

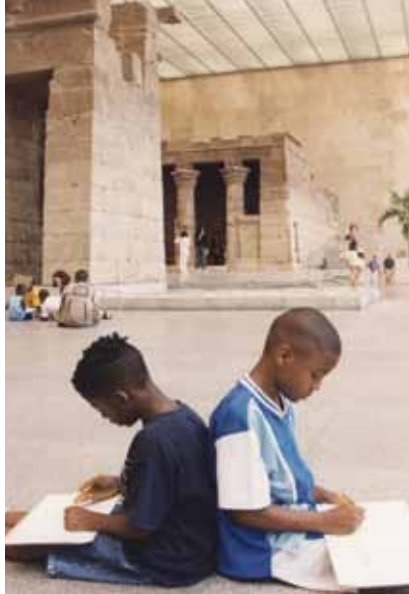


fun for all the family

From farm breaks in England to snorkelling with sharks in Dubai, we propose holidays sure to delight the children

Words » [Helena Iveson](#)

Entertain the kids with cultural trips and memorable activities wherever you are in the world



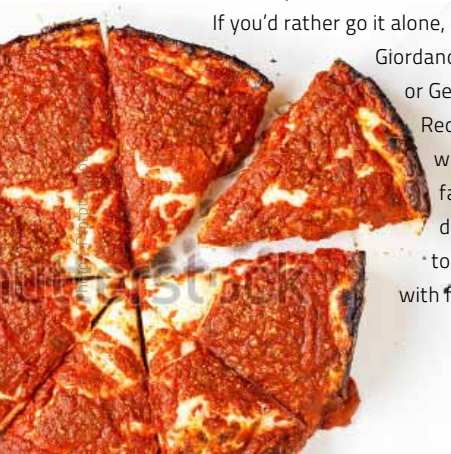
Learn while you play: Jordan and US cities provide the perfect environment

HIT THE CITY

Summer is a great time to explore New York with the little ones. In Central Park from June onwards there's the SummerStage Kids Series, with tons of performances from artists from around the world involving music, dance, circus acts and theatre. If your 5-12 year old enjoys art, every Saturday in the summer the Metropolitan Museum of Art takes kids on an Art Trek voyage: they will draw, go on treasure hunts – and maybe even learn something on the way. The Big Adventure is the newest exhibition to open at the Brooklyn Children's Museum and with its computer-generated alligator-infested rivers to cross, crow's nest to scale and high beams to run on, it will appeal to kids that love running around and scaring their parents!

For something more tasty than terrifying, hit the city of Chicago and indulge in the city's most famous dish: cheesy, deep-dish pizza. Or how about a world-class hot dog? Tastebud Tours offers 3-hour trips where you and the kids will visit the city's best pizzeria, enjoy Chicago-style hot dogs, award-winning Gumbo, and unmissable cupcakes (tastebudtours.com).

If you'd rather go it alone, head to Giordano's Pizza or Gene & Jude's Red Hot Stand where their famous hot dogs come topped with fries.



