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THE BESTS

The Best Family Vacation Spots in the U.S.

Look no further for a family outing destination that fits every need.

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Planning a **family vacation** is never easy. For starters, there are many factors to consider: affordability, distance, dining options, activities for all ages, and of course, safety—not to mention, if you've got an infant in tow, there's extra planning that goes around the feeding and nap schedules. With the rise of **COVID-19**, this year looks wildly different from years past, shifting how we travel, as well as where and when.

The good news is that there are plenty of places right here in the U.S. suitable for your next family trip, no matter the criteria. So whether you and your brood prefer to spend a week touring museums or lying belly up on the **beach**—or both—we've got you covered. Here, we've

rounded up seven of the best family vacation spots in the U.S., with options that everyone is guaranteed to love.

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Catalina Island, California

Who says you have to hop on a flight to the [Caribbean](#) for an unforgettable island getaway? Located just 22 miles off the coast of Long Beach, and reachable only by [ferry](#) or helicopter, [Catalina Island's](#) top selling point is its relative seclusion—and chances are, anything you're looking for in a vacation, the island has it. You can go zip lining 600 feet in the air or drive a biofuel-powered Hummer up into the mountains for a dose of adventure, or spend an afternoon with your feet in the sand at [Descanso Beach Club](#), where the kids can splash around in the waves while parents stay shoreside with a cocktail. When it's time to turn down for the night, [Hermit Gulch Campground](#) in Avalon is the ideal DIY option; though if you can't live without a complimentary pair of slippers, there are always the bright, cheery rooms at the recently opened [Hotel Atwater](#).

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Albuquerque, New Mexico

There's a reason [New Mexico](#) is known as the "Land of Enchantment." It's one of the best family vacation spots in the U.S. because it's an ideal year-round destination, but also because there's something to suit every preference. And Albuquerque, with its easy access to national parks like White Sands and Carlsbad Caverns, and unmatched mountain views, also offers plenty of opportunities for education: Stop in at the [Albuquerque Museum](#), where the Only in Albuquerque exhibit traces the story of the city through local artifacts, or, when it reopens after COVID-19, the [Indian Pueblo Cultural Center](#), owned and operated by the 19 Indian Pueblos of New Mexico, to learn about Pueblo Indian history and art. (You can also drive 15 minutes northwest of downtown to [Petroglyph National Monument](#), where you can see upward of 17,000 etchings made by Puebloans on the area's volcanic rock more than 400 years ago.) But we'd also recommend taking in the city from above: hop on the [Sandia Peak Tramway](#), which stretches all the way up to the 10,378-foot crest of the Sandia Mountains, or book a hot air balloon ride with [Apex Balloon Rides](#). Spend the night at [El Vado Motel](#), a historic, recently renovated motel along the iconic [Route 66](#), for some welcome throwback kitsch.

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Alexandria, Virginia

This quaint city on the Potomac River, just a 20-minute drive south of [Washington, D.C.](#), is a great addition to any trip to the District. But there's also plenty enough to do to make it worthy of a stand-alone trip, as our readers know—after all, they voted it one of the [best small cities in the U.S.](#) this year. In the historic Old Town district, step back in time while walking along the cobblestone pathways of King Street, home to centuries-old architecture, or get a history lesson at the [Alexandria Black History Museum](#). If you prefer to explore by sea, take a riverboat tour on the Potomac or hop on board [Tall Ship Providence](#) for a look at a replica of a navy ship from the 1770s. Spend a few nights at [The Alexandrian](#), in the heart of Old Town Alexandria, where families can take a ride around town on the complimentary bikes and splash around in the heated indoor pool; come Saturday morning, you can mosey over one block to the [Old Town Farmers' Market](#), which has been operating continuously at the site since 1753.

Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Cape Cod has remained a favorite of vacationing families for generations—and for good reason. From the moment you cross Sagamore Bridge (or Bourne Bridge—both connect the island to mainland Massachusetts), you, too, will be swayed by all it has to offer. The picturesque ocean views and fresh-from-the-water lobster rolls are just the beginning. For a dose of family fun, visit the historic, 48-foot-tall **Nauset Lighthouse**, which dates back to the 19th century and played an important role in the area's maritime history, and spend the rest of the day communing with nature at the **Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary**, where kids can learn about the area's wildlife and habitats on a 45-minute clue-filled quest. The **Villages at Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club**, at the northern tip of the peninsula, has a massive pool, plus activities for kids of all ages, from oyster bed tours and tennis lessons to stand-up paddle boarding and kayaking on its very own Blueberry Pond.

Finger Lakes, New York

Covering over 9,000 square miles that wrap around 11 narrow blue lakes, New York's [Finger Lakes](#) region is a natural marvel. It's the ultimate escape for families seeking a vacation filled with outdoor adventure, farm-to-table food (we love the restaurant at [Elderberry Pond](#), which sits on its own farm, for a special, "we're-on-vacation" lunch), and, when the season is right, ample leaf peeping opportunities. Spend a few nights at the recently opened [Lake House on Canandaigua](#), just a five-minute walk from Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park. Not only is the hotel easy on the eyes, with its warm, breezy design; it also provides plenty of prime family time extracurriculars, including kite flying, bike riding, and arts and crafts activities like print-making and rock painting. Beyond hotel walls, the [Strong National Museum of Play](#) has plenty of interactive games for kids, like DanceLab and Imagination Destination, while the [Corning Museum of Glass](#) offers them a chance to create their very own glass-blown souvenir.

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Moab, Utah

Pinned between two spectacular national parks, you'll never run out of things to see in this city in southeastern [Utah](#). One day, you can hike among the rock formations at Arches National Park or explore the mesas in Canyonlands National Park; and the next, you can book a rafting trip on the Colorado River with [Western River Expeditions](#). And that's hardly scratching the surface: There's also canyoneering, mountain biking, and

Hummer tours, plus the opportunity to spend a night under the stars with s'mores while glamping at [Under Canvas Moab](#). Bring the family over to [Moab Giants Dinosaur Park & Museum](#) (many dinosaur bones have been found in the area) and spend an afternoon digging for fossils or following the Dinosaur Trail, where you can walk around life-size dinosaur replicas and see the tracks each one once left behind, back when they roamed the earth.

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Hilton Head, South Carolina

With miles and miles of white sandy beaches, biking trails, family-friendly resorts like the [Omni Hilton Head](#), golf courses, and delicious [Low Country](#) cuisine and seafood (try the stuffed shrimp or fried oysters at [Hudson's Seafood House on the Docks](#)), it's no surprise our readers voted this southeastern getaway the [number one U.S. island](#). But more than that, Hilton Head's unique cultural history makes it an important educational destination, too. Learn about the country's first self-governed town of formerly enslaved people at [Mitchelville Freedom Park](#), or spend the day with [local guide](#) Sallie Ann Robinson, a sixth-generation Gullah native, on nearby [Daufuskie Island](#), to immerse yourself in the area's Gullah culture.

