

Family Travel 5

From kid-friendly themes to active, outdoor pursuits

By LYNN O'ROURKE HAYES
FamilyTravel.com
It's always a good time to plan a family vacation. Here are five ideas to consider:
1. Family by JW Marriott
Tap into the family-friendly experiences recently launched within the 83 JW Marriott hotels around the world. Crafted for children ages 5 to 12, Family by JW centers around three, kid-friendly themes—creativity, fitness and culture. These pillars infuse original programming created in partnership with cultural icons such as the Guggenheim Museum and The Joffrey Ballet as well as resources within each local community. Expect interactive cooking classes led by culinary experts during which junior foodies will help prepare and sample nutritious cuisine reflecting the culture of the destination. In New York and beyond, the JW Marriott has teamed with the Guggenheim to engage young guests with activity guides and experiences that explore art, architecture and culture. The Joffrey Ballet collaborated on suggested in-room exercises and stretches to help families wake up in the morning and wind down each evening during their stay. A new in-room dining menu features healthy, family-style dining options to share at mealtimes.
Contact: www.jwmarriott.com/family

2. The Watergate, Washington, D.C.
Visit our country's capital city with your favorite American Girl fan for an experience she'll never forget. Check in to the hotel's specially designed suite, sink into the plush velvet pink sofa and scan the room for American Girl's best-selling books, fan-favorite products.
See **FIVE** on Page 2C



Richard Hassen/San Diego Union-Tribune/PH
Norwegian Bliss is the new 165,028-ton, 4,004-passenger ship from Norwegian Cruise Line. Its signature features include a go-kart track and massive 180-degree observation deck.

New Bliss offers more, or less

By MARK GAVETT
Sun Sentinel
Is it possible to get away from a crowd of 4,004 passengers and 1,710 crew aboard a 954-foot cruise ship?
A cruise ship that boasts the longest (at 1,000 feet) electric go-kart race track at sea? A veritable sea-going resort with an open-air laser tag course, themed as an abandoned space station. An Aqua Park with two pools and two multistory water slides (one of which includes a free-fall followed by a loop overhead that will leave you, assuming your heart didn't faint back there at the free-fall part, grinning uncontrollably for a good 90 minutes thereafter). No fewer than 33 places to eat, drink and dessert (yes, it's worth using as a verb here), including, perhaps most pleasantly unexpected for a high-sea-going vessel, a high-plains Texas steakhouse called Q, where you can pass the sauces and listen to country music each night. Not to mention a smoking (and nonsmoking) casino. Broadway-caliber shows (the Tony Award-winning musical "Jersey Boys," anyone?), a spa with 24 treatment rooms, six infinity hot tubs, a fitness center ... and the Beatles (cover band) warming up in a facsimile of The Cavern Club, "inspired by the Liverpool club where the Beatles performed frequently in the 1960s."
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know.
But is it possible to get away from all of that on a 165,000-ton, 136-foot-wide, 20-deck cruise ship? Some place where it's possible to just enjoy the cool sea breezes, the flaming sunsets, the stars at night?
Yes.
I'm not sure how, exactly; but here's my theory: Norwegian Cruise Line's new Bliss is so big, and offers so much to do, everybody is likely to be somewhere else when you want a quiet moment or two alone.
See **BLISS** on Page 2C

GEOQUIZ
The White Mountains are in which two New England states?
—CHICAGO TRIBUNE
A 271 mph wind gust recorded April 12, 1934, at Mt. Niangua in Missouri.
—Lynn Hayes/Union-Tribune and Mark Gavett



David Hassen/San Diego Union-Tribune/PH
The Beacon restaurant provides a dazzling view of the town of Soufriere and the pitons in St. Lucia.

TRAVEL TIP
COLORFUL COMFORT
St. Lucia, the glittering gem in the Caribbean

By DOUG HASEN
The San Diego Union-Tribune
"I want to go to somewhere nice in the Caribbean," my wife, Sharon, has told me many a thousand times. So finally, for her birthday, I arranged a five-day visit to St. Lucia that, I'm relieved to say, exceeded our expectations. Even though getting there required a couple of flights from our home in Carlsbad, Calif., it was worth the effort for a number of reasons, including super nice people, memorable meals, spectacular landscapes, good beaches and lots of fun activities.
Based on our experience in St. Lucia, I'm suggesting a new marketing slogan: "The 4-C's of St. Lucia: clean, courteous, colorful and comfortable."



