

Would your clan prefer to explore a bustling city or play in the surf?

The best vacations are thrilling, relaxing, and unforgettable. They stretch us a little *and* make us feel like Goldilocks: that we've come to just the right place. That's why each year *FamilyFun* asks moms and dads nationwide to cast a particularly joyous and uncontested vote for their gang's favorite destinations. One of our respondents perfectly summed up why we eternally scrimp and save to make these getaways happen: "It was one of the greatest weeks of my life, spent with my family without a care in the world. My little guy laughed nonstop. I wish we could have frozen time and lived like that forever." With thanks to our 2,000-plus voters, here are ten places to freeze time with the ones you love.

The 2017 FamilyFun travel awards

From campgrounds to cruises, beaches to big cities, these chart-topping destinations—all approved by families like yours—promise priceless memories.

BY RANI ARBO

Snorkelers can spot turtles, fish, and rays right off Maui's Kaanapali Beach. Flip to page 70 for more!



Best for Theme-Park Enthusiasts

Walt Disney World

Orlando, Florida

HOW DO OUR READERS LOVE YOU, WALT DISNEY WORLD? LET US COUNT JUST A FEW OF THE WAYS. "Nothing compares!" they write. "It never disappoints... excellent customer service...makes us instantly happy to be there...our favorite vacation ever!" To this outpouring of love, veteran park visitor Kristin Harbulak of Stillwater, MN, adds important advice: "Don't try to fit it all in, or you'll go crazy." That's true—and it's also good to remember that Walt Disney World is as action-filled as your family wants it to be. Harbulak prefers to move slowly and follow her young children's lead. Other families don't waste a minute, using the My Disney Experience app to keep track of wait times for big rides, FastPasses to skip lines, and advance reservations for dinners, character breakfasts, and more to bypass the masses. Harbulak recommends starting to plan at least six months ahead to get the reservations you hope for. This summer, Disney's Animal Kingdom is sure to draw crowds with the opening of Pandora: The World of Avatar. A Star Wars Land is also in progress at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Park passes start at about \$100 per day, but combo packages that include multiday tickets, accommodations, and dining options are often the best way to go.

► **WHERE TO STAY** You'll certainly save money outside the park. But on-resort lodging brings convenience and perks, like use of the park's transport system (buses, boats, and a monorail) and extra "Magic Hours" for resort guests. On-resort options range from a campsite at Fort Wilderness Campground (from \$53 a night), to a savannah-view deluxe room at Animal Kingdom Lodge (from \$319 a night), to the Art of Animation Resort (standard rooms from \$124 a night; family suites from \$306).

► **GET MORE INFO** disneyworld.com

► **RUNNERS-UP** Disneyland, Anaheim, CA; Cedar Point, Sandusky, OH; Hersheypark, Hershey, PA

"MY KIDS ASK TO GO BACK TO HAWAII EVERY SINGLE YEAR," says Caryn Bailey of Rancho Santa Margarita, CA. "They'll frequently say, 'Remember the sea turtles? Remember the ice cream we got in the coconut shell?'" Hawaii's tastes, smells, flora, fauna, culture—and, of course, beaches—are a true sensory immersion, and Maui is a great place to dive into it all.

The best kid-friendly beaches are Kaanapali Beach by Black Rock, Kapalua Beach, and Napili Beach. When you get enough of hanging by the shore, there are plenty of expeditions to consider. Snorkelers should charter a boat to Molokini crater, a coral reef with 100-foot visibility; good choices for families are *Pride of Maui* or *Four Winds II*, which feature glass bottoms and waterslides (\$95 to \$124 per adult, \$65 to \$93 for kids, for a five-hour excursion). On land, enjoy a sunrise atop the volcano in Haleakala National Park; drive Maui's winding, 64-mile Hana road with its eagle-eye lookouts; or visit the Maui Ocean Center aquarium. Then spend the evening enjoying music, dancing, storytelling, and heaps of food at the Old Lahaina Luau (\$120 for adults and \$78 for kids 3 to 12).

► **WHERE TO STAY** Top resorts for families include the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa (from \$321 a night); and Napili Kai Beach Resort (from \$442 a night). For a local Hawaiian feel, try the Kaanapali Beach Hotel (from \$195) or the Maui Coast Hotel (from \$215).

► **GET MORE INFO** gohawaii.com/maui

► **RUNNERS-UP** Amelia Island, FL; Cape Cod, MA; Grand Haven, MI



Best for Beach Bums

Maui, Hawaii

The West Maui Mountains add to the spectacular scenery.



Kids get ready to ride *Harmony of the Seas'* ten-story slide!

