margherita* and *marinara*.

From Naples, take the train to Pompeii Scavi station. Book **Pompeii** tours online, via the local tourist office, or at your hotel. Choose a guided two-hour tour of the main highlights—from the bathhouses and brothel (you may want to skim the kids past the giggle-inducing naughty murals) to the taverns and laundrettes of ancient times. The plaster casts of dogs and people immortalized in their death throes invariably pique kids' curiosities.

Head to **Mount Vesuvius** on board the multipurpose four-wheel-drive "Unimog," the only vehicle allowed up to the foot of the walking trail. Trek up the steep, dusty path for spectacular views of the smoking crater. Prepare yourself for "it's stinky" comments, prompted by sulfurous gases. If asked "Will it erupt again?" reply that an explosion is long overdue.

DON'T MISS In Naples, head to **Il Gelato Mennella** (at two locations, Via Carducci and Via Scarlatti), with flavors including pistachio and lemon. —*Maria Pieri*

HANS WADE/LAIFREDUX (BODIES); KEENPRESS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE (FAIR)

PARIS

French Connections

European spree for mademoiselle and mom

WHY GO What *jeune fille* (or *filles*, for that matter) wouldn't love a Madeline-style weekend in Paris, packed with culture, shopping, and *macarons*?

THE PLAN Shake off jet lag with a guided tour of Paris's major attractions in a vintage convertible **Citroën Deux Chevaux**, run by a company called *4 roues sous 1 parapluie*. Then join the *beau monde* for afternoon tea at one of the French capital's posh palace hotels such as **Le Meurice**, centrally located across from the Louvre. It's pricey, but the high tea's tower of finger sandwiches, scones, and *petit fours* could easily substitute for dinner.

Globe-trotting restaurateur Amy Morton recommends beginning a "monumental" day with **Notre Dame**

Cathedral. Visiting the church's crypt with its Roman ruins "gave my young daughters a real sense of Paris's multi-layered history," she says. At the **Eiffel Tower**, skip the long ticket queues by reserving online ahead of time. Commute between these Seine-side icons by **BatoBus**, the city's ferryboat transit system.

Mona Lisa isn't going anywhere. So why not try one of Paris's insider venues such as the **Gaité Lyrique**, a cultural incubator and digital-art exhibition space in a *belle époque* theater? Or explore the free **Cognacq-Jay Museum**, a former aristocrat's mansion with opulent 18th-century decor in the artsy Marais neighborhood. (The newly reopened **Picasso Museum** is practically around the corner.)

The magic word for most Parisians is not Chanel but *soldes* (sales). Outside of France's biannual sales weeks, head to **Monoprix** (the Target of France) for costume jewelry, scarves, and casual wear; the Opera location, especially, stocks fun, tasteful souvenirs such as Eiffel Tower iPad covers. On the Left Bank, **Le Bon Marché** (France's Neiman Marcus) carries Louis Vuitton and Dior, a great selection of lingerie and hosiery, and fine chocolate bars in its ground-floor grocery.

DON'T MISS Sign up for a macaron-making class (in English) in the cozy Latin Quarter kitchen of Fred and Amanda Pouillot. Or stop at a **Pierre Hermé** patisserie: New macaron flavors debut monthly. —*Ceil Miller Bouchet*



A carnival swings into Paris's Tuileries Garden each summer.

YUCATÁN

Welcome to the Jungle

Teens bashtag Maya Mexico

WHY GO Let the high schoolers channel Indiana Jones in Mexico's Maya temple-strewn Yucatán Peninsula, where they can scale mysterious pyramids, bushwhack through jungles, and cool off in freshwater cenote pools the way the ancients did. A weeklong road trip connects the Maya dots from the Caribbean to Gulf coasts.

THE PLAN From the region's main airport at Cancún, drive inland for two hours to the great ceremonial city of **Chichén Itzá**. Stay at the adjacent Lodge at Chichen Itza to stage an early morning visit, when the popular site is most mystically quiet. Get a living lesson in sophisticated Maya astronomy by counting the 365 steps ascending the nearly ten-story-tall El Castillo. Imagine real-life *Hunger Games* at the elaborately carved ball court, where competitions ended in human sacrifice.

