

BY *Plane, Train, Automobile*



BY SARA KENDALL

FROM BUSTLING URBAN CITIES TO AWE-INSPIRING MOUNTAINTOPS AND BREATH-TAKING BEACHES, THERE'S A DESTINATION FOR EVERY INTEREST AND DESIRE, AND GETTING THERE SHOULD BE HALF THE FUN. BELOW IS OUR ROUNDUP OF SEVEN DESTINATIONS FOR FAMILY VACATIONS, AND HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE JOURNEY WITH KIDS, WHETHER BY PLANE, TRAIN OR AUTOMOBILE.

▶ UP IN THE SKY



Managing children in a confined space for an extended period of time is no easy task — especially when you're flying through the air, but nonstop flights are the fastest means of transportation for long-distance destinations. When traveling with young children, load up digital devices with new games for in-flight entertainment. Pack plenty of snacks and extra clothes for mishaps. Eliminating potential crankiness helps ensure a smoother, saner flight for all.

BOSTON

Airport 411: Boston likes kids and it becomes clear the moment you arrive at **Boston Logan International Airport**. There is a special area with kids in mind. Kidport is an aviation-themed play area featuring climbing structures and slides where kids can burn off energy while parents can relax. The airport is conveniently located with great access to mass transit. To get to your hotel, just jump on the subway, affectionately called "The T."

- Join actors in period costumes to relive the Boston Tea Party by dumping tea overboard one of the authentically restored tea ships at **Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum**.
- Lace up your sneakers and walk **The Freedom Trail**, a 2.5-mile red path that leads to 16 (13 of which are free to visit) American Revolution sites including the **Paul Revere House**, **USS Constitution** and **Bunker Hill Monument**. Follow costumed guides representing the 18th Century on a 90-minute tour or venture out on your own. Download The Freedom Trail® Official App for more guidance.
- Ride a Bobcat in the Construction Zone or scale a three-story structure made of flowing, curved platforms at New Balance Climb at the **Boston Children's Museum**.
- After exploring the **Museum of Science** along the Charles River, take a **Boston Duck Tour** on a vehicle that travels on roads and in the water. For more ideas, visit bostonusa.com.

CHICAGO

Airport 411: Watch out for the 40-foot high replica of a Brachiosaurus dinosaur looming over **Chicago O'Hare Airport** in Terminal 1 and a replica of a World War II Wildcat Fighter Plane in Terminal 2. Take the little ones to Kids on the Fly play area to learn the inner workings of an airport through an interactive exhibit. And the "L" train is the easiest way to get into town from the airport — no need to rent a car and pay for parking.

- Experience the iconic **Navy Pier**, a landmark extending nearly 1 mile into Lake Michigan where visitors can ride on a 150-foot Ferris wheel and enjoy restaurants, shops and fireworks extravaganzas.
- Enjoy incredible views of the city at **Skydeck Chicago** where you can step onto The Ledge, a glass balcony extending 4 feet outside the 103rd floor, if you dare.
- Pack your swimsuits to play in the fountain and cool off at **Millennium Park**, a gathering spot in the heart of downtown Chicago. Have your photograph made in front of **The Bean**, an outdoor sculpture resembling an enormous



The Boston Duck Tour



When your children have had their fill of history and museums, author Eileen Ogintz suggests in her book

"The Kids' Guide to Boston" a visit to the **Charles Bank Playground** nearby the Museum of Science, or head to the public garden adjacent to Boston Common to ride the famous **Swan Boats**. They really look like swans! For more ideas, visit bostonusa.com.



FAMILY- PLEASING VACATION DESTINATIONS

★ See more destinations for families online at CharlotteParent.com/lifestyle.



Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum



The Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier, Chicago

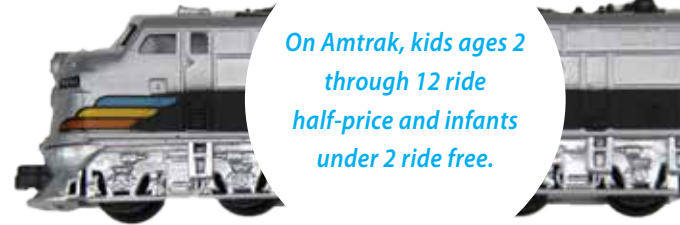
metal bean. In the summer, kids can splash around in **Crown Fountain**, an interactive work of public art.

- Take Chicago's **First Lady Cruise** to learn about 50 famous Chicago buildings. You can also choose from other cruise outings such as fireworks cruises, nighttime tours and dinner cruises.

- Visit **Museum Campus** to explore **The Field Museum**, **Shedd Aquarium** and **Adler Planetarium**. A must-see for dinosaur lovers, The Field Museum is home to Sue, the most complete T-Rex ever found. If you plan to visit more than one museum and the Skydeck Chicago, check into buying a Chicago CityPASS to save some bucks. For more ideas, visit choosechicago.com.

RIDE THE RAILS

Taking a train is safe, comfortable and affordable. When the journey is part of the experience, kids are entertained by watching the world go by. Prevent restlessness by roaming around the train to explore and burn off energy. Bring a carry-on bag packed with entertainment and snacks to curb boredom and hunger.



On Amtrak, kids ages 2 through 12 ride half-price and infants under 2 ride free.

WILLIAMSBURG AND VIRGINIA BEACH

Why take the train? There is an afternoon layover in Richmond, Va. Take the time to explore **Maymont Park** — a 15-minute taxi ride from the train station — a 100-acre park with a Children's Farm and Nature Center, complete with trams and carriage rides. There is a snack bar at the nature center and ice cream man located past the Fox habitat towards the Japanese Garden.

When you arrive into Williamsburg, the train station is perfectly located just a few steps away from Colonial Williamsburg hotels.

- Visit the **Jamestown Settlement** to experience America's 17th-century Colonial beginnings and board replicas of the three ships that brought America's first permanent English colonists to Virginia.
- Interact with costumed Native Americans in the Powhatan Village through live demonstrations of cooking and tool-making.
- Take a **Tavern Ghost Walk** to learn about ghosts who still haunt Colonial Williamsburg's taverns and historic buildings. This early-evening activity is suitable for all ages.
- **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** offers 100 acres of family fun. Roller coasters and gentle rides for the little ones make this a fun destination for the entire family.
- Beat the heat at **Water Country USA**, the mid-Atlantic's largest water park, where a 1950-60s surf theme entertains all ages. Get wet on water slides, falls and water cannons.
- Need more soaking? **Virginia Beach** offers beautiful beaches, a lively boardwalk, a historic lighthouse and outdoor activities. Hike or bike around **First Landing State Park** to discover cypress swamps and nesting grounds for a variety of birds. For more ideas, go to visitwilliamsburg.com and visitvirginiabeach.com.



The Discovery at Jamestown Settlement

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

Why take the train? Amtrak Trains arrive at a stunning gateway to our nation's capitol, **Union Station**. The beautiful Beaux-Arts style building captures the traveler's attention and can stop them in their tracks just admiring the beautiful domed structure. In the heart of the city, this location offers easy access to hotels within walking distance or a short taxi ride away.

- This budget-friendly destination offers more than 100 free attractions. The most famous address in the U.S. is 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., where the U.S. president resides. **White House tours** take visitors through the East Wing; State Dining Room; and Red, Blue and Green Rooms. Visit whitehouse.gov to find out how to book a tour.
- Watch millions of dollars being printed at the **Bureau of Engraving and Printing** as you overlook the production floor during this free, 40-minute experience.
- The **National Mall** is a 2-mile green space spanning along the banks of the Potomac River, from the **U.S. Capitol Building** to the **Lincoln Memorial**. View the **Washington**

Monument, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial while walking along this pedestrian-friendly boulevard.