Best for Cruise Fans

Royal Caribbean to the Caribbean

ALLURE OF THE SEAS, OASIS OF THE SEAS, AND HARMONY OF THE SEAS ARE THE LARGEST CRUISE SHIPS IN THE WORLD. Almost a quarter-mile long and some 20 stories high, they offer an activity menu as full as your adrenaline tank: zip lines, climbing walls, waterslides, discos, ice-skating, mini golf, pools, surfing and skydiving simulators, and encounters with Shrek, Kung Fu Panda, and other DreamWorks movie heroes.

If your cruise dreams involve hot tubs, formal dinners, shopping, and Broadway shows, Royal Caribbean's renowned youth programs put those adult amenities in easy reach. It's just that activity spread—and the convenience of an all-inclusive vacation at an average of \$100 per day, per traveler—that makes cruising so tempting for families. "We spent the days with our kids at the pools and all over the ship," says Mitzi Morgan of Edmond, OK. "After dinner, the kids insisted on going straight to the Adventure Ocean club, and wanted to stay until it closed at 10 o'clock. They told us not to pick them up!"

► **THE PACKAGE DEAL** A seven-night cruise for a family of four on *Harmony of the Seas* (the fleet's newest and biggest ship) starts at \$2,750, including lodging, meals, youth programs, and entertainment. For the best prices, book from January to late March, when Royal Caribbean (along with other cruise lines) rolls out its new itineraries.

► **GET MORE INFO** royalcaribbean.com

► **RUNNERS-UP** Disney Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, Carnival Cruise Line

MAUI: HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY (HTA)/TOR JOHNSON. PREVIOUS SPREAD: TOR JOHNSON

Best for
Budget
Travelers

Asheville,

North
Carolina

How we got our results

Using a nationally representative pool, we asked 2,000 families that travel with kids ages 3 to 14 to rate 181 destinations in ten categories. Winners required a minimum number of votes to qualify.

IF YOUR PERFECT SATURDAY STARTS ON A MOUNTAIN TRAIL AND ENDS WITH A LOCAVORE DINNER AND A FREE OUTDOOR BLUEGRASS CONCERT, then hipster, historic Asheville, NC, is the place for you. Smack in the middle of the wildest stretches of the Southern Appalachians, Asheville brims with easy adventures on the cheap, like hiking trails that start at the Blue Ridge Parkway National Park Visitor Center, exploring flora and fauna at The North Carolina Arboretum, and visiting with black bears, wolves, foxes, and otters at the Western North Carolina Nature Center. Older kids can try tubing the French Broad River, which runs right through downtown.

In summer, Asheville hops with free fun, such as the downtown Pack Square splash pad, art gallery events, craft demonstrations, festivals, and the Western North Carolina Farmers' Market. If it rains, head to the Asheville Museum of Science or splurge on a tour of the opulent, 250-room Biltmore Estate (\$40 to \$75 for adults; kids 10 to 16 are half-price; 9 and under are free).

► WHERE TO STAY Lodging in Asheville's high summer season isn't a particularly great deal, but it's offset by a smorgasbord of bargain fun. Weekend rates are quoted here; an early-week visit can net a major discount. Family options include Crowne Plaza Resort (from \$230 a night), which is next door to the Adventure Center of Asheville, with zip lines, a mountain bike park, and ropes course; Brookstone Lodge (from \$181 a night with a three-night minimum stay), near Asheville's Fun Depot, with go-karts, mini golf, and Lazer Tag; and the Omni Grove Park Inn (from \$350 a night, plus a daily \$25 resort charge), with golf, tennis, and children's programs. Chains like Super 8 and Days Inn offer budget options. Or check out Airbnb, Homeaway, and VRBO for area rentals.

► GET MORE INFO exploreasheville.com

► RUNNERS-UP The Catskills, NY; Clearwater Beach, FL; Door County, WI

A family hikes Black Balsam Knob mountain outside of Asheville.

Best for
Adventure
Seekers

Big Sky, Montana



You can lasso up some outdoor fun at Camp Moonlight in Big Sky.

"IT'S JUST INCREDIBLE HOW MANY ADVENTURES YOU CAN PACK INTO A DAY AT BIG SKY, AND THEN, TO TOP IT OFF, YOU'RE JUST AN HOUR FROM YELLOWSTONE," says Barbara Rowley, a local resident and veteran *FamilyFun* contributor. On the slopes of Lone Peak, the privately owned resort also known as Big Sky hits high season in wintertime, when skiers relish more than 5,800 uncrowded acres of slopes. In summer, the area amps up the fun with zip lines, a giant swing, a bungee trampoline, and a climbing wall in the center of town; swimming, paddleboarding, and kayaking on Lake Levinsky; and a mountain ropes course and lift-served biking (try Otter Trail with kids).

