



Courtesy UnCruise

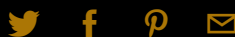
# Why My Son Does Better on Adult Trips—And Yours Might, Too

by J U D Y K O U T S K Y

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I thought taking him on a trip tailored to adults could be a disaster. Today, it's still one of his favorites.



When my son was 10, I took him on an adult cruise—a **meditation cruise** to Mexico that I knew would not have other kids on board. We were sailing with UnCruise, a line that specializes in adventure and off-the-beaten-path experiences—but for adults. Not only was he going to be the only child on the ship, but he's not the best eater and I knew there would be no kid's menu; I also knew there wasn't a kid's club or kid-specific programming (the cruise does plenty of active-adventure excursions that appeal to all ages, but nothing labeled specifically for kids). Plus, he'd be surrounded by adults—and adult conversation—all day, every day.

It turns out, it was one of our best vacations together and was a turning point in our family travel. Now, barely two years later, I've taken him on several cruises that don't cater to children—the first one, to Mexico; as well as **Alaska**; and Costa Rica combined with Panama. One of the reasons I love this UnCruise in particular is that,

because it's adults-oriented, they didn't dumb it down for him. My son ordered from the only menu available—not an adult menu, not a kid's menu, simply a menu—and tried lamb, duck, tuna, and salmon. Sometimes he liked it, sometimes he didn't; but he was expanding his palate by trying.

At the table, there were no iPads, so he had to be present and part of the conversation. (Actually, one of the best parts about the ship is that there's no **WIFI**. I admit, it took me awhile to get used to that, too. But that's especially ideal for kids.) He launched conversations by asking people how they enjoyed the days' activities, where they were from, and for their favorite movie. In fact, being the only kid around made him practice his manners without even being aware of it. Turns out, there are distinctive developmental benefits for kids who go on "adult" vacations.

"Engaging with an unfamiliar world requires a child to be courageous and take risks, and these risks often lead to fun, friendship, and intellectual stimulation," says **Lindsay B. Jernigan, Ph.D.**, and a licensed psychologist. "You may be surprised to find that **incorporating your kids into adult travel plans** doesn't mean they will be deprived of child's play." In fact it's the opposite. Trying new things encourages kids to take risks and broaden their horizons. By contrast, "if children are limited to travel experiences that mimic their home environment, their frame of reference isn't encouraged to grow," Jernigan says.

Kayaking in the Sea of Cortes with UnCruise.

Courtesy UnCruise

Not having a kids club on board meant we did **activities together every day** that we both enjoyed. He did standup paddle boarding for the first time in Mexico—and now we SUP on almost every trip we take. He kayaked around a glacier in Alaska and snorkeled among the tropical fish in Costa Rica. Whether it was at mealtimes or during daily excursions, taking my son on an "adult" trip set the expectations higher and I noticed that he stepped up in turn, even finding like-minded people to play chess, backgammon, and cards with during down time.

"Most kids want more than anything to be older. Allowing them to learn to make choices and try new things is a broadening experience. Kids are very influenced by their environment, and most are quite adaptable," says **Dr. Nancy Irwin**, a clinical psychologist and primary therapist. "Interacting with other adults on a vacation is good for kids because it teaches them to grow their vocabulary, learn, be exposed to various occupations, personalities, role models, to learn how to respect adults—and how to be respected by them."

When my son recounts his favorite trips, the UnCruise **trip** rates top of the list. To this day, the same goes for me. 💎

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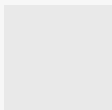
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