David Hassen/San Diego Union-Tribune/PH
The view from a room at Ladera Resort is beautifully framed by a private dipping pool.

Understandably, my wife's first question was, "Where is St. Lucia?" The small island nation (27 miles long by 14 miles wide) with 165,000 residents lies in the eastern Caribbean Sea, north-east of St. Vincent, south of Martinique and just 393 miles north of Venezuela. Fortunately, we did not need a visa, though a passport was required. While most of the people can speak a version of French called Creole, the official language spoken universally is English, which makes sense, given the country's history of alternating French and British colonization for nearly 200 years. My Internet sleuthing also revealed that St. Lucia is known for having an attractive interior and being a great honeymoon destination (true), and for its pitons (peebly mountains) and the Caribbean's only drive-in volcano. So far so good.
After landing at the small, welcoming airport, we arranged for a driver to take us to The Landings Resort & Spa in the far north. The island's only road led us past banana plantations, coconut palms and verdant mountains during the nearly two-hour drive. We appreciated the island's cleanliness and constant breezes that kept down the moderate heat and humidity.
Only in the island's capital and largest city, Castries, did we encounter a few minutes of traffic congestion. Once we entered the Landings' gated compound, we felt at home among the tidy, two-story buildings that encircled a private marina. Our two-bedroom unit overlooked one of the resort's three pools and the marina's assorted boats. With elegant furnishings, a full kitchen and a 200-square-foot balcony with a private whirlpool spa, our room was spacious, attractive and comfortable. At breakfast the next morning, my wife looked positively

If You Decide to Go
Travel
■ JetBlue Airline: direct flights from New York City to St. Lucia; jetblue.com; 800-538-2923
Lodging
■ Ladera Resort: ladera.com/reservationladera.com; 844-285-6242
■ The Landings Resort & Spa: landingsstlucia.com; 844-896-1762
Activities
■ Chocolate making tour & lunch: Hotel Chocolat Soucan; www.hotelchocolat.com/uk/boucan/the-experiences.html
■ Rainforest Adventure: rainforestadventure.com/pages/st-lucia
Eating
■ The Naked Fisherman at Cap Maïson; www.nakedfishermanstlucia.com or www.capmaison.com
Relaxation
■ Ti Kaye Resort & Spa: tikeaye.com; info.tikeaye.com
■ BodyHoliday: thebodyholiday.com; 1-855-858-5100
■ Four Seasons Resort St. Lucia Information: www.stlucia.org
Since the north part of the island is known for its upscale homes, hotels and restaurants, we decided to check out several special.
See **LUCIA** on Page 3C

TRAVEL TIP
Tales from Old Rocky Top, down in Hocking Hills

By ANNE Z. COOKS
Tribune News Service
LOGAN, Ohio—If you passed long enough to read the trailhead signs in Ohio's Hocking Hills State Park, you'd find that the Black Hand sandstone underfoot was laid down 350,000 years ago, on an ancient seabed.
Or you could blow off the science lesson—like I did—and push ahead to the Old Man's Cave, past a meandering creek and down a level path. Level, it seemed, until both trail and creek abruptly vanished, swallowed into a hole in the earth.

A moment earlier I'd been slathering sunscreen on my nose. Now shadows dimmed the sky, pinched between narrow walls, and the sun's filtered rays glanced off a cluster of half-hidden caves and a waterfall below.
For a moment I wondered if we—my sister Mary and I—had tumbled into Rivendell, in Middle-earth. But the shapes ahead weren't elves. They were teens on a school trip, posing for selfies and daring each other to jump in the water. "Don't be a chicken," teased one of the girls. "It's nothing special. Just a creek."