For adventures on foot, pack a picnic and try the gentle 1.6-mile trail to Ousel Falls or the longer Beehive Basin trail, which climbs steeply to mountain meadows (keep your eyes peeled for foxes, mountain goats, eagles, bears, and wildflowers). River rats can fly-fish the Gallatin River or raft with Geysers Whitewater Expeditions (raftmontana.com). Horse-lovers can ride (and lodge) at 320 Guest Ranch (320ranch.com) or Lone Mountain Ranch (lonemountainranch.com).

► **WHERE TO STAY** To save on lodging, stay near the river, about 15 minutes from Mountain Village, at Whitewater Inn (from \$215 a night) or Buck's T-4 (from \$229 a night including breakfast). A one-bedroom condo at Village Center starts at \$647 a night including resort fees. Reserve at bigskyresort.com.

► **GET MORE INFO** bigskyresort.com

► **RUNNERS-UP** Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, MN; Blue Mountain Ski Area, Palmerton, PA; Sevierville, TN

BIG SKY: KENE SPERRY; NYC: NYC & COMPANY/JULIENNE SCHAEER; GRAND CANYON: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. PREVIOUS SPREAD: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Best for
City Slickers

New York City



Jane's Carousel in Brooklyn Bridge Park

IT JUST DOESN'T GET MORE ICONIC THAN NEW YORK CITY, whether you're downing a giant pastrami sandwich at Katz's Delicatessen on the Lower East Side, riding the subway, sampling dim sum in Chinatown, visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, or staring down an Egyptian mummy at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York is a cosmopolitan, international feast for all the senses. Scottie Vosburgh of Loudoun County, VA, visits regularly with her four kids (ages 6 to 20) for the museums and Broadway shows. "People say New York isn't friendly, but it is. Someone is always willing to give you directions! We also ask the locals where they like to eat—their suggestions are always different, and they are all good," she notes. If your family plans to hit top tourist spots like the Empire State Building and the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, check out CityPass and New York City Explorer Pass for bargains on multiple attraction tickets.

► **WHERE TO STAY** Moderate Manhattan hotel rooms range from \$150 to \$300 a night. The Watson Hotel, with its outdoor rooftop pool, is convenient to Central Park and Times Square. Hampton Inn offers moderately priced facilities (with free breakfast) all around the Big Apple, including at South Street Seaport (convenient to Ellis Island ferry, The Tenement Museum, Brooklyn Bridge, the financial district, and Chinatown).

► **GET MORE INFO** nycgo.com

► **RUNNERS-UP** San Diego; San Francisco; Austin

Grand Canyon National Park Arizona

Best for
Avid
Insta-grammers



TO CAPTURE THE MOST AWE-INSPIRING IMAGES, BRING A PRESCHOOLER! "My four-year-old woke up at 5 A.M.," reported Jen Canning of Pittsford, NY. "I laid there wishing I could go back to sleep, and then thought, no, we should get up and see the sunrise!" And get up they did, making it to Mather Point in time for a spectacular dawn. Bringing her preschooler and 7-year-old to the edge of a mile-deep chasm made Canning's stomach flutter, but she took things slowly and easily, and was surprised at how safe it felt. Her kids rocked a 1.5-mile hike to Ooh Ahh Point, spotted mountain goats and elk, learned about local Native American culture, heard a ranger talk at Yavapai Geology Museum, and earned Junior Ranger badges. Entrance is \$30 per car, or \$15 per person if arriving by foot, shuttle bus, railway, or bike (purchase tickets in Tusayan, Williams, or at the park).

► **WHERE TO STAY** South Rim options include El Tovar (from \$263 a night), Thunderbird Lodge (from \$225 a night), Kachina Lodge (from \$225 a night), and Maswik Lodge (from \$112 a night); book all four at grandcanyonlodges.com.

► **GET MORE INFO** nps.gov/grca

► **RUNNERS-UP** Oahu, HI; Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, MI; Big Sur, CA

Best for
Ski Bums

Gore Mountain Ski Resort

North Creek, New York

THIS ONE WAS THE BIG SURPRISE—AND THE HIDDEN GEM—OF OUR 2017 SURVEY. A state-owned ski resort on 439 acres within the Adirondack Wilderness Preserve, New York's Gore Mountain feels like a local hangout while offering some of the largest, wildest, and emptiest terrain in the East. You won't find slopeside condos, an après-ski scene, or fancy food here, but you will find uncrowded trails on four peaks, gorgeous Adirondack views, excellent glade skiing (for experts), low prices, and nonexistent lift lines. While only 10 percent of the mountain is ranked for beginners, ski and snowboard schools get newbies onto the blue trails (where the mountain really shines) quickly and cheaply. A three-day intro program (ages 13 and up) with rentals, lift tickets, and a daily 90-minute lesson costs just \$169; a full-day ski or snowboard program (for ages 4 to 12) costs \$127 per day (\$157 with rentals). One-day weekend lift tickets are \$83 for adults, \$65 for teens, \$46 for ages 7 to 12, and free for ages 6 and under.

