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Why Traveling As a Single Parent Is Important — and How to Plan an Amazing Trip With Your Kids

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BY **JUDY KOUTSKY** | OCTOBER 21, 2018





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For years, vacations traditionally meant two parents and kids hitting the road. But these days it's becoming much more common for just one parent to take the helm. This is due to a variety of factors, including the increase in single-parent households. "In 2017, 29% of children were living in a single-parent household in the U.S.," says Dyan Mckie, Brand Manager of Family Adventures at [Intrepid Travel](#) and a single parent herself. "The change in family dynamics has an immediate impact on the travel industry, which has traditionally focused on the nuclear family."

Other reasons for just one parent traveling with the kids? Busy schedules in two-parent households (dad can't get off from work, so mom takes the kids skiing in Colorado) or kids and parents having different interests (dad doesn't like to scuba, so mom takes her son on a diving trip solo). For these reasons and more,

the size and scale of the solo-parent travel market has drastically increased over the past few years.

Why It's Important

"As a single parent, you spend a great portion of your time at home moving through the paces of school, work, household duties and weekend sporting activities with little time to sit and have quality time with your child," says Mckie. "When you travel with your child you have more time to focus on conversations, bonding and getting to know them more." Often, your child sees you in a different light; they see the adventurous, fun person that you really are (and not just the mom nagging the kids to finish their homework and clean up their room).

For two-parent households where only one parent goes on a trip, this is valuable one-on-one time. "Solo travel is important because it allows the parent to spend time with the children without the distractions of their partner or of everyday life," says [Dr. Lisa Long](#), a licensed clinical psychologist based in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Being away with your child allows you and your child to experience each other in a new environment which naturally provides a rich opportunity for bonding." These adventures can help the child appreciate their parent more as an individual and develop a greater sense of respect.

Solo travel can also provide many opportunities for teaching. "A parent can also use the one on one time with the child to create special memories that the two of them can share; which may not have been feasible if the other parent was present," says Long. "There is nothing more valuable that you can invest in your children than your time."

The Benefits to Both Kids and Adults

I have traveled extensively with both of my boys – often without my husband – and the memories of those trips are some of my favorites. My oldest son, Jack, who is super adventurous, remembers when we held crocodiles in Mexico and went dog sledding in Finland. Matthew, my youngest, remembers swimming with sting rays in the Bahamas and going for hikes in California. When I'm the sole parent, I'm able to give my full attention to each child – without balancing another person's interest.

“For kids, this one-on-one time is a chance to be truly present with their parent,” says Danette May, a mindfulness expert and author of [“The Rise: An Unforgettable Journey of Self-Love, Forgiveness, and Transformation,”](#) who traveled extensively as a single parent when her kids were eight and two. “It's an opportunity to share any challenges they may be facing, the emotions they're having, and just show you who they really are.” It's also a chance to bond with their parent and get to know them as a whole person. For parents, this is a great way to check in and see and what's going on in their lives. Seems counterintuitive, but spending time away from home allows you learn about who their best friends are in school right now or what they're looking forward to in the next few weeks.





How to Make It Work

Let's face it: While taking a trip with your child can be exciting, at times it can also be exhausting if you're the only parent on duty. Here are some tips to make it work.

- “When planning your trip, look for hotels with pools,” says Mckie “A hotel pool will attract other kids which means your child will have someone to splash around with.” And you can watch them from the sidelines without having to be in the pool playing the whole time.
- For long travel days, pack activities that they can do by themselves, like reading a book, playing on an iPad or bringing a game they can do on their own. Tensions can sometimes run high (and energy low) on long flights or train rides. Having some breathing room is key.
- “Build time into your vacation for the two of you to be somewhat apart so that the time you do spend together feels more special and you can both be fully present,” says May. For me, that means booking a massage for myself and putting my son in a kid's club for a few hours. I feel pampered and recharged and they enjoy making new friends – often from other countries – and having new experiences. In Mexico, I put Jack in a piñata-making class. In the the Caribbean, Matthew learned how to make jerk chicken in a cooking class.