But not to us, nor the hikers behind us, astonished at their surroundings. The Old Man's Cave was as fabulous as it was unexpected. But our next day's outing, a nature walk booked in advance, which—to my surprise—included an introduction to rappelling—outdid the caves by half.
"Don't we need a cliff to step off?" asked Mary, nervously scanning the landscape as eco-biologist Steve Roley, our guide, a rock climber and the owner of High Rock Adventures, gathered the group together. "Yeah, where's Old Rocky Top?"

echoed the guy behind me. But Roley, a student of native plants, was in no hurry as we strolled uphill beneath birches and hemlocks. Stopping here and there, he pointed out the edible plants that thrive beneath hemlocks: trees descended from similar hemlocks that flourished 10,000 years ago, when the climate was cooler and moister.
"These here are jack-in-the-pulpits and those are may apples," he said, moving on to a patch of greenbriar and a solitary sweet cicely.
See **HILLS** on Page 2C

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
STYLING: JESSICA WILSON
D pressreader

Taco trucks have transformed New Orleans street food

By IAN MCNEERY

NEW ORLEANS—Like any proud cook, Iris Cardona gets a thrill when people tell her they like her food. Sometimes that praise comes in Spanish, sometimes in English. Other times it's just a big thumbs-up from someone scarfing down tacos on the run.

Iris and her sister Floriselda operate a taco truck called Taqueria el Pasaño, which resides in the parking lot of a gas station at North Broad and Toulouse streets in Mid-City. They make tacos and burritos and baleadas, the bean- and egg-flecked tortillas of their native Honduras.

"I cook for the people," said Cardona, while forming masa into fresh tortillas by hand. "And when they tell me they love it, it makes me feel so happy."

There was a time when taco trucks like Taqueria el Pasaño were unknown in New Orleans, and the mounds of their carmitas or a pastor-style pork, their asada or barbacoa, were foreign.

That time ended abruptly after Hurricane Katrina struck 13 years ago this week.

In the years since, the numbers of trucks have fluctuated, and

individual operators have come and gone. But today, the taco truck is a fixture of New Orleans food. They have greatly boosted the prospects for street food around the city and they provide a tangible link to the changes brought by Katrina that continue to unfold here.

If all arrives, wrapped in tortillas with a sprinkling of cilantro and onion, squirts of incendiary salsa verde and a smattering of Szechuan.

The Latino workers who rapidly arrived in New Orleans after Katrina carried the city's early recovery on their backs. Taco trucks followed on their heels, providing workable meals and a taste of home in what was then a strange, broken, sometimes hostile new land.

Taco trucks became a symbol of the area's sudden demographic shift, and against the backdrop of Katrina's convulsive trauma, that shift was not always welcomed.

In 2007, Jefferson Parish officials outlawed taco trucks and swiftly cleaned them out of the suburbs. But in the city itself, the trucks have had a different trajectory. Like the workers they followed, many of the truck operators eventually departed, off to the next

disaster zone or back to wherever they called home. But some made New Orleans their home, and along the way, the trucks gave New Orleans a taste of its own future.

The metro area's Latino population doubled in the years after Katrina, according to 9 percent of the population by 2017, according to the Data Center, a New Orleans-based research group.

The impact on New Orleans food registers in more Latin American groceries, an expanding diversity of Latin American restaurants and a growing local fluency in their flavors. Taco trucks are part of this landscape.

Food trucks of a much greater variety exploded in popularity around New Orleans in the post-Katrina years, serving everything from straight-up grilled cheese to deconstructed Creole soul. They have spread their range from spots outside Uptown bars and downtown hospitals to festivals and fundraisers.

The traditional taco truck, meanwhile, has been working its way into the mainstream. Many now have Louisiana license plates, and their operators display vendor permits from city hall. Some pay rent for their semi-permanent

parking lot spots.

Their customer base has expanded to include every wall of New Orleans life. It turns out the appeal of quick, inexpensive, handmade street food extends to craftsmanship on the job, almost-broke college kids, harried moms in white-collar professions with a craving between appointments.

"Taco trucks," or loncheras, serve more than tacos. Most list miniature taqueria menus, with burritos, tostitos and tortas, these gloriously messy sandwiches of smashed beans, chopped meats, avocado and crema and cheese on griddled leaves.

Over the years, their offerings have expanded and diversified. Some specialize in particular items, such as a Cuban meal, nationality or customer demand.

One common weekend special is soup, served up in voluminous foam quarts, like the hangover-vanquishing menudo at Taqueria DF (for Distrito Federal, a name for Mexico City). This trailer has been parked in front of a laundromat on South Claiborne Avenue (at Eagle Street) for so long it counts as a permanent eatery for a Hollywood neighborhood with few conventional restaurants.

Many serve full plate lunches. Some try cheese-crusted enchiladas with rice and beans at the Taqueria Sanchez truck, parked on the edge of Central City, under a great concrete swoop of the Crescent City Connection overpass high above.

