

## 16 Out-of-the-Ordinary Family Vacations for Spring



1/17 SLIDES © Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex/Facebook

### Spring Escape

Among the many New Year's resolutions made each year, there's typically a pledge to spend more quality time with family members. Often, one of the best ways to accomplish that goal is to escape the daily grind and [explore a new destination together](#). With spring break on the horizon, here are 16 spring vacation options that include something for everyone in the family and in the process offer an opportunity to reconnect with loved ones. (Check out these [16 Beautiful Destinations That Are Cheaper in the Spring](#), too.)



**2/17 SLIDES** © Hidden Palms Ranch/Facebook

## Go Beyond the Theme Parks | Florida

Many Orlando-bound families rarely make it outside the city's [theme parks](#). While the popular parks have their value, there's also something to be said for taking a different path as a family, one offering a slower pace and more quality time together. Minutes from Orlando, the [community of Sanford](#) offers a charming, stroll-worthy downtown, mom-and-pop eateries, festivals and seasonal events for all ages. The quaint riverfront agricultural town borders Lake Monroe and is said to have transformed into a place teeming with creative culinary offerings, art galleries, shopping, cafes, and live music. Additional top attractions for families include [Hidden Palms Ranch](#), kids 5 and up can participate in a 1-hour horse encounter that includes brushing a horse, learning horse safety, and a mini riding lesson. And don't miss [feeding a giraffe](#) at the Central Florida Zoo, also located in Sanford.



3/17 SLIDES © Science Central/Facebook

## Genealogy, Science and Animals | Indiana

Gaining a reputation as an affordable, family-friendly destination, Fort Wayne is the second-largest city in Indiana and a place where adults can research their family history at [The Genealogy Center](#) (which claims to be the nation's largest public genealogy collection); while younger visitors can explore [Science Central](#), a hands-on science center featuring more than 200 exhibits. The city is also home to the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo (named one of the top 10 zoos in the country) and the newly opened [Promenade Park](#), a riverfront park where there's a treetop canopy trail, kid's canal, and riverboat cruises.



**4/17 SLIDES** © Butterfly Biosphere at Thanksgiving Point/Facebook

## Off the Beaten Path | Utah

Millions of visitors flock to Utah's popular and often overcrowded national parks each year, including Arches, Capitol Reef, and Zion. But just a little further north of these famed stops is Utah Valley, a place locals describe as a hidden treasure that offers outdoor recreation, stunning scenery and plenty of family friendly entertainment. Some of the highlights in the valley include [riding llamas at Spanish Fork Canyon](#); touring the [Timpanogos cave system](#) at American Fork; visiting the new [Butterfly Biosphere](#) at Thanksgiving Point or zipping through the trees at [Sundance Mountain Resort](#) on mountain bike, horseback, scenic lift ride, or zipline.



5/17 SLIDES © Little River Inn/Facebook

## California's Mendocino Coast

Whisk the family away to a full-service destination resort on California's picturesque Mendocino Coast. The [Little River Inn](#) is one such option. The northern California property overlooking the Pacific Ocean features rolling lawns where kids can let loose and picturesque gardens for a quiet, adult stroll. There are also tennis courts onsite, a golf course, and just across the street is a beach and Van Damme State Park where visitors can explore redwoods on miles of easy hiking trails. Activity options nearby include touring [Pennyroyal Dairy](#), which offers guided tours of the farmstead creamery and a walk through its barn to meet the animals. Kayaking, canoeing and tide pool explorations are some of the additional possibilities. Yet another highlight in the neighborhood, riding the historic [Skunk Train](#) through ancient redwood groves.



