

Your Fam's First Big Vacation

When you're a threesome, your getaway options look a little different.

Travel pros reveal the places that know exactly how to roll out the welcome mat for tiny tourists and tired parents.

by LIZ KRIEGER / photograph by THAYER ALLYSON GOWDY



The thatched cabanas at Azul Beach Resort are a few steps from the ocean.

THE AMAZING CARIBBEAN

Thoughtful conveniences and kids' clubs with low (or no!) age minimums give you a well-deserved break.

Fancy Care

A CPR-trained nanny can spend up to eight hours a day with your family or just the kiddos at the all-inclusive **Franklyn D. Resort, in Runaway Bay, Jamaica**. "Our nanny did it all," says Carrie Burrows, a mom of three in Phoenix. "She picked up our kids after breakfast and took them to swim. She tie-dyed T-shirts, played games, and led them on a hike to collect shells."

Mommy & Me

You and your little love can enjoy pedis side by side at **Azul Beach Resort by Karisma in Riviera Maya, Mexico**. Babies are treated to chef-made purees, using ingredients from a nearby greenhouse, and you can bring your babe to a moms' morning fitness class. When you're ready for "me time," drop off kids ages 4 and up at Azulitos Play House for games and piñata making.

Space for Your Squad

Last year, **Atlantis Resort, in the Bahamas**, opened The Coral, a family-centric hotel with a kids' concierge who can help coordinate your reservations and sign up little ones ages 3 and over for a chance to feed the fish. The resort's kids' club is as big as some children's museums. Its life-size dollhouse, Lego-building area, and kitchen with cupcake-decorating classes will be hits!

They Thought of Everything!

While the new all-inclusive **Nickelodeon Hotels & Resort Punta Cana, Dominican Republic**, wows little ones with character breakfasts featuring Dora the Explorer as well as Chase, Marshall, and the other PAW Patrol canines, it impresses parents equally. “The resort is beautiful and sophisticated, with fun, cartoony touches that appeal to the kids without making adults feel like they’re at a theme park. And everything is designed to make life easy,” says *Parents* health features director Julia Edelstein, who recently visited with her two sons, ages 1 and 3.

Edelstein appreciated that the water park—a short walk from the main resort—had slides and a lazy river that were just the right speed for pre- and early swimmers.

As for the room, a sweet sliding glass door separated the living space from the bedroom, so the evening didn’t have to end when the kids went down for the night. And a loaner step stool in the bathroom made toothbrushing a breeze.



The Aqua Nick water park has daily slime time, and kids rinse off in the pool.



This SoCal city is one of those rare places where your fam can play on the beach in the morning, go back to your hotel for a nap, and have an adventure in an urban neighborhood until bedtime. San Diego is compact (even the airport is in the heart of downtown) but not crowded, so it’s easy to get around on the public trolley or by car. Make **Balboa Park**, the largest urban cultural center in the nation, one of the first things you see. “With fountains, rockets, a puppet theater, a carousel, and animals, it’s simply magical for little ones,” says Katie Dillon, founder of the *La Jolla Mom* blog. Elsewhere around town, you can introduce kids to baseball at **Petco Park**, the home of the Padres. Buy lawn tickets and watch the game from your blanket on a giant screen; restless kids can run around a mini infield! If your

little one loves to make crafts, head to the **New Children’s Museum**, which offers a sensory-focused art studio just for kids ages 4 and under. Elmo fans will be all smiles at **SeaWorld’s Bay of Play** with Sesame Street-themed rides and meet and greets.

For lunch or dinner, check out a family-friendly brewery, the new **Little Italy Food Hall**, or a Mexican restaurant in **Old Town**. There’s no bad time to visit San Diego. It’s usually sunny with high temps in the 70s—but during October’s Kids Free Month your little ones will score free admission at most attractions when you buy an adult ticket.

Stay at the newly renovated **Paradise Point Resort** on its own peninsula in the calm waters of Mission Bay. It has a tot-friendly pool, a pizza place set inside a cave that was used as a bunker during the Cold War, and is within walking distance of SeaWorld.

3 More Cities to Visit

● FULL STEAM AHEAD!

Cleveland

Your curious toddler will be all over the city’s arts and science programs. Start at the **Great Lakes Science Center**, which built the experiment-filled Polymer Funhouse. No big kids (older than 7) are allowed! The **Cleveland Museum of Art** recently created games with gesture-sensing projections and other fun features based on 20 pieces of the museum’s collection, making it an instant fave of local Heather Tunstall’s 2-year-old.

→ Stay at the **DoubleTree by Hilton The Tudor Arms Hotel** in the neighborhood-y and park-like University Circle area, with ample paths for strolling. Kids won’t forget the warm chocolate-chip cookie they’re handed at check-in.



