

Title:

Selecting a family travel destination: No need to forego the hip or give up the charm

Word Count:

470

Summary:

Small hotels are adapting to family needs, and becoming an attractive alternative to resorts and large hotel chains.

Keywords:

family travel, family vacation, travel kids, tips travel kids, child-friendly resorts

Article Body:

*Small hotels are adapting to family needs, and becoming an attractive alternative to resorts and large hotel chains.*

Out of guilt or a need to maximize the amount of time we spend with our children, we have convinced ourselves for years that a family vacation requires sacrificing the interests of the parents to satisfy the needs of the kids. Thus whether traveling half way around the world or driving a mere two hours from home many of us are heading to the same location: a child-friendly resort.

This need not to be the rule. Many independent hotels and lodges have discovered how to make an adult environment work for kids and may be more child welcoming than those that bill themselves as child-friendly.

Not surprisingly, smaller hotels, inns and lodges - many of them luxurious - are leading the pack. The atmosphere is cozy and the service, more personalized. In addition, your family will probably get more exposure to the local culture - not to mention cuisine - in a smaller hotel than is possible in a big international resort.

Children profit the most. Many cultures embrace kids. Thus a large part of the experience in countries such as Argentina and Turkey is the interaction with the locals. Exploring other cultures provides children with a unique education; it broadens their horizon and helps them to learn more about life.

What you need to know

- Some smaller hotels may not offer round-the-clock service or traditional in-room services, such as minibar, tv and video games but are likely to be more spontaneous, warm your baby's bottle with a smile or offer your child a dish that is not on the menu.
- Children's meals may mean that kids are not allowed in the dinning room. Aside from providing parents with a reprieve, kids-only meals usually offer food they like and give them a chance to make new friends.
- No kids clubs. Relax. While it may take a day or two and a bit parental encouragement, kids will rediscover how easy it is to make friends and create fun, on their own.
- If the environment is relaxed, children will be relaxed as well.
- In a smaller hotel, you are likely to feel comfortable allowing your kids to explore on their own.

#### Rules of thumb

- Review the hotel's website. Find out if it belongs to a local or an international association. Is it recommended by your travel agent or a leading tour operator? Has it been rated?
- If the website does not mention children, they may not be welcome. A telephone call or email will avoid unwanted surprises.

#### Specialist websites:

[Hip Hotels](http://www.hiphotels.net)  
[Great Small Hotels](http://www.greatsmallhotels.com)  
[Secretplaces](http://www.secretplaces.com/)

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