6/17 SLIDES © Orr Family Farm/Facebook

## Glamping on a Family Farm | Oklahoma

At the [Orr Family Farm](#), families can spend days fishing, riding pedal boats, exploring a replica of the historic Jupiter locomotive, cooking s'mores, and engaging in what the farm describes as "agri-education and agri-tainment." At day's end, guests bunk in a Conestoga wagon or a teepee that includes such modern conveniences as heating and air conditioning, battery-powered lanterns, and deluxe mattresses. Wagons and teepees include king size beds and bunk beds and sleep anywhere from four to six people. Guests also have access to a swim spa. (Curious about glamping experiences that are much pricier? Check out [40 Crazy-Expensive Glamping Experiences](#).)



**7/17 SLIDES** © Chattanooga Fun/Facebook

## Spring Break Safari | Tennessee

Recognized by the Conde Nast Traveler's 2019 Reader's Choice awards as one of the top small cities in the country, Chattanooga offers a variety of outdoor activities, culinary options, museums and galleries. What's more, this spring (March 9-April 7) the city will host [Spring Break Safari](#), a roster of events and hands-on activities designed just for kids at participating attractions. Activities range from creating artwork to exploring caves and learning music skills. There are also photography workshops, cruises on the Tennessee River aboard a riverboat, and opportunities to dig for dinosaur bones.



**8/17 SLIDES** © YMCA of the Rockies/Facebook

## Family Fun at Snow Mountain Ranch | Colorado

A year-round destination, Snow Mountain Ranch is located on more than 5,000 acres outside Winter Park and is designed to bring families and groups together to unwind and enjoy the outdoors. The [selection of activities](#) (most of which are available at no extra charge for overnight visitors) includes dog sledding, fat snow bike riding, snowshoeing, indoor archery, an indoor climbing wall, swimming pool with water slides, a craft shop, ping-pong, basketball, and roller-skating. Accommodations at the property, which is run by the YMCA of the Rockies, range from hotel-style lodge rooms to cozy cabins or mega reunion cabins that sleep as many as 44 guests.



**9/17 SLIDES** © Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex/Facebook

## Florida's Space Coast

Sun, sand, and space. It doesn't get much better than that, particularly if there's a budding space enthusiast in your family. First and foremost, Florida's Space Coast is home to the [Kennedy Space Center](#), where visitors can have lunch with an astronaut, watch a rocket launch, and even experience what it would be like to live on Mars. Next, visitors can spend some quality time exploring [Cocoa Beach](#), an authentic beach community where there's shopping, live music, and plenty of oceanfront to go surfing, parasailing, or fishing. Yet another local highlight for families: taking a clear-bottomed kayak to [explore bioluminescent lagoons](#) and watching the water sparkle.