The Taqueria Sanchez truck shares this rutted spot with another lonchera called Kichen Cruise. With its English name and the images of Mardi Gras beads emblazoned along its flank, it looks like a NOLA-Mex hybrid. But this one still serves the traditional taco truck menu, and its gorditas, made on thick, toasty-crisp tortillas, are a specialty.

These two trucks both face a Home Depot just across Earhart Boulevard in Central City. Such stores have been the unofficial anchors for taco trucks since their arrival in New Orleans. The Lowe's across town on Elysian Field Avenue is another example, with a band of trucks spread around its dusty periphery.

One is Taqueria Las Delicias, a trailer painted the color of a watermelon rind and parked between a canal and the city's old rock crusher yard.

See TACOS on Page 3C

Hills

Continued from Page 1C

Then Rokey stopped short, next to two rocky walls. "Geez," said somebody, gaining skyward. But before you could snap your fingers, we'd buckled up, climbed to the top, waddled over a narrow bridge, and one-by-one gasped, backed off into this air and "bumped" down the wall to the ground.

"Wow, it's easy, let's do it again!" clamored the group, thrilled—and relieved—that they hadn't backed out. And to think that a month earlier I'd written off Ohio as one of the states you fly over on your way to somewhere else.

And I would have, if my sister, who lives in Kent, hadn't suggested a getaway to the Hocking Hills, southeast of Columbus. Cuz this is Daniel Boone country, with log cabins and pioneer history, like those books we used to read," she said. "Except that it's the 21st century. There's zip lines, music, festivals, art galleries, antique malls. Even golf, or canoeing or we can look for the caves."

"Everybody wants to see the caves," said Audrey Martin, at the Hocking Hills Tourism Association, in Logan, the county seat.

"From nature lovers to serious hikers, or families camping or renting a cabin, they all want to get out and walk."

The park gets an estimated 14 million visitors annually, but the trails are rarely crowded," she said. "That's in autumn, if you can. When the weather cools and the maples and birch change colors, every hillside glows. They're a dazzling panorama of reds, golds, bright yellows and orange, with splashes of green. Hemlocks are evergreens."

Packing up, we drove southeast to Columbus and on to Hocking County on



Hidden in plain sight, the Old Man's Cave surprises visitors exploring the trails in Hocking Hills State Park, Ohio.

State Route 73, crossing rolling meadows and farms. Then it was on to two-lane roads over bigger hills, and finally to roller-coaster-stop hills, winding, turning and climbing and plunging.

Cottages, barns and trailers measured the miles from porches, vegetable gardens and laundry on the line marked the days. Here was a rock truck, there a flower garden. The last turn, on State Route 374, left us at our destination's door, the Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls, and to Ellen Grinsfelder, the owner.

You'd think we were cussing, judging from Grinsfelder's warm welcome. But I think it was Mary who'd read about her mid-1840s (pre-Civil War) chinked-log cabin, will used, and picked out the inn from 202 other cabin rentals listed in the Hocking Hills Official Visitors Guide.

Perched on a 75-foot bison across near the State Park, the inn park sites—Conkles Hollow, Ash Cave, Rock House and Cautwell Cliffs—are linked by roads, a free public shuttle bus, 35 miles of hiking trails and 33 miles of bridle trails.

And after hiking? We squeezed in three hours for a zip line while through the treetops—literally, giant beech, rose—at Hocking Hills Canopy Tours, in nearby Rockbridge. A birds-eye view of the hills and the Hocking River below were the highlights, our guide and comedian-in-training, Maikl Karlovec, was an unforgettable.

The next day we tooned Logan, named for Talgeyeva, aka Logan, the distinguished Mingo Indian chief who befriended the region's first

white settlers. Welcoming to all, he preached and practiced friendship, until a couple of vicious white supremacists murdered his family.

Wandering through the town center we came upon his name and picture on a small monument, a poignant reminder of Ohio's early history.

And the town's premier attraction? The Columbus Washboard Factory, the last American maker of washboards, the rickety percussion instrument favored by country and bluegrass bands. The business, owned by James Martin, a former Brit, sells thousands of washboards annually, many to tourists lingering in the gift shop. A souvenir hunter's heaven, it's awash in games, hats, soap, honey, lotions, towels, playing cards, toys

THE NITTY GRITTY

Going. Fly to Columbus, Ohio, drive southeast on U.S. 33 to Lancaster and Logan. Staying: The Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls, www.innandspacedarfalls.com, State Rt. 374, Logan.

Hocking Hills Tourism Association, Visitors Guide at 800-hocking or 740-385-2750.

Eco-tours/rappelling: High Rock Adventures, www.highrockadventures.com, Rockbridge.

Zip lining: Hocking Hills Canopy Tours, www.hockinghills-canopytours.com.

Columbus Washboard Factory, www.columbuswashboard.com.

Hocking Hills Moonshine: tour and tasting, 519 East Front Street, Logan, 740-347-9044.

Recommended reading: Allan Eckert, "That Dark and Bloody River," Bantam Books.

Bliss

Continued from Page 1C

So you can sit in a deck chair on the upper deck and watch Miami slip away until it's an orange smudge on the horizon, like you're the only person aboard. In the morning, at least for a while, you can listen to soft jazz and classical music with a Bloody Mary and the dawn

view all to yourself in the adult-only Spice HDX on Deck 17. You can even sit on your own personal balcony (there are 1,888 among the 2,047 guest staterooms onboard) and watch fish splash and islands pass in the Straits. If that's not enough "you time" for you, you can splurge (in the bucket-list sense) on The Haven enclave, located on Decks 17, 18 and 19, where guests are even further

"transported with privacy, personalized service and a deluxe array of complimentary amenities," along with a private restaurant. (My yes, that is a \$3,000 bottle of Louis XIII cognac back there behind the great-stanch private elevator, observation deck, pool, cocktail bar and concierge desk, "where Haven guests can relax, have a drink and make dining, entertainment or spa reservations through the dedicated concierge."

It's like being on a yacht aboard a 4,004-passenger cruise ship. The cost? Well, if you have to ask... (Did we mention the Louis XIII?)

Then, when you've been quiet enough, you can join the crowd at the Aqua Park, or on the stairway up to the water slides, or line dancing by the pool, or in the theater, or the fitness center, or the spa, or Laser tag at the abandoned space station

Skagway and Victoria, British Columbia. The ship's inaugural winter season will begin in November, with seven-day Eastern Caribbean cruises each Sunday from Fort Miami, featuring calls in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands; Tortola, British Virgin Islands and Nassau, Bahamas. For more information, visit bliss.ncl.com.

Five

Continued from Page 1C

such as the American Girl Grand Hotel, as well as the American Girl doll bed, and doll-sized bathrobes and slippers. Get ready for afternoon tea for kids and their dolls, mommy and me manicures and pedicures, and an American Girl movie and popcorn night. The Watergate Hotel offers young shoppers easy access to the American Girl store at Tysons Corner

Center where young fans can shop for the latest dolls and accessories, dine at the American Girl Bistro and spill up their doll's locks at the popular Doll Hair Salon. Contact: TheWatergateHotel.com

3. Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland

Visit this UNESCO World Heritage Park for outdoor adventure. Located on the west coast of Newfoundland in Canada, hikers will find trails winding through fjords carved by glaciers, towering cliffs, waterfalls,

and dense forests of rare plants, animals and bird species.

Choose your level of difficulty and discover geological wonders and amazing views. The region is reported to have one of the highest concentrations of moose on the planet, so be on the look out. The park is also home to a long stretch of the historic Viking Trail, the route to Lunenburg, the only proven Viking settlement. Contact: www.newfoundlandlabrador.ca

4. Steamboat Springs, Colo.

In the late 1890s for Trappers passing through this Colorado enclave heard an odd noise resembling a steamboat. They were pleasantly surprised to find more than 150 geothermal, steamy, bubbling springs that today soothe tired muscles aches or after a long day's hike. Choose from a long list of active, outdoor pursuits that includes fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding and fly fishing or tubing on the Yampa River. At days end check out the impressive barrel racing and saddle

bronc riding at the rodeo, a favorite of locals and visitors alike. Contact: www.SteamboatHotSprings.com; wwwsteamboatcolorado.com; www.SteamboatChamber.org

5. Panama City Beach, Fla.

Here the emerald green waters of the Gulf of Mexico and St. Andrew Bay converge before spilling onto 27 miles of sugary white sand beaches. Boasting 320 days of sunshine, championship golf, spas and a diverse array of recreational oppor-

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NCL; COURTESY OF THE WATERGATE HOTEL

D pressreader