

February 2018

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5 reasons WHY camp is a good choice

Summer vacation offers students a respite from lessons and the routine of school. Children might once have eagerly awaited those final days of classes so they could lounge poolside, skip rocks across ponds and spend the long days of the season playing with friends. But many of today's youngsters spend much of their summer vacations indoors playing with their digital devices.

Perhaps that's why one of the last vestiges of the classic summer vacation escape — summer camp — remains such a viable option for parents who want their children to get outdoors once the school year ends.

Although kids needn't be in camp all summer long, a week or two can benefit campers of all ages. The following are five reasons why summer camp might be the right fit this year.

Explore talents

Summer camps help young people explore their unique interests and talents. Under an organized, yet often easygoing, camp schedule, kids can dabble in sports, arts and crafts, leadership, community support, and so many other activities that may not be fully available to them elsewhere.

Physical activity

Lots of camps build their itineraries around

physical activities that takes place outdoors. Campers may spend their time swimming, running, hiking, playing sports, climbing, and so much more. This can be a welcome change for kids accustomed to living sedentary lifestyles. Regular physical activity has many health benefits and can set a foundation for healthy habits as an adult.

Gain confidence

Day and sleepaway camps offer campers the opportunity to get comfortable in their own skin. Camps can foster activities in self-esteem by removing the academic measures of success and fill in with noncompetitive opportunities to succeed. Campers learn independence, decision-making skills and the ability to thrive outside of the shadow of their parents, siblings or other students.

Try new things

Camp gives children the chance to try new things, whether that's learning to cook, exploring new environments or embracing a new sport or leisure activity. Opening oneself up to new opportunities can build character and prove enlightening for children.

Make new friends

Camp is a great place to meet new people and make lifelong friends. Campers flood in from areas near and far. This provides kids with a chance to expand their social circles beyond their immediate neighborhoods and schools.

Camps benefit children in a variety of ways. Lessons learned in camp can strengthen values, build confidence, develop coping mechanisms when adversity strikes, and enable campers to make lifelong friends.





Start gearing up now for summer camp plans to guarantee kids attend the camps they prefer.

GET PREPARED for summer camp season

Summer camp season is just around the corner. Each summer, millions of children depart for campsites around the country to swim, hike, craft, and enjoy the companionship of friends.

Summer camps in North America were first established in the 1880s and were attended by children without their parents for overnight stays. By the 20th century, summer camps had become an international phenomenon, and various organizations hosted traditional summer camps or camps geared toward religion, sports, music and other subjects and activities. According to the American Camp Association, each year more than 14 million children and adults in the United States attend camp. America is home to more than 14,000 day and resident camps (8,400 are overnight camps and 5,600 are

day camps). Nonprofit groups are the largest sponsors of summer camps.

Many people put off summer camp planning until it is too late. Parents should keep in mind that camps begin registration early in the year and have specific cut-off dates for enrollment. Parents who want to beat the crowds this year can use this guide to help plan a summer camp agenda.

- Attend an orientation seminar. Take the time to visit prospective camps for a tour, and use this open house as an opportunity to learn more about the programs offered. If available, find a camp employee to discuss your child's eligibility for enrollment. Some camps may offer webinars for convenience.
- Fill out the enrollment package completely. Each camp has their own requirements for registration. Expect

to submit some personal information, including a medical background and proof of insurance, names and numbers of emergency contacts, and any other pertinent information as it applies to the camper. This may include allergies, fears, physical or mental disabilities, or even preferences in camp courses.

- Establish payment schedules. Summer camps vary in price. The ACA says camp costs range from \$100 to more than \$1,500 per week. However, many accredited camps offer some sort of financial assistance for children from families with limited financial means. If cost is a factor, be sure to broach the subject.

· Prepare children for the physical challenges a camp may present. Summer camp activities may be rigorous, and campers may need to be cleared by a physician before starting. Be sure to

schedule your child a physical and bring along any pertinent forms. Children also can increase their levels of physical activity compared to the often sedentary nature of winter. Such preparation can prevent injuries when engaging in outdoor and physical activities.

- Shop for supplies. Camps are likely to provide a list of requirements with regard to clothing and other equipment campers will need. Make sure kids have enough shorts, T-shirts, socks, athletic shoes, swimsuits, toiletries, and other camp necessities before they leave.
- Keep children in the loop. Engage children in the planning process to help alleviate their fears and get them excited about summer camp.

Summer camp can foster lifelong memories. Parents can help kids prepare in advance for the fun that's soon to arrive.



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Avacation for the family is no small expense, but there are plenty of ways you can minimize the hit your wallet takes and focus instead on exploring new places while making great memories.