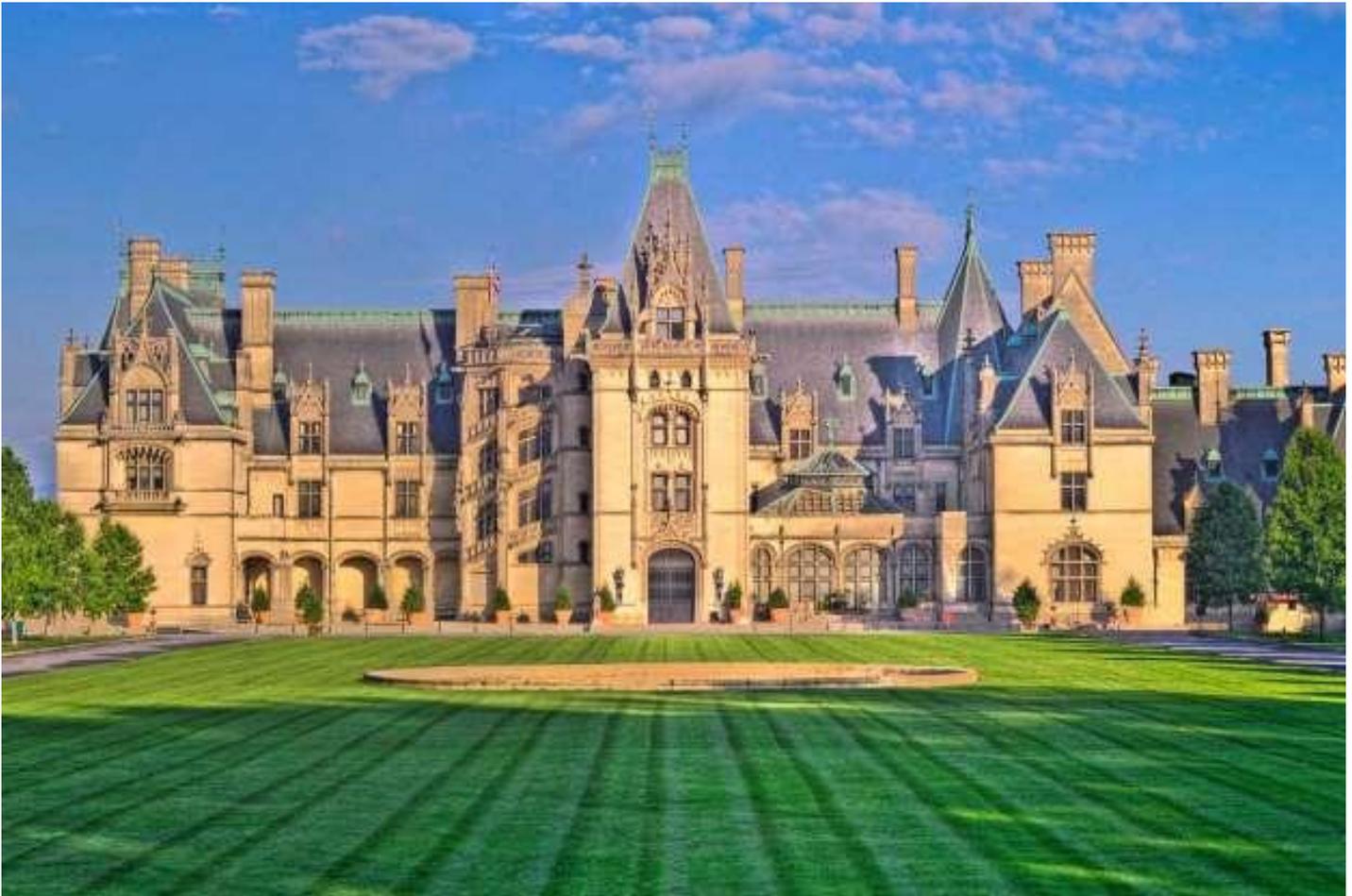


**10/17 SLIDES** © Santa Catalina Island/Facebook

### Catalina Island Escape | California

Catch a glimpse of bison, go on a zipline tour, spend the day at the beach or explore ocean life via a glass-bottom boat — these are some of the options when visiting Catalina Island, off the coast of California.

Parasailing, miniature golf, and fishing are additional family-friendly possibilities here. Adults, meanwhile, might opt for a [Catalina food tour](#), or perhaps an afternoon exploring the [Catalina Island Museum](#), which showcases history, pottery, and more. Reaching Catalina Islands requires just a short boat ride from mainland Southern California (one hour via high-speed ferry.)



**11/17 SLIDES** © Biltmore/Facebook

### America's Largest Home | North Carolina

Explore a bygone era dominated by industry titans who amassed staggering wealth, including the Vanderbilts who once lived in the [250-room Biltmore chateau](#) built by George Vanderbilt in 1895. The massive property sits on 8,000 acres near Asheville and now includes two hotels — the four-star Inn on Biltmore Estate and the family-friendly Village Hotel on Biltmore Estate. The sprawling property also features a winery (that serves juice for kids), as well as an outdoor adventure center, 2.5 miles of manicured gardens, and 22 miles of hiking and biking trails. There are also multiple restaurants and a spa. And come spring, the grounds showcase more than 50,000 blooming tulip bulbs. If all of that's not enough, there are also baby animals at Biltmore's Antler Hill Village, blacksmith demonstrations, and antique tractors.