Trips That Are Made for Solo Parent Travelers

Certain companies — and destinations — are easier than others when it comes to family travel as a solo parent. Some companies even have specialized itineraries specifically for that. “In 2017, 16 percent of Intrepid Travel’s family bookings were single parents and their children, and we’ve been receiving increased inquiries and requests from single parents,” says Mckie. “This year, we made a conscious effort to create a dedicated range of tours for solo-parent travelers. They allow children to bond and form friendships with other children in the group, while giving a single parent — or a parent traveling without their spouse — the unique opportunity to travel with adults in similar family dynamics.”

The itineraries, which are based in Costa Rica, Egypt, Morocco, Northern India, Thailand and Vietnam, are led by local tour leaders, which provides parents with some much-deserved rest and relaxation, while taking the pressure off them to plan and entertain at all times. Plus, Intrepid doesn’t charge a single supplement, which is the industry norm.

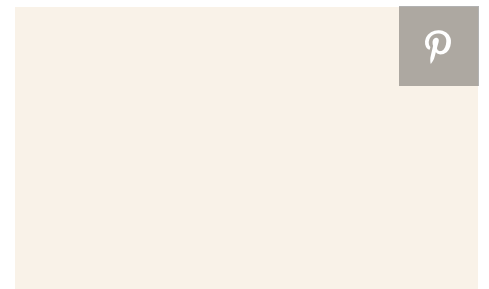
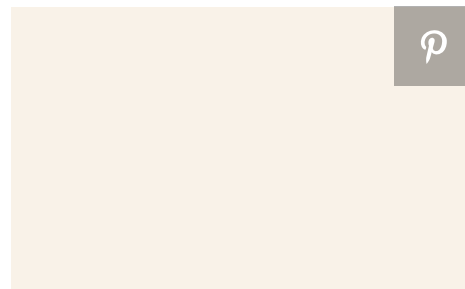
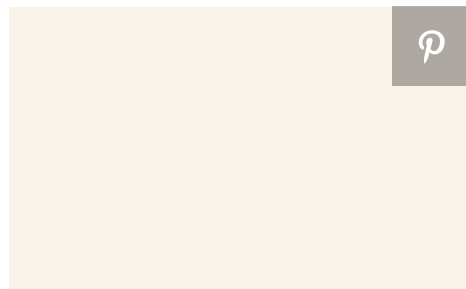
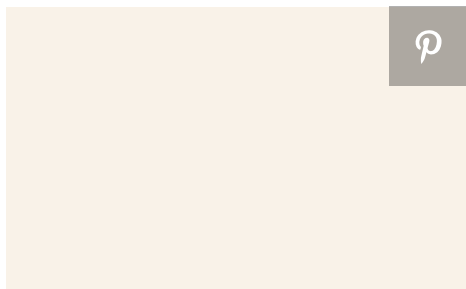
The [Velas Resorts](#) (family-friendly properties in Puerto Vallarta, Riviera Maya and Riviera Nayarit) are waiving the single supplement fee for single parents traveling with their children from now until December 22nd. Entertainment for kids ranges from mini mariachi classes, sand castle building, water balloon wars, kite making workshops and human foosball tournaments to Mexican Fiesta, foam parties, cooking and baking classes, drive-in movies, eco-cycling tours, and more. At [True Blue Bay](#), Grenada there’s no single supplement add-on, plus they offer Single Parent Travelers a variety of add-ons including: assistance with researching of flights; VIP airport service (which includes luggage collection and transfers to the hotel); and two hours of complimentary babysitting.

[Abercrombie & Kent](#) is offering single parents a deal on their Family Antarctica luxury expedition cruise. A single parent does not pay a single supplement when sharing with a child. Plus, the child (18 and under) saves 50% savings off the adult double occupancy rate, when sharing with 1 adult.

The [Asbury Hotel](#) located in Asbury Park, NJ is offering a 10% off discount for single parent travelers through April 2019 (use the code: parent). The hotel offers play and sleep tents, available at no cost, for small kids. They also have bunk rooms, available with four or eight beds, providing ample space for larger families. Connected to the hotel through a "secret" passage is the just reopened Asbury Lanes, iconic 1960's bowling alley-turned music venue. The Lanes welcomes families to enjoy multigenerational programming with bowling lessons for youth and family-friendly concerts.

The bottom line is traveling as the sole parent on a family trip affords amazing opportunities to really get in tune with your child and vice versa – while also exploring a new destination. The look of family travel is changing, but it's a welcome change for many.

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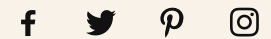
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