



TRAVELING WITH KIDS

Affordable New Zealand

By HEATHER GREENWOOD DAVIS

Q. We're visiting New Zealand for two weeks. What should we see without spending a fortune?

Stick to one island to make the most of your time and money. The South Island offers greater variety for family excursions. Rent a car and head for places that appeal to your kid's interests: Milford Sound's dramatic peaks offer stunning hikes. Glowworm caves in Te Anau will excite science buffs. Adventure tours (bungee jumping and jet boating) in Queenstown will beckon the thrill seekers. Book lodgings (self-catering accommodations with kitchens are a good deal) and activities ahead of time, especially for New Zealand's summer months (December-February). Contact an i-SITE tourist office (www.newzealand.com) to help you plot your route and book your activities (no service fee).

GOT A QUESTION?

Heather Greenwood Davis blogs about her family's around-the-world journeys at globetrottingmama.com.

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Q. Is my five-year-old nephew too young for a cross-Canada rail trip?

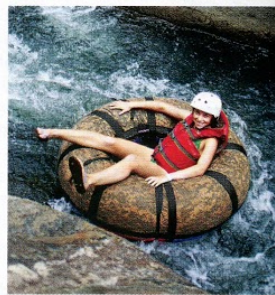
A cross-country trip will likely be too much for him. It's a four-day journey from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Toronto; a day and a half more to get to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Better to keep his first train ride memorable but short. On Via Rail's *Ocean* overnighter (from Montreal to Halifax), sleeper cars are available, and a dedicated "learning coordinator" engages kids with vignettes about the culture and customs of the Maritimes. The *Rocky Mountaineer* offers several short western Canada routes, including a 3.5-hour Sea to Sky Climb trip from Vancouver to Whistler that slowly crosses a trestle bridge with the Cheakamus Canyon far below. Kids can peer into the canyon from the open-air heritage observation car, where they may feel the spray from Brandywine Falls.

Q. I'm a single mom with an eight-year-old boy who wants an Indiana Jones adventure in Costa Rica.

There's plenty of high-adrenaline (but safe) action and eye-popping wildlife. Start in Monteverde, and sign up with 100% Aventura Adventure Park for the zip line (one of the longest in Central America), and do the Canopy Tour with SkyWalk, where you'll traverse suspended bridges. For bigger adventures (rappelling down waterfalls or tubing on the Arenal River), make sure you give outfitters your child's height, weight, and age details before booking. Mix in some explorer components, like looking for howler monkeys, local iguanas, and hanging sloths in Manuel Antonio National Park, and you'll have a happy boy. Don't want to arrange it yourself? Many operators, including Thomson Family Adventures, will put a package together for you.

Q. I want to start a tradition of taking my animal-loving grandkids away on their tenth birthday. Where should we go?

The trick to showing big animals to little people is accessibility. Yosemite National Park is a haven for wildlife. Spot black bears and mule deer right from Yosemite Valley. The Galápagos Islands in Ecuador offer sea lions, giant tortoises, marine iguanas, and blue-footed boobies. It's as close as you'll get to an animal Eden.



Adventures include tubing in Costa Rica and hiking the South Island in New Zealand (top, left).