HISTORY LESSONS

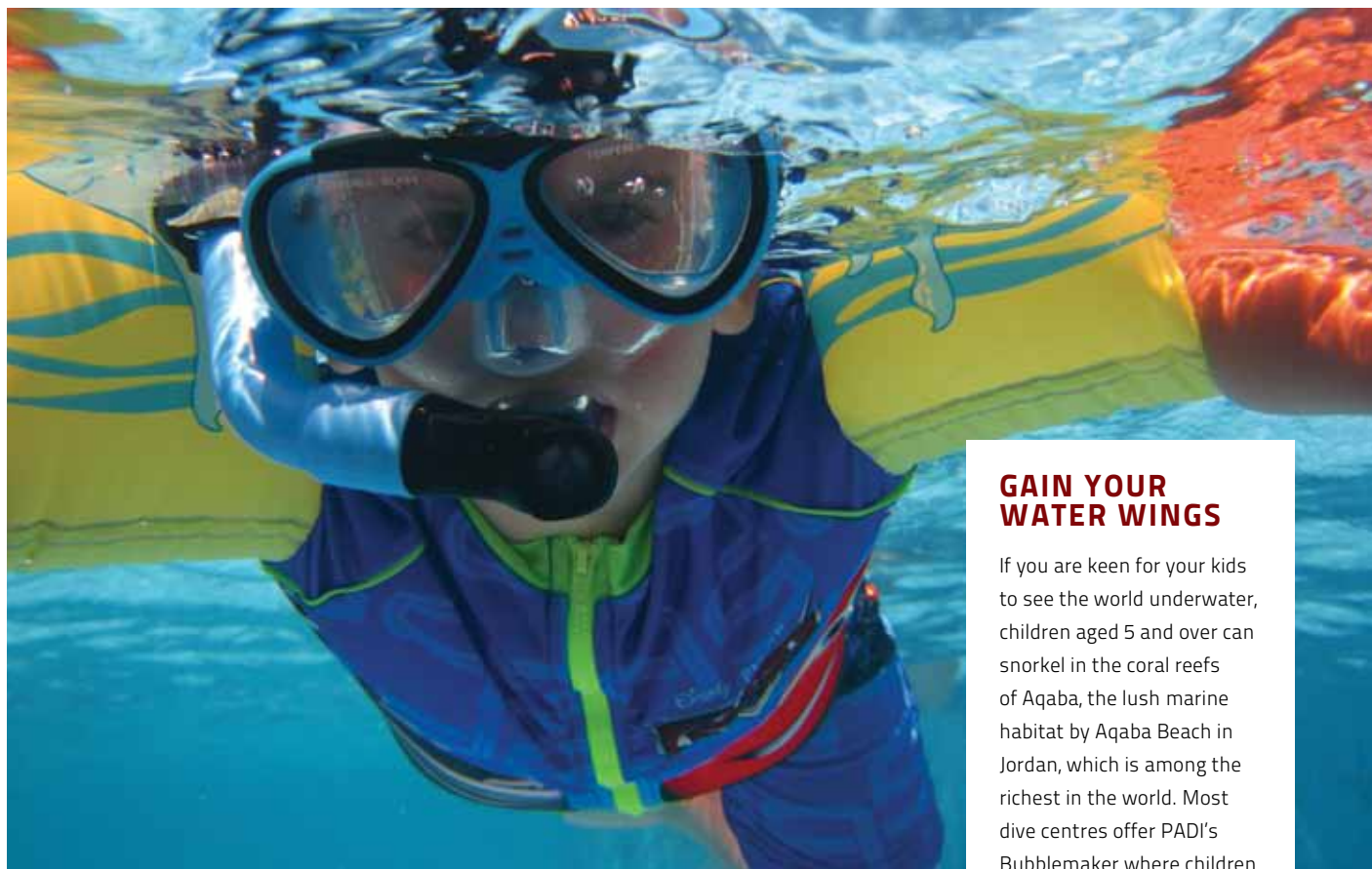
Parents wanting their kids to learn as they play should head to Jerash. Considered the best-preserved Roman city in Jordan there are re-enactments of gladiator battles and chariot racing on the main street where you can see the marks made by the real-deal two centuries ago. Be sure to look around the city where there are still more than 800 columns standing, 2,000 years later.

Kids who have covered Ancient Egypt in the classroom will be wowed by a visit to Cairo. The Pyramids and the Egyptian Museum, with remains of ancient queens and pharaohs, are the main attractions. If your children don't scare easily, they will be fascinated by the body of Ramses II which, though more than 3,000 years old, still has his hair, skin and teeth. The pyramids in Giza are breathtaking – if your kids are still unimpressed, a camel ride might save the day.



DOWN AT THE FARM

For a break in idyllic English surrounds, Court Farm in Sanderwick, Somerset (only 2 hours from London) offers visitors the chance to experience life on a farm. Guests stay in a 16th century stone cottage set within 10 acres of picture-perfect farmland, complete with pigs, chickens, ducks and sheep: children will love feeding the animals. Families will have run of the farm, and if the weather isn't so summery, there's a games room and a barn full of toys. »



GAIN YOUR WATER WINGS

If you are keen for your kids to see the world underwater, children aged 5 and over can snorkel in the coral reefs of Aqaba, the lush marine habitat by Aqaba Beach in Jordan, which is among the richest in the world. Most dive centres offer PADI's Bubblemaker where children over 8 can learn to use scuba gear in the swimming pool and go down to a depth of 4 metres. At 10, they can start the PADI Junior Scuba Diver Course, introducing them to the delights and adventures of exploring historic shipwrecks and pristine reefs.