- Often called America's treasure chest, the **Smithsonian** consists of 17 separate museums. The most popular museum in the world, based on attendance numbers, is the **Air and Space Museum**. Other popular Smithsonian museums include the **American History Museum**, the **Museum of Natural Sciences** and the **National Zoo**, where baby panda Bao Bao and her parents, Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, are the zoo's most popular attraction. For more ideas, visit washington.org.



The White House

Take the Metro rail system to the Smithsonian Metro Station and walk to the recently renovated Washington Monument and Smithsonian Museums. ➔



ON THE ROAD

Minimize how many times you hear, "Are we there yet?" by using roadtrippers.com. Just upload your destinations and interesting places pop up on the site's map to make your road trip more entertaining. Choose from a variety of offbeat attractions, scenic points or historic monuments.

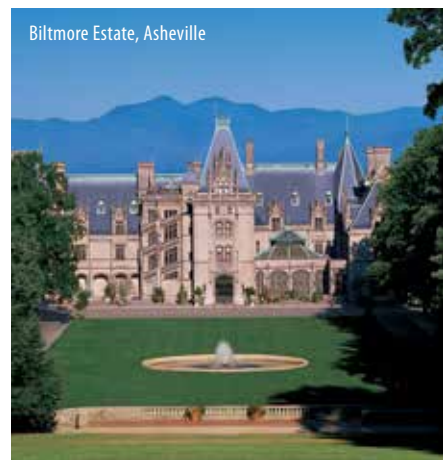


ASHEVILLE

Roadtrip bonus: A quick two-hour drive from Charlotte, Asheville is a great vacation getaway for families who don't want the expense of long-distance travel. Before crossing into the city limits of Asheville, take a ride along the **Blue Ridge Parkway**, commonly known as America's favorite drive. It's a perfect place to take in stunning vistas and have a relaxing picnic.

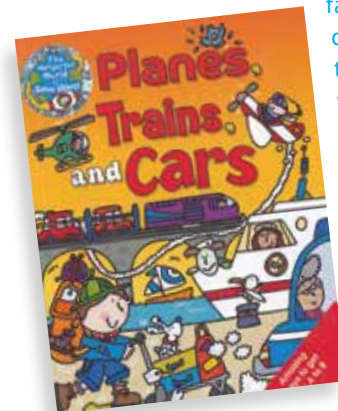
- This lively mountain city offers an active outdoor community with a bustling art and music scene that possesses a cosmopolitan flair and a laid-back mountain vibe.
 - A must-see is America's largest home: **Biltmore Estate**, a French Renaissance-style mansion with 250 rooms. Marvel at the two-story library, gilded elevator, indoor swimming pool and bowling alley. Children can pet baby animals in the estate's farmyard, or drive across obstacles on the Land Rover Kid's Adventure Course.
- Go **Bellayaking**, a new way to travel down a river that was created in Asheville, by paddling

- while on your stomach using webbed gloves. This provides a great way for beginners to explore a river. Riders advance to their knees, then feet.
- Experience a unique aerial obstacle course at **Asheville Treetops Adventure Park**. Kayaking through the trees or snowboarding on open air are just two of the 50 unique challenges offered, which range from beginner to advanced skill levels. Kids as young as age 7 have tried the challenges.



Biltmore Estate, Asheville

"Planes, Trains and Cars" by Simon Abbott is a fun fact book about different ways to travel the world. Filled with animated illustrations and cultural history. Perfect for any long distance trip. \$8.99 ➔



Family Adventures

SC Strawberry Festival May 2 & 3, Ft. Mill, SC
8th Annual Arts on the Ridge May 2 & 3, Ridgeway SC
Hog on the Hill May 2 & 3, Chester, SC
Living History Saturdays, Historic Brattonville near Rock Hill SC
Photography Collections Chester Cty. Hist. Soc. Museum, Chester, SC
Beard Gun Collection, Camden Archives & Museum, Camden, SC
Wings & Wheels Annual Air Festival May 10, Winnsboro SC
Yard Sale of the Carolinas, May 10, Chesterfield, SC
Porches, Patios & Paths Garden Tour May 10, Cheraw, SC
Red Rose Festival May 16 & 17, Downtown Lancaster SC
Hot Rods & Guitars May 16 & 17, Union County Dragway, Union, SC
FREE Ag + Art Tour June 21 & 22

