

in the loop family time

The importance of family vacations

BY SARA KENDALL

EXPERIENCING DIFFERENT cultures, trying new foods and seeing images from the Internet come alive are great reasons to travel with your kids. Not only is it a great way to learn together, but a wonderful bonding experience. Family vacations are quality time spent together away from the normal routines of daily lives.

Overscheduling is the norm for today's family. Work, school, sports, family events, and extracurricular activities have many families working at a deficit with their time and energy. Frankly, many families don't spend enough time together. Going away together for a long weekend or a week brings families closer and gives kids a perspective that extends beyond their hometown.

The learning curve

Packing for the first time kids tend to think they are moving, not going away for a short period of time. Kids tend to cram everything possible into a piece of luggage without much thought. A good starting point is to have your children lay out what they want to bring. If you will be traveling by plane, let them know luggage space is limited. If you're driving, let them bring along a couple of extra items they just want to have. Look over everything with them. Explain why something should go and something else should stay at home. After a few trips, they know the difference between necessities and luxuries.

Be flexible

Some trips go better than planned and end up going without a hitch. Others are accompanied by logistical nightmares,



language challenges and reservation snafus. When one of these unwanted occurrences happens, flexibility is the key to overcoming it. Approach it as a real-life teachable moment for your kids. This is a time when a family relies on each other, learns how to solve a problem and adjust expectations.

Go slow

Bringing along the kids will require an adjustment to how much ground you can cover in a day. Not rushing around cramming everything into a day might actually enable everyone to see more. Kids notice things adults often overlook. Join them in a moderate pace and enjoy the small moments along the way.

Make it a crowd pleaser

There should be a balance between what the kids will enjoy and what the parents will enjoy. Everyone needs to get some of their wants met during their vacation. Have a conversation with your children about the importance of accommodating each other. Explain a

vacation can't be one-sided in either direction. It's never too early to learn the art of compromise.

No matter where you roam

Whether it's a far-flung trip across the world or a simple excursion across town, kids build upon their base of knowledge. If you have the opportunity to take your kids to another country, they will be exposed to different time zones, gain a better understanding of different languages and world geography. Going local, you can visit ethnically different areas, stores and restaurants within your city or across your state. It doesn't matter how far you go, it is important to get your kids out there in the world.

Reap the benefits

Kids gain an enormous amount of knowledge within the walls of their school. However, beyond textbooks, there is a big world out there waiting to be explored. There is so much to be gained from going places. There is a true value to hearing different languages, smelling exotic markets and interacting with people from a different country.

Every experience builds upon the next one. Your kids will be making more connections with the world with every new experience they have. You may find yourself surprised when they connect something they are learning in school to a travel experience from a few years ago.

Take your kids to new places, it will be worth the time and effort you put into it. Get your kids out there and start your family on the road to many shared memories and a greater understanding of the world.