En route to Mérida, another 80 miles west, detour to **Izamal**, where the Spanish colonial buildings are painted egg-yolk yellow. Race to the top of the town's Kinich Kakmo pyramid.

Comb the lost city of **Dzibilchaltún**, about ten miles north of Mérida, an archaeological site dating to 300 B.C. that features a central plaza, amphitheater, temple, and—swimsuit alert—the freshwater Cenote Xlakah.

Safari-break some 60 miles west at coastal **Celestún** to spy rosy flocks of mating flamingos. Time your next Maya conquest, eighth-century **Uxmal**, 50 miles south of Mérida, to arrive after dark for the dramatic sound-and-light show. After a night at Hacienda Uxmal, return to the site to Instagram the elaborately carved gods, including mighty Chaac, god of rain, wearing a serpent's mask, and a throne featuring a two-headed jaguar.

Swing back east to **Cobá**, sight of Yucatán's tallest temple, 138-foot Nohoch Mul, providing a high-priest's view over the jungle canopy.

DON'T MISS Cool off with a dip at the Gran Cenote on the drive back to the Maya's most beautifully sited ruins, seaside **Tulum**, just 80 miles but epochs apart from where you started in Cancún. —*Elaine Glusac*

SOUTH DAKOTA

Where the Buffalo Roam

Little kids on the prairie

WHY GO It's nicknamed the Mount Rushmore State, but there's more to love about South Dakota than its famous, 60-foot-tall faces. "I went into South Dakota thinking it was a wasteland, and I came out wanting to move there," says Durango, Colorado, mom Heidi Goodman, who took sons A. J., 10, and Jack, 7, to Mount Rushmore last summer. "The boys loved all the history, and I felt that I was as deep in America as I could be." A four-day road trip east to west across the state appeals to pint-size pioneers with hands-on activities at every stop, lots of animal sightings, and never more than two hours trapped in the car.

THE PLAN First up is **De Smet**, home of Laura Ingalls Wilder of the *Little House* series. Even if the kids aren't familiar with the books or the iconic TV show, they'll have a blast rattling across the tall grass in a covered wagon, making corn cob dolls, and playing pioneers at the Ingalls Homestead. In the gift shop, true fans can pick up Wilder's never-before-published autobiography, *Pioneer Girl*, finally released in November 2014.

Drive two hours west to the **Lewis and Clark Information Center**. The I-90 rest area/museum is on the site of a Corps of Discovery encampment. Climb aboard a replica of the expedition's 55-foot keelboat for an explorer's-eye view of the Lake Francis Case reservoir below. Stop for the night at **Badlands National Park**, a bedrock moonscape rich with the fossilized remains of extinct mammals, including a three-toed mini-horse. In the morning, drive the Highway 240 Loop Road to spot bison, mule deer, and bighorn sheep. The gravel detour to **Robert's Prairie Dog Town** is worth the dust to watch hundreds of the ridiculously cute rodents romp around.

Make tracks for **Custer State Park**, where massive buffalo—some as big as 2,000 pounds—freely roam. Supper is a hayride/chuck wagon cookout, and cowpokes will get a kick out of sleeping two nights in the Bunkhouse Cabin at State Game Lodge, starting point for the Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour. Wrap up by visiting the Black Hills' rock stars: **Mount Rushmore** and the **Crazy Horse Memorial**. Rushmore highlights for kids include the dynamite blast simulator and, of course, peering up the presidents' nostrils. The Crazy Horse Memorial, begun in 1948, is much bigger (Crazy Horse's head is nearly nine stories tall) but still unfinished.

DON'T MISS Cedar Pass Lodge in Badlands has new old-timey-looking cabins and a restaurant serving Sioux Indian tacos (fry bread and buffalo).

—*Maryellen Kennedy Duckett*



Bisonwear at the annual Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park

BENJAMIN BRAYFIELD/RAPID CITY JOURNAL/ASSOCIATED PRESS (SOUTH DAKOTA)