



their birth control goes where?



Best Beach Vacations

Make it more than just sun and sand. Here are six destinations that offer activities the whole family can enjoy.

By **Judy Koutsky** | October 05, 2005



Best Beach Vacations

Matagorda County, Texas

(800-806-8333; www.baycity.org)

This little-known Texas gem marks the spot where the Colorado River meets the Gulf of Mexico. Along the unspoiled beaches, you can catch a glimpse of more than 241 species, making the area one of North America's premier bird-watching destinations. Kids will want to hunt a more exotic creature: the cowboy. For a unique view, take a canoe trip down the



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Colorado, where your family can see cattle ranches and cowboys driving herds.

Where to stay: The Holiday Inn Express is centrally located. Rates start at \$94.

- www.baycity.org

Amelia Island, Florida

(800-874-6878; www.aipfl.com)

The Amelia Island Plantation gives you and your spouse the rare chance to enjoy a little R and R while keeping your children happy with loads of activities. Drop them off at the supervised Kids Camp Amelia (ages 3 to 10), where they can spend the day swimming, taking hayrides, making crafts, and more. Then head to the spa for a couples massage, an antistress aroma bath, or another luxurious treatment.

Where to stay: At the plantation, the Amelia Inn & Beach Club offers easy access to the restaurants and clubs; the Villas of Amelia provide a more secluded, spacious stay for big families. Rates start at \$186.

- www.aipfl.com

Cannon Beach, Oregon

(503-436-2623; www.cannonbeach.org)

Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Coast Mountain Range, this locale is known for its forested headlands and miles of pristine sand. Your family will want to hang out on the beach, where you can go horseback

riding, search tide pools for sea creatures, or rent a three-wheeled funcycle. In the spring, spot gray whales from the cliffs or on a boat tour. And don't miss the famous Kite Festival in late April: Kids can see professionals perform tricks or they can take part in workshops, a kite parade, a sand-castle contest, and more.

Where to stay: Get more bang for your buck at the oceanfront Hallmark Resort. Rates start at \$79.

- www.cannonbeach.org

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

(843-626-7444; www.myrtlebeachinfo.com)

One of the most family-friendly beaches in the country, this up-and-coming hot spot offers all the big-beach fun of Florida and California without the large crowds or high prices. The main attraction is the 60-mile-long area known as the Grand Strand, where kids will have their run of amusement parks, mini-golf courses, water slides, and kooky museums. With more than 115 courses, it's also a golf-lover's paradise.

Where to stay: The Sands Resorts offer a popular beach club for kids, a water park, family-friendly restaurants, and more. Rates start at \$81.

- www.myrtlebeachinfo.com

Gulf Shores, Alabama

(800-745-7263; www.gulfshores.com)

A refreshing escape from more touristy locales, this stretch of white sand on the Gulf of Mexico hasn't been overrun by development. At Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, your kids can hike or swim near endangered animals (like sea turtles) and undisturbed sand dunes. The area offers a number of family-friendly water activities, from deep-sea fishing to snorkeling. For a more relaxing boat ride, take the Sailaway Charters bayou tour, where you'll learn about oystering and spot dolphins, pelicans, and blue herons.

Where to stay: The Island House Hotel is on the beach and has a game room, large pool, and more. Rates start at \$99.

- www.gulfshores.com

Mackinac Island, Michigan

(800-454-5227; www.mackinacisland.org)


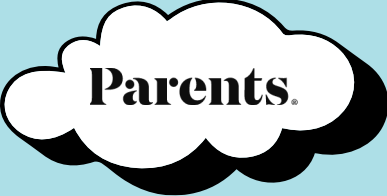

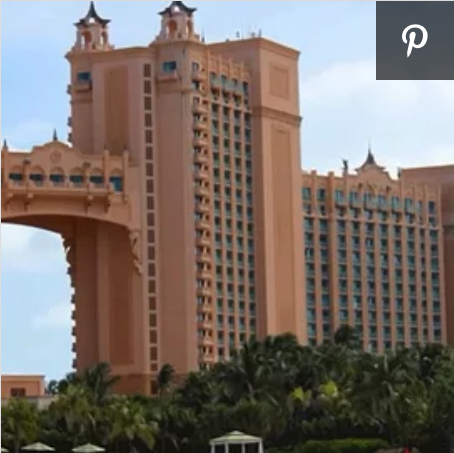

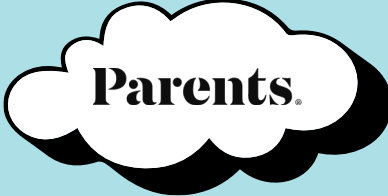

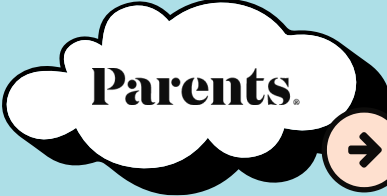
Motor vehicles are banned on this island in the Great Lakes, so you can count on a peaceful vacation with an old-world feel. Horseback, carriage, and boat tours make getting around with your family an adventure. But the best way to explore the beaches and quaint town is to rent bikes and pedal along one of the 60 scenic trails. Or take a stroll along the picturesque shore, and make sure to stop by Main Street to snack on free samples of fudge in almost any flavor imaginable.

Where to stay: The Mission Point Resort is a big hit with families, thanks to its large kids' center, hiking field trips, and pizza parties. Rates start at \$119.

- www.mackinacisland.org

By Judy Koutsky

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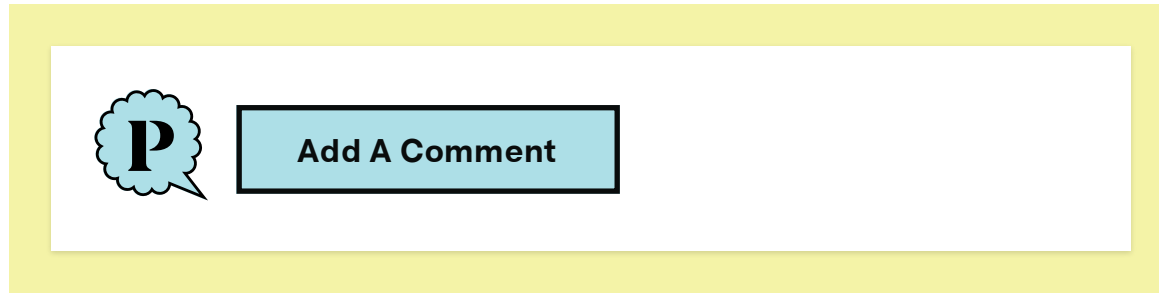
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