Travel during off seasons. Although peak season varies by destination and region, virtually every location has an off season when demand is lighter and so are prices, for everything from hotel rooms to entertainment. The one downside is that while off season travel can be great for a strict budget, lower tourist traffic means many attractions and amenities may offer reduced schedules or even close. An alternative is traveling during what's known as the shoulder season, the transitional timeframe between peak and off-peak seasons, when it's easier to find the best of both worlds: lower prices and plenty of things to see and do.



Shop smart for gas

Just as you've likely noticed in your hometown, gas prices can fluctuate from one area to the next. When it's time to fill up, avoid densely populated tourist areas where prices tend to be higher. There are also several smartphone apps that can help identify the best prices in your immediate vicinity.

Leverage rewards programs

Whether it's a retail shopping card or an incentive program on your credit line, take maximum advantage of your available rewards to help defray travel costs. Cash in points to earn credit on essentials like gas, hotel costs and more, depending on your program offerings.

Practice fuel-efficient driving

If weather allows, use the vents or windows to cool

down rather than the air conditioner. Make sure tires are properly inflated. Try to limit abrupt changes in speed with hard accelerations and braking, and use cruise control when traffic conditions allow.

Eat on the cheap

Do your research ahead of time to find deals at restaurants on your route. Look for "kids eat free" deals and other specials. Also take advantage of the free meals offered at many hotel chains, such as hot breakfast buffets.

Comparison shop

If you can pinpoint where you'll be each night of your trip, you can compare hotel rates ahead of time. Not only can you get a better deal, you'll avoid the risk of bouncing from one lobby to the next in search of vacancies.

Enjoy simple pursuits

Entertainment doesn't have to be expensive to be enjoyable. Skip the pricey amusement parks in lieu of a scenic hike or a new experience like zip lining. National parks and historical sites offer plenty of low-cost adventure for families of all ages.

Pack your snacks

Particularly if you're traveling with small children, there's no way to avoid frequent stops for restroom breaks and burning off some energy. Outfitting the whole family with a drink and snack at every stop can quickly add up. Instead, carry a supply of treats and drinks in a cooler, if there's room, so you can refresh and recharge but skip the added expenses.

Find more tips for travel and other family-friendly activities at eLivingToday.com.



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How families can make staycations more unique

As a result of the economic downturn that began in 2008, many families found themselves forgoing traditional vacations in favor of “staycations.” In such instances, families spent time away from work and school together but did not travel far, if at all.

While the economy has bounced back since the dawn of the staycation, many families are still choosing to stay at home in an effort to save money. Staycations might not seem as glamorous as traveling abroad or as relaxing as spending a week in an oceanfront resort or condominium, but there are ways for families to make staycations more fun and seem like a true departure from everyday life.

- Experiment with new cuisine. One of the joys of travel is the opportunity to dine out and experience cuisine native to particular locales. But families don’t need to travel abroad to enjoy this particular benefit of traveling. The internet is home to a wealth of recipes from countries far and wide. Parents and their kids can choose recipes online and prepare meals from a different country each night, or pick a “country or region of the week” and prepare a different dish native to that area each night. This provides a great departure from



Experimenting in the kitchen during a staycation can give families the feeling of dining out that they enjoy on more traditional vacations.

ordinary family dinners and can make for a fun activity for the whole family.

- Camp out. Straying from the norm, even when staying at home, can make staycations seem more like a vacation than merely a week away from school or the office. Parents who want to add a dash of adventure to their families’

staycations can set up tents in the backyard and sleep under the stars or seek out local campsites that are free or relatively inexpensive. Tell stories around a backyard firepit when staying at home to provide a more authentic camping experience for everyone.

- Take in local culture. Rather than

spending the week lounging around the house or the backyard pool, families can explore the cultural opportunities in their towns or cities. Busy families tend to take such opportunities for granted when they get caught up in the daily grind, and exploring local history and artistic opportunities in the same way you would when traveling can provide a sense of excitement similar to that experienced during more traditional vacations. Visit a local zoo, take in a performance at a local theater company or take a guided historical tour of an area of your hometown or a nearby city.

- Indulge in an extraordinary activity. While families typically choose staycations to save money, forgetting the budget to enjoy one extraordinary activity can make a staycation more fun and memorable. Spend one day during the staycation doing something the family would not ordinarily do, be it visiting an all-day amusement park, taking a helicopter tour of a nearby city or going to a ballgame. Such a break from the norm, even if it’s only for a single night, can make staycations feel more like vacations.

Staycations have become an economic necessity for many families, and there are many ways for parents to make such times as enjoyable and unique as more traditional vacations.

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