● THE PRETEND-PLAY CAPITAL

Philadelphia

From Alice in Wonderland’s Tea Party to a rocket launching, there’s so much make-believe going on at the **Please Touch Museum**. “The lower-level Fairytale Garden, based on classic kids’ books, is perfect for toddlers,” says local Kerry Milch, a mom of two. “Give yourself a day at this place.” The next morning, swing by the **Fireman’s Hall Museum**, where kids can try on gear and steer a fireboat. Then tour the ships in **Penn’s Landing** and head over to **Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest**, a pop-up →

... CONTINUED

village with a skating rink, an arcade, carnival games, and rides. Before you leave, see the **Liberty Bell**—it's free, so if you're outta there in ten minutes, no biggie. Just for laughs, ask your toddler how he thinks it cracked.

➔ **Loews Philadelphia Hotel** offers loaner books, toys, and gear plus an indoor pool for year-round splashing.

● **FIRST PASSPORT STAMP****Vancouver**

This city in British Columbia adores kids—and has 150 playgrounds to prove it. Take your kiddo to the green space near **Coal Harbour** to watch the sea planes taking off and landing. If you're visiting between mid-May and early September, hop onto a water taxi (how fun!) to **Granville Island**, which has a free water park with a slide and spray features, suggests Shelly Rivoli, creator of the *Travels With Baby* blog. Duck into the **Kids Market** near the entrance to check out a bunch of toy shops and an indoor play area with a ball pit.

➔ At the **Residence Inn Vancouver Downtown**, you can spread out in a spacious suite with a kitchen and take a dip in the indoor pool before bed.

**MORE WATER AND BEACH**

Beautiful **Bermuda** is a short flight from most East Coast and Midwest cities and a trendy choice for babymoos and vacays with itty-bittys. Keep it convenient by staying at the **Grotto Bay Beach Resort & Spa**, just five minutes from

the airport. The only all-inclusive on the island, its ground-floor rooms spill out onto the lush lawn, overlooking the bay and the pink-sand beach.

We're also fans of picture-perfect **Beaches Turks & Caicos** (kids can even help make treats for Cookie Monster!) and **Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit, in Mexico**, where babies get their own menu of gourmet purees.

Want to stay stateside? Float down a lazy river with closed-bottom inner tubes at the indoor water park at **Kalahari Resorts** in Wisconsin Dells and the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Or check into princess bedrooms (and a themed pool) at **Legoland Castle Hotel**, at **Legoland California Resort**.

FUN FARM GETAWAYS

Spend the weekend at a working farm where you can start your day with eggs freshly snatched from the coop, and your fam can help with animal-care chores, like brushing ponies. Toddlers can explore all their senses far from the glare and blare of screens, and you can often sit in a rocker on a wide porch and watch it all. Three little farms we love: **Hull-O Farms, in Durham, New York**; **The Inn at East Hill Farm, in Troy, New Hampshire**; and **Leaping Lamb Farm, in Alsea, Oregon**.

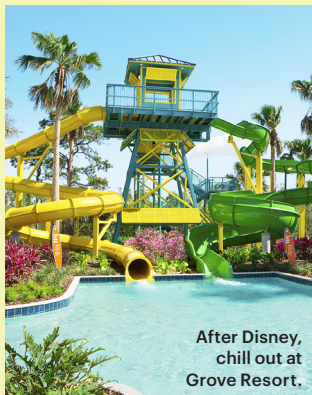
3 Things to Know About Orlando

Is your toddler ready for his first mega theme park? Maybe!

① Kids ages 2 and under are free at **Walt Disney World** and **Universal Orlando Resort**. Of the four Disney parks, Magic Kingdom is best for toddlers because it offers gentler rides and, well, duh, the castle! Plus, Universal's Islands of Adventure has the sweetest Dr. Seuss-themed storybook section.

② You don't have to skip your fave thrill rides (hello, Harry Potter!) because someone has to wait with your little one. Disney and Universal have a system that allows you and your partner to take turns staying with your kid while the other rides so you only have to stand in line once.

③ You'll probably get more space for your money if you stay outside the parks. The all-suite **Grove Resort & Spa Orlando** offers a kitchen and a washer/dryer in every unit; prices start at \$299 per night for three bedrooms. *Parents* managing editor Michaela Garibaldi took her 2- and 5-year-old to Magic Kingdom for the day using the resort's shuttle, and her fam spent the rest of their mini vacay in the resort's water! The toddler-friendly pool that starts at a few inches deep was fun, but the Grove's new water park ruled! "It's the real deal—not a baby splash pad at all," says Garibaldi. "My kids especially loved the lazy river, and I appreciated the loaner life jackets because we felt safe letting our 5-year-old drift nearby."



After Disney,
chill out at
Grove Resort.