**12/17 SLIDES** © bart4u/istockphoto  
Authentic Adventure | Nevada

At the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and less than one hour from Reno, [Carson Valley](#) is a place known for its beauty, history, arts, and outdoor offerings. There are more than 50 miles of hiking trails here and endless room for mountain and road biking. The valley is also home to museums that cover the region's rich Western history and the experiences of early settlers. And don't miss, Genoa, Nevada's first non-native settlement, which was established in 1851. For art enthusiasts, there's an [art and antiques trail map](#) that takes visitors through art galleries, antique shops and more.



**13/17 SLIDES** © alexeys/istockphoto

## Green Season | Costa Rica

Rainforests, [volcano hikes](#), [bird watching](#), riverboat tours and waterfalls are just some of the options in Costa Rica, a wildly popular eco-destination ideal for family getaways. [Costa Rica Vacations](#) offers a seven-day family vacation package that includes all of these highlights and more, starting at about \$1,850 per person, a price that includes hotel accommodations, many meals, activities, and transfers. Spring is a particularly noteworthy time to visit, say experts at Costa Rica Vacations, as it's green season, a rainy period when the country is particularly lush. Because of the rain, prices tend to be more budget-friendly and easier to negotiate.



**14/17 SLIDES** © Adventures On The Gorge/Facebook  
Outdoor Adventure Resort | West Virginia

At [Adventures on the Gorge](#), in West Virginia's New River Gorge region, families can spend time together participating in a variety of outdoor activities including ziplines, horseback-riding, an aerial adventure park with five courses, and rafting (which begins in early May and includes options for kids as young as 6). Additional activities at the resort, or provided by nearby partners, include laser tag and paintball. Accommodations at Adventures on the Gorge include a variety of cabins, some of which offer multiple bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms, ideally suited for families.



**15/17 SLIDES** © San Ignacio Resort Hotel/Facebook  
Multigenerational Getaway | Belize

Named one of the best places to go in 2019 by Conde Nast Traveler, Belize is a destination where families can find accessible activities for every age while taking in the best nature has to offer. The [San Ignacio Resort Hotel](#), a unique conservation-minded property, offers custom tours catering to multigenerational visitors through its onsite tour company Cayo Gial Tours. Activity opportunities include visiting a Mayan temple, birdwatching on a private reserve, taking guided rainforest hikes, or touring botanical gardens. On the property, there's also the Green Iguana Conservation Center designed to provide education about the threatened animal. Guests can also "adopt" an iguana by making a donation that provides ongoing support for the reptiles. As an added bonus, the resort's new River and Jungle View suites offer large outdoor living spaces and dining areas designed to allow guests to eat together.



**16/17 SLIDES** © Visit San Juans/Facebook  
Laid Back Island Life | Washington

The Caribbean isn't the only place to experience a mellow island vibe. Washington's [San Juan Islands](#) promise a similar sense of relaxation and entertainment for the whole family. The temperate islands are a picturesque destination where families can participate in wildlife tours, boating, sailing, hiking and kayaking. There's also wineries and breweries on the islands, fishing, shopping, spas and a vibrant arts scene.



**17/17 SLIDES** © Hawks Cay Resort/Facebook  
Sundrenched Resort Life | Florida Keys

The largest resort in the Florida Keys, [Hawks Cay](#) was designed with multigenerational visitors in mind. The 60-acre property includes a saltwater lagoon where visitors can safely kayak and snorkel. There's also an onsite marina where guests can reserve fishing charters, scuba-diving adventures, and snorkeling trips. And for the youngest visitors, Camp Hawk offers an [environmental education program](#) for kids ages 5 through 12. If that all sounds a bit too active, relax poolside at one of the property's five resort pools. There's even a pirate ship pool with slides, cannons and raining palm trees where kids can hang out with visitors their own age. The resort's Coral Cay Club includes video games, sand volleyball, miniature golf, and basketball.

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