In Dubai, kids that haven't been scared for life by seeing Jaws might love putting on snorkelling gear, climbing into the secure cage in the aquarium, and getting up close and personal with over 400 sharks and rays in their Cage Snorkelling Experience. You have to be 10 and over to do so, but just imagine the bragging points this experience will have when it comes to going back to school. »

A BIT OF LUXURY

When the whole family needs some relaxation, a luxurious all-inclusive type of holiday where all whims and wants are catered to on site is ideal. On Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, Desert Islands Resort & Spa by Anantara offers the young, and the not-so-young, thrilling adventure combined with touches of luxury. As well as a whole host of activities such as kayaking, mountain biking and wildlife walks, kids brought up on Black Beauty and Sea Biscuit will make a beeline to the newly opened stables. Children can enjoy pony riding in one of the beautiful outdoor paddocks and take part in the grooming and feeding of the horses.

Over in Bahrain, kids might think they're just having fun at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Bahrain's kids clubs, but they'll also be working on their character development and leadership skills. The Ritz Kids Camps offer everything from water sports to culinary classes, as well as good old-



fashioned camp fires where kids can gaze up at the stars and constellations above them, while their parents enjoy some alone time. Bliss.



Travelling with toddlers

Laura Haddad, managing editor of *Family Flavours* (below), shares her favourite family travel spots and tips for keeping your child happy on the road

I grew up travelling the world with my family, lived between two cultures as a dual citizen of Jordan and the United States and now I'm raising two third-cultured sons (five-year-old Omar and newborn Shareef) with my German spouse. Needless to say, travelling is in my genes!

Although I've certainly enjoyed the privilege of luxury hotels and gourmet meals, some of the best memories I cherish from childhood are trips to the barren desert in Jordan. We didn't have gadgets and gizmos back then but I was thrilled just running in the vast, boundless landscape, feeling the fresh breeze on my face, listening to the soothing sounds of wind blowing and picnicking with home-made sandwiches.

Today, when we think of family vacations, we quickly tend to conjure up images of long distance trips – perhaps sightseeing tours of Istanbul or Rome or non-stop thrills

at world famous theme parks. For us, quality family holidays have largely meant overnight trips across Jordan – camping in Wadi Rum, hiking in Ajloun and trekking in Wadi Feynan. You may be surprised by how little it takes to impress younger children: although we've travelled the world, our son Omar's favourite moments have involved digging in dirt and petting animals – you don't need to jet off to faraway places for that.

Regardless of the family holiday destinations you choose, what's important is that you take them. Between work and daily obligations, it's easy to opt for

staying home and relying on

play dates to keep the children occupied and content. Not only do family holidays provide you with wonderful memories and stories to tell for years to come, they're also a unique opportunity for children to learn and grow into well-rounded world citizens. 



are we there yet? »

The challenge of flying with children is not to be underestimated. From endless security lines to long flights, flying can make even the most seasoned travellers a bit edgy. Don't despair; here's how you can prepare yourself...

» Stick to child-friendly airlines like RJ that offer kids' menus and child-friendly amenities such as in-flight children's programming.

» Start packing a few days before your trip to avoid stress and get your child involved in the planning stages – from packing to checking out books from his or her school library about the countries, cities, sights and people you'll be visiting.

» Reserve non-stop, morning flights. As long as kids get a good night's sleep, they'll be less tired and in a better mood.

» Don't go to the airport hungry and limit salty snacks before travel to reduce thirst and bathroom trips.

» Pack a child-friendly carry-on that contains everything your child might need to make it through the flight and plan for delays. Be sure to have enough diapers, wipes, snacks, a change of clothes and favourite toys or blankets.

RJ operates regular flights to featured destinations. Visit rj.com