Photo: Historic Brattonville



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(Plane continued from page 27)

- In nearby **Pisgah National Forest**, take a slide down **Sliding Rock**. This 60-foot all natural well-worn rock has delighted young and old for years and offers a great way to cool off on a hot summer afternoon. There is a nominal \$1 parking fee.
- You'll find 60 species of animals including river otters, bobcats, cougars, and red and gray wolves at **Western North Carolina Nature Center**. Children can also snuggle up to farm animals and hop on a red tractor. For more ideas, visit exploreasheville.com.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Roadtrip bonus: A trip to Charleston means access to historic attractions, as well as three great nearby beach towns all within three hours of Charlotte. Take a short drive off I-26 to explore **Cypress Garden Ruins** in Monck's Corner, S.C., a 170-acre preserve and garden where many big-screen movies, including "The Patriot" starring Mel Gibson were filmed.

- Clippity-clop down cobblestones streets atop a **carriage ride** to learn about the city's history and culture, and see antebellum mansions, historic churches and enchanting side streets.
- Take a 30-minute tour with a period-costumed guide through the **Old Exchange** and **Provost Dungeon** where George Washington was entertained and patriots and pirates were imprisoned.
- Visit the **South Carolina Aquarium** on historic Charleston Harbor, home to loggerhead sea turtles, alligators, jellyfish and sharks. The aquarium's largest exhibit, The Great Ocean Tank, extends from the first to the third floor.
- Grab a swing and enjoy the view from **Waterfront Park**. On hot days, kids can play under the streaming water at Splash Fountain.
- Go on a treetop adventure at **Wild Blue Ropes**, Charleston's first open-air ropes course. Once the family is tired from a day of activity, hop on a pedicab rickshaw for an exhilarating ride back to your accommodations. For more ideas, visit charlestoncvb.com.

CRYSTAL COAST

Roadtrip bonus: The Crystal Coast is for those who love fewer crowds and more natural beauty of North Carolina beaches. **Whirligig Park**, a public sculpture garden featuring works from famed folk artist, Vollis Simpson whose whimsical windmills have been featured in museums across the country, makes for an interesting stop along the way; or take a break in Raleigh for a visit to the **N.C. Museum of Natural Science** or **Marbles Kids Museum**.

- See wild horses and go shelling with **Port City Tour Company**. After a 15-minute ferry ride to Shackleford Banks on the Cape Lookout National Seashore, see wild horses, and go shelling on one of the best shelling beaches.
- Surrounded on three sides by water — the Atlantic Ocean, Beaufort Inlet and Bogue Sound — **Fort Macon** is free and offers nature trails, opportunities for surf fishing and a protected swim area.
- Climb to the top of the 150-year-old **Cape Lookout Lighthouse** to enjoy endless ocean views. Nicknamed The Diamond Lady, it's one of North Carolina's most iconic lighthouses.
- View artifacts from the pirate Blackbeard's flagship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, and interactive exhibits at the **North Carolina Maritime Museum** in Beaufort.
- Get up close and personal with marine life at the **North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores**. While you're there, check out the 300,000-gallon tank featuring a replica of a sunken World War II German U-boat.
- Experience an aqua adventure, such as **dolphin cruises, sunset sails, moonlight cruises** and **sport-fishing daytrips**. For more ideas, visit crystalcoastnc.org.

Sara Kendall is a freelance writer who loves to travel with her husband and two daughters. She has discovered fun and learning happen together when exploring our beautiful country.



South Carolina Aquarium



Downtown Charleston



Cape Lookout lighthouse on the Crystal Coast