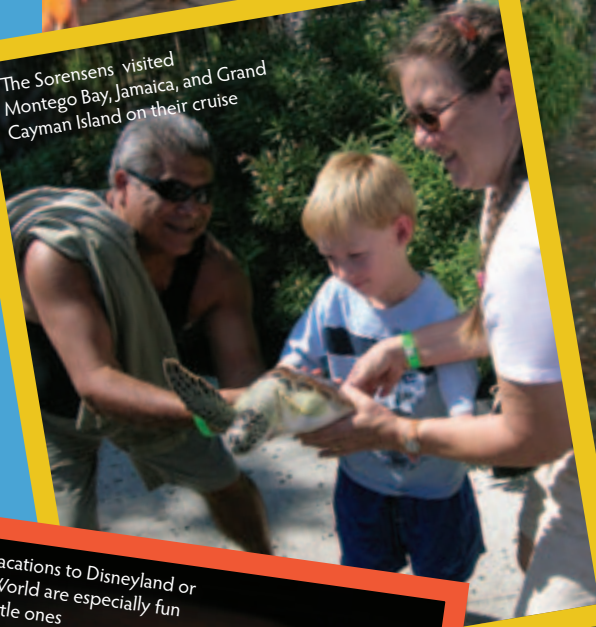




The Sorensens visited Montego Bay, Jamaica, and Grand Cayman Island on their cruise



Family vacations to Disneyland or Disney World are especially fun for the little ones



A ride on the River Walk
Cruiser in San Antonio is fun
for kids of all ages

Family Fun VACATION DESTINATIONS

Travel Ideas, Tips, and Tricks for
Katy Families

Spring Break is around the corner and summer is not far away—it's time to start planning your family vacation. Whether you stay in Texas or venture further away, there's a destination to suit everyone's tastes.

Written by Alice Hicks



Photo by Al Rendon



photo courtesy of Seaworld

SeaWorld is one of the many kid
friendly destinations in San Antonio

Lone Star Jaunts

When staying close to home, many Katy families opt to travel to San Antonio, home to SeaWorld, Fiesta Texas, the Riverwalk, and the Alamo. A virtual cultural cornucopia and jam-packed with kid friendly activities, San Antonio is a great option for Katy-area families. Andrea Dvorachek and her family chose San Antonio for their weekend trip due to its ease to navigate and proximity to home. "We wanted to go somewhere different from Houston, but someplace easy and quick to get to since we only had a weekend," says Dvorachek. "Also, it's not too big, so it is easy to get around." Other popular destinations in Texas for Katy families include Fredericksburg, New Braunfels, and South Padre Island.

Into the Mountains

Patricia Jones and her family chose the Denver, Colorado area for their recent vacation because they love the Rocky Mountain view. The Jones family enjoyed the variety of activities in the area. "The zoo is truly beautiful, and the amusement park in Golden is not to be missed," says Jones. "I also recommend rafting, even with young children."

Gena Dibowitz and her family plan to go to another Colorado destination, Steamboat Springs, for the kid friendly skiing alternatives available there. "It is very family-oriented," says Dibowitz. "It is easier for us, with two young kids, to be able to walk to the ski lifts and ski schools. At other ski resorts, we would have had to rent a car and lugged car seats." Dibowitz also likes Steamboat Springs' option of renting child gear onsite. "They have a company that leases everything you could possibly need for your child," says Dibowitz. She also cited Continental Airlines' direct flight from Houston to Steamboat Springs as another factor in choosing the resort.

Tropical Locales

For a true escape from the city, the beaches of Mexico are a popular choice for Katy families. Nicole Graul and her family visited Playa del Carmen. Though some beaches in Playa del Carmen have been reduced by hurricanes, resorts are offering an attractive option for families with all-inclusive vacations. "You don't have to hear your kids beg for anything because it's all-inclusive," says Graul. "They can get all of the food, drinks, and desserts they want." Graul's family has

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also been to Cancun, but they feel that Playa del Carmen is more family friendly. “We went with my whole immediate family and they thought that Playa del Carmen was more family-oriented than Cancun,” says Graul. “We’ve been to both destinations with and without kids and had more fun with the kids.”

The Sorensen family has visited and now recommends Costa Maya and Cozumel for a family adventure. All enjoyed the excursion to the beach in Cozumel, says Marygrace Sorensen. “We went to a beach resort and thoroughly enjoyed the beach with all the amenities,” says Sorensen. The Sorensens also enjoyed a more rustic visit to Costa Maya. “We just walked into town and found a local beach and found some great shells,” says Sorensen.

Caribbean Cruising

Besides Mexico, the Sorensen family has also cruised to Montego Bay, Jamaica, and Grand Cayman Island. Sorensen says her family prefers cruising to other types of vacations due to value and convenience. “It’s a great value for the money,” says Sorensen. “The meals, facilities, and service were impeccable. The shows were wonderful as well.”

Sorensen also cited the children’s programs as a reason to cruise. “The on-board children’s program was wonderful on the Carnival Cruise,” she says. “It was terrific to not have to think about or plan meals. It was also fabulous only having to unpack once and get to visit three ports of call in three different countries.”

Sue Schmitt of Cruise Planners says that Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines have an easy option for Katy families with itineraries departing from Galveston. “They both have excellent programs for children and teens,” says Schmitt. “For some families, the ship itself is the destination. There are activities for all ages.” A sampling of these activities includes an ice-skating rink, rock climbing walls, and miniature golf. Schmitt recommends booking your trip well in advance. “Usually, the earlier you book, the better the price,” says Schmitt. “A good travel agent can get the price adjusted should the pricing go down.”

Magical Mickey

Disney resorts are another favorite choice for Katy vacationers. My family and I met Mickey and the gang at Disneyland and had a blast. Many families say it’s better for little kids, and I agree. With a height requirement of 40 inches or less on most attractions, younger children can go on just about every ride, unlike Disney World. It’s also a smaller park, which is easier for young kids with a short attention span and even shorter legs.

Robyn Joyce’s family has visited both Disneyland and Disney World and says that three days is a good amount of time to spend at Disneyland. “It’s easy to navigate and do in a few days, so little ones aren’t as tired out as they would be after a longer trip to Disney World,” says Joyce.

For older kids, Disney World is a great option. The multiple parks with different themes and practically inexhaustible amount of shows ensures that the kids won’t get bored. Joyce recommends visiting the rides in the morning when lines are shorter and seeing shows in the afternoon in the air conditioning to beat the heat and relax after the rides.



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Wherever you decide to go, planning is important for any vacation. Deciding on a budget and learning cost-cutting and timesaving tips can go a long way toward a successful trip. As Joyce says, it can make or break a trip.

“Planning is the difference between a frustrating experience and a good experience,” says Joyce. **KM**

ALICE HICKS has traveled to Seattle, Portland, Boston, and California with her family and can't wait for their next trip.

Family Vacation Planning Online

Before you plan your next family getaway, visit these online resources to find the best deals and to learn some new tricks to make your vacation more enjoyable for the whole crew.

visitsanantonio.com

denver.org

steamboat.com

disney.com

royalcaribbean.com

cruiseplanners.com

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The Dvorachek's in front of the Alamo during a weekend getaway in San Antonio

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