► **WHERE TO STAY** Try Gore Mountain Lodge (from \$200 a night weekdays, \$252 weekends), The Alpine Lodge (from \$179 a night, plus \$15 per child), or an apartment with a kitchen at Summit at Gore Mountain, which offers an indoor pool (\$888 for two nights).

► **GET MORE INFO** goremountain.com

► **RUNNERS-UP** Boyne Mountain, Boyne Falls, MI; Crested Butte, CO; Snowshoe, WV

A DAY IN WASHINGTON, D.C., IS THE BEST SORT OF HISTORY LESSON, the kind that whizzes by before you even realize you've learned something. For starters, it's where government actually happens. Take a White House tour to see where the President lives (book through your congressperson 21 days to three months in advance) or choose a touchscreen tour at the National Park's free White House Visitor Center next door. Other tours include the Capitol (book online at visitthecapitol.gov), the Library of Congress, the National Archives (home to the Declaration of Independence), and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (watch stacks of bills roll through the printers).

As if that weren't enough, the city's spectacular and (mostly) free museums and public monuments offer a great way to dig deep into topics from astronomy to African-American history. Top picks include the National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the National Postal Museum. The new National Museum of African American History & Culture is so popular that you'll need a timed ticket to enter (book on the museum's website the day of your visit). Then check out nps.gov/nama for a map and guide to the monuments on the National Mall.

When your crew is full up on history, head to the National Zoo to meet three of D.C.'s most famous residents: the giant pandas Mei Xiang, Tian Tian, and Bei Bei.

► **WHERE TO STAY** For a hotel near the Mall and Capitol, try Holiday Inn Capitol or Residence Inn Capitol, both with pools (rooms range from \$109 to \$399 a night).

► **GET MORE INFO** washington.org

► **RUNNERS-UP** Mackinac Island, MI; Boston; San Simeon, CA

Best
for History
Buffs

Washington, D.C.

The National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center, in nearby Chantilly, VA, gives kids an up-close look at the Boeing Aviation Hangar.

Best for
Campers

Yellowstone National Park

Idaho,
Montana,
and Wyoming



IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF WYOMING

sits Yellowstone's bubbling landscape of geysers, mud pots, and sulfurous vents. "I have hilarious photos of my kids holding their noses because of the smell by Mammoth Hot Springs," laughs Sara Kearsley of Portland, OR. They first visited when her kids were 7 and 8 years old, good ages to safely navigate boardwalks near geothermal features and to earn their Junior Ranger badges by soaking up facts about park wildlife and geology. The family savored ice cream cones while Old Faithful erupted; explored Artist Point and the waterfalls at Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and marveled at the big game that finally showed up in the Lamar Valley. "I told them in advance about all the animals we'd see," says Kearsley. "But on our first day, we didn't see a single one, until seven in the evening, when everything came out: elk, bison, bear, and moose. It was amazing!"

► **WHERE TO STAY** With a 142-mile driving loop prone to bison- and bear-induced traffic jams, you'll be spending time on the road to park highlights, no matter where you stay. Campsites at the seven park-service campgrounds cost \$15 to \$20 a night and are first-come, first served (and fill by early morning). Sites at four privately run campgrounds and one RV park cost \$24 to \$48 a night, which includes access to grocery stores, gas stations, showers, and laundry facilities. Reserve those sites—as well as park cabins (from \$90 to \$210 a night) and lodge rooms (from \$90 to \$428 a night)—up to 12 months in advance at yellowstonenationalparklodges.com.

► **GET MORE INFO** nps.gov/yell

► **RUNNERS-UP** Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC and TN; Acadia National Park, Mount Desert, ME; Custer State Park, Custer, SD

last bite

OUR TREAT OF THE MONTH



EGG 'EM ON

Crack up your little peeps with these Easter pitas.

BY SELENA KOHNG PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDRA GRABLEWSKI

Hunting for ways to get your kids egg-cited for veggies? Use a **cookie cutter** to cut **pita bread** into egg shapes, then "dye" them with pink **beet hummus** and orange **roasted red pepper hummus**, either all over or in a striped pattern. Use **miniature cookie or fondant cutters** to make stripes, flowers, half moons, and other shapes out of **red, orange, and yellow bell peppers, and other assorted veggies** for decoration. Then place the eggs on a bed of grass made with shredded **baby spinach leaves**.