

Family travel Top 30

A brave new world of adventure for all ages

From making forest dens in Britain to surfing in Canada and chilling out in the Maldives, Laura Fowler picks 30 brilliant breaks for families

IFFOREST FFUN
Hankering for a back-to-nature way of life – as many of us do these days – James Lynch and Sam Tucker, plus four children, upped sticks from Shore-ditch to a farm in west Wales and created Forest: a creative, grass-rootsy community built with an artist's aesthetic and upcycled furniture materials. Guests sleep in sculptural wooden shacks, *onsen* domes around a bath house, or the Scandinavian 14-bed farmhouse. Everything is hyperlocal. From the own-design Welsh wool blankets to the fish grilled at sociable barbecues. Kids go feral and have the time of their lives, making forest dens, wood carving, coast-coasting, shooting bows and arrows and roasting marshmallows over fires. There's a coastal site, too; Manorafon Camp near Penryn Bay.

2 TRANSYLVANIA ON TWO WHEELS
Set up by a man who cycled from England to Australia, The Slow Cyclist champions languid travel, offering a sustainable way to discover Rwanda, Transylvania and Greece through a network of local people. Founder Oli Broom describes the Transylvania trip as "absolute magic for families", taking cyclists through one of Europe's last wildernesses, staying at medieval mansions or restored village houses. The six-day trip is suitable for anyone from 11-year-olds to grandparents – electric bikes are available and the rides can be shortened or lengthened to suit ability. *From £1,895pp; theslowcyclist.co.uk*

3 SOUND IDEA
After a year of being grounded, many are looking to make the most of their 2021 holiday with a bucket-list blowout. Cue the Vancouver Wilderness Family Explorer, Abercrombie & Kent's eye-opening eight-day trip on an epic scale, flying into Vancouver Island by seaplane to stay at Clayoquot Wilderness Resort – a scattering of luxury tented lodges that kids will adore, set on the edge of pine-forested hills above the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by a towering landscape. It's a digital detox *en famille*; go horse riding, walking, mountain biking, rock climbing, sun-fing, fishing, canoeing, with expert guides, and look for whales and bears.

4 GRYLLS – JUST WANNA HAVE FUN?
Sani Resort is the original chic Greek family-friendly bolthole. The five-hotel property in Halkidiki encompasses almost 1,000 acres and a string of beaches, which you can zip around by golf buggy, plus 40-odd restaurants and bars, spacious pool villas, and full-throttle facilities including a zip-line adventure park, water park, and academies of tennis, biking, diving, football, sailing and water skiing. Joining them in 2021 is a Bear Grylls Survival Academy: guided survival expeditions through the resort's woods, building rafts, shelters and fires, and catching food in the (relative) wild. *Rooms from £166 (£149); Bear Grylls Survival Academy from £40pp per day (saniresort.com)*

5 IT'S NOT JUST CRICKET
Sri Lanka's popularity has been growing steadily since it became safe to return, and it's a brilliant option for families looking for exotic but easy-going (and affordable) adventures, from jungle to beach. Yonder's new 14-day Family Holiday to Sri Lanka travels to offbeat parts of the country, with a journey by train, as well as cycling through paddy fields, meeting indigenous people, surfing and learning how to be a park ranger. *From £2,900pp; yonder.co.uk*

6 HEAVEN IN DEVON
To keep up with soaring demand for staycations, UK rental companies are adding ever-more-interesting options to their books. In Devon's glorious South Hams, the Lost Music Hall is newly available to rent through Unique

Homestays. It's perfect for summer, with an outdoor pool, frepit and extensive gardens for games, and some of Britain's most beautiful beaches nearby. Inside, the open-plan spaces sing "party", with fun-time extras such as table tennis, an antique organ and day beds for sleepovers. *From £1,350 for a four-night stay (uniquehomestays.com)*

7 LE GREAT OUTDOORS
The French know how to camp. Not for them the pop-up tent in a miserable field. Hutopia brings cabins, roulettes and safari tents to some of France's loveliest campsites, beside beaches, lakes and streams. Throw in swimming pools, airstream bars with live music, and plenty of other children to make friends with – et voilà! *Bonnes vacances* all round. Five new sites were added last year, including one on the Côte d'Azur, making a French Riviera holiday in August very affordable. Meanwhile, Le French Time features dozens of luxury Les Castels campsites, with pitches in the grounds of chateaux, along with pools, decent places to eat and bouncy castles. *Two-bedroom safari tents with bathrooms from about £400 per week (hutopia.com). Pitches from £70 for a week (lefrenchtime.co.uk)*

8 PATAGONIAN ADVENTURE
This February, Explora's long-awaited El Chaiten lodge opens on a private nature reserve in Argentinian Patagonia. The lodge is Bond villain lair-contemporary, low-lying across the valley floor between the snow-capped peaks of the Andes. Interiors are pared down, with no televisions to detract from the mountain views. Explora is big on outdoorsy activities – horse riding, biking, walking – in the vast, remote landscape, done in small groups (great for single parents) or exclusively as a family. Until September 2021, there is up to 50 per cent off for families, too. *From 903 (£518)pp, all-inclusive; explora.com*

9 THINK MALLORCA
In 2021, Italian holiday specialist The Thinking Traveler is branching out for the first time to Mallorca, with which founders Huw and Rossella Beaugie fell in love on family holidays. Its new collection of reliably gorgeous villas ranges from Seaside Cottage, a beautifully designed three-bedroom house beside a sandy cove in the north-east of the island, to spectacular five-bedroom Sa Vista, on a headland above Deia. It's spot on for those multi-gen get-togethers we have been waiting for, as it has lots of space indoors and out, a large pool and gorgeous gardens, plus services on tap. Restaurants and shops in nearby Deia are a draw, too. *Seaside Cottage from €3,460 a week for four; Sa Vista from €34,110 a week for 10 (thethinkingtraveler.com)*

10 ECO RICA
Costa Rica's mix of jungle and two coasts (one turquoise Caribbean, one Pacific surf), along with its progressive sustainability ethos and safe infrastructure, makes it a mecca for nature-lovers and for families. *Bohies Pres plus your route at mountainsbohies.org.uk. Get Lost Mountain bothies from €900 (mountainbohies.org.uk). Get Lost Mountain bothies from €900 (mountainbohies.org.uk).*

11 SEASIDE CHIC
Comporta, a chic beach spot just south of Lisbon, is where Europe's style set holiday in architect-designed villas among the pines. But it's also heaven for families, with its easy-breezy vibe and white-sand beaches, and a great array of houses to take over (ecolocationist.com has an amazing selection, ranging from rustic huts to all-out glam). Party too small for a villa? Quinta da Comporta, a recent hotel on the scene, is quietly elegant but still welcoming for children, and as well as rooms is adding a few new houses. *Rooms from €235 per night; three-bed pool villa from €900 (quintadacomporta.com)*

12 SO COOL IN ALASKA
National Geographic has teamed up with adventure tour operator G Adventures to create a handful of small-group Family



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Journeys (suitable for children over seven). Knowledgeable guides pique interest, bringing learning to life and revealing the world's wonders, big and small. Their first set of trips includes the 10-day bucket-list classic Peru Family Journey: from Machu Picchu to the Amazon; and the adventurous nine-day Alaska Family Journey: walking and wildlife-spotting on a grand scale, dog sledding across a glacier and sailing around Kenal Fjords, where humpback whales and orcas breach. *Peru from £1,999pp (adults); Alaska from £3,545pp, excluding flights (acildfrontierstravel.com)*

13 GO GO TOKYO
If you ever needed a reason to visit Japan, Wild Frontiers' new two-week Japan Family Trip makes for a compelling one. It teaches children ninja arts and samurai sword fighting, and other exciting activities include guided walks around Tokyo's alleyways, cycling around the temples of Kyoto, and kayaking around Miyajima Island. *From £3,545pp, excluding flights (acildfrontierstravel.com)*

14 CHANNEL ISLAND IDYLL
You'd be hard-pushed to find an island better suited to a timeless beach break than Alderney. It's small enough to walk and cycle around (and let older kids loose), with enough beaches for every day of the week; it has ruined forts to explore, an old Bakerloo Line train pooling along the coast, and outdoor parties in August. There are great places to eat and drink, too. The new Blonde Hedgehog boutique hotel recently opened the three-bedroom Corner House, which sleeps six. The Landmark Trust's Fort Clonque sleeps 13 on its own island. *Corner House from £400 per night B&B (blondehedgehog.com). Fort Clonque from £812 for four nights (landmark-trust.org.uk)*

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16 HOT STUFF IN ICELAND
Iceland is a great destination for outdoorsy families, with lots of wildlife-watching experiences and dramatic landscapes to explore – volcanoes to climb, warm thermal pools to swim in, ice caves and canyons and mountains to hike. It is more accessible after the country opened two new routes for visitors in 2020: the Westfolds Way and the Diamond Circle. Discover the World offers various Iceland trips suitable for children, from the classic Fann's Exploreming in waterfalls and lakes in Krka National Park, gorge hiking and overnighting in log cabins beside Þlittvice



Circle Drive taking in the new route. *Family Explorer from £833pp in July/Augil Circle Drive from £1,340pp (discovertheuworld.com)*

17 OH MY GOSH GALAPAGOS
Launching this April, the eight-night Island Hopping in the Galapagos is Journey Latin America's new luxury "bubble holiday". Private yachts and light-aircraft transfers whisk travellers around the islands' little-seen spots, inaccessible to cruise passengers, from the rim of the active Sierra Negra volcano to secret bays on Santa Cruz. Local experts enable close encounters with the archipelago's extraordinary wildlife, so that children can experience the wonders they watched on the Attenborough series for themselves. *From £7,864pp, including flights (journeylatinamerica.co.uk)*

18 CROATIA WITH KIDS
New holiday company Two Point Four, which was set up last year to cater specifically for families with very small children, has a host of itineraries for 2021. Its tailored Croatia trip takes families swimming in waterfalls and lakes in Krka National Park, gorge hiking and overnighting in log cabins beside Þlittvice

19 CHILDREN learn ninja arts and can go kayaking around Miyajima Island

and sandcastle-building, and on-tap childcare means parents can take time out for spa treatments, yoga and cookery classes – and in the evenings choose between dining *en famille* or child-free. *From £1,745 per adult; £895 per child, including seven nights' accommodation, transfers, activities and childcare (twopointfourtravel.com)*

20 SAFARI PLUS
Lepogo Lodge's stylish Noka Camp in South Africa, opened a year ago, is sustainable, zero-footprint and not-for-profit. Recently, it started hosting a programme of cultural activities for children to complement safaris: treasure hunts, baking, pottery, jewellery making and painting; boating, fishing and swimming in the Palala river; and trips to an Iron Age site in the mountains. *From R16,500 (£732pp per night, all-inclusive (lepegolodges.com))*

21 MARINE MAGIC IN THE MALDIVES
The thatched overwater villas at Gill Lankanfushi were the first in the Maldives, and some of the most sustainable. That ethos endures, and now the resort has launched a five-night educational escape package for families with teenagers, who can scuba dive, learn to identify marine life with Gili's resident marine biologists, and spend three days working on the Coral Lines conservation project, helping with coral reef recovery and learning about the preservation of our magical underwater world. *From \$15,325 for five nights' all-inclusive for four (gili-lankanfushi.com)*

22 TAKE UMBRIA
The rolling hills of Umbria are easier to reach this year, thanks to new BA flights direct to Perugia, the region's ancient capital. Umbria's historic buildings-turned-holiday rentals are ideal for families seeking space and distance. Borgo Bastia Creti is a hamlet of five restored houses, while at Temuta di Murlo (murlo.com), owners Carlotta and Alessio have spent the past decade transforming the ruins of their estate into a few desirable villas. The region's knockout newcomer is Reschio, a family-run estate near the Tuscan border with a 1,000-year-old castle and a clutch of farm buildings renovated and opened as a hotel. There is no need to leave the 3,700-acre estate: take cookery classes, go cycling or horse riding, fishing or padel-boarding on the lake, or foraging with the in-house expert among the

wild-flower meadows and oak forest. *From £400 per night or €2,100 per week (bastiacreti.it). Reschio from €680 per night B&B; three-bedroom houses from €14,000 per week (reschio.com)*

23 MIDDLE EASTERN PROMISE
Dubai increasingly appeals to families. Teenagers tend to be impressed by the gold-plating and world records (tallest towers, most expensive suite, biggest Ferris wheel – Ain Dubai, opening this year); and little ones love the theme parks, Legoland Dubai and Legoland Water Park among them. Also opening is the statement-design Museum of the Future, with interactive exhibits bringing together inventions, design, ideas and tech. *Trailfinder can arrange a week's Dubai Family Adventure, staying at Atlantis, the Palm and including a four-wheeler desert adventure plus Legoland Water Park among other activities, from £990pp (trailfinders.com)*

24 NATURAL HIGHS IN NORWAY
62° Nord is a Norwegian experiential travel company with a handful of boutique hotels (one so boutique it's just a three-bedroom

cabin on its own tiny island) that arranges out-of-the-ordinary trips in Norway's epic outdoors. The trips loop around via three of 62° Nord's hotels, with walks in the mountains, kayaking trips across pristine fjords, survival skills lessons and a new out-in-the-wild camping experience for 2021. *All trips bespoke; 62.no*

25 TREES COMPANY
Set amid forest in Hampshire's Test Valley, on the Fullerton Estate, is a new clutch of treehouses sustainably designed and hand-built by woody Will Hardie (of Channel 4's *Amazing Spaces*), shed architect extraordinaire. Of the four treehouses, Poppy and Perigord are designed for families of four (plus dog), and have bunk rooms for children; parents get outdoor zinc bathtubs and bottles of the estate's own award-winning Black Chalk wine. *Treehouse for four from £320 (canopyandstars.co.uk)*

26 GAME ON
Football Escapes is a coaching course, the difference being that the coaches are Premier League level, and the players who drop by to join in and give tips include Rio Ferdinand, Jamie Redknapp and Ashley Cole. Kids love it. Professional training brings their game on, whether they want a career or just to shine in the playground. This year, the five-day courses take place in family-friendly hotels around the world, from the Grove in Hertfordshire and Elounda Bay Palace in Crete to Marbella's new Ikos Andalusia. *Football Escapes offers seven nights' B&B at Elounda Bay Palace from £3,250 per family, including flights and a place on the five-day course (football escapes.com)*

27 ECO-WARRIORS IN KENYA
The pandemic has all but halted safaris in Africa, and the loss of funding from tourism has severely affected conservation and anti-poaching efforts in the continent. So, by booking a safari trip to responsible and sustainable outfits, travellers are helping wildlife as well as local communities. Kenya is a great game on, whether they want a career or just to shine in the playground. This year, the five-day courses take place in family-friendly hotels around the world, from the Grove in Hertfordshire and Elounda Bay Palace in Crete to Marbella's new Ikos Andalusia. *Football Escapes offers seven nights' B&B at Elounda Bay Palace from £3,250 per family, including flights and a place on the five-day course (football escapes.com)*

28 GREECE IS THE WORD
Greece is fast becoming the world's go-to destination for luxury family resorts. Classic favourites (such as Peligoni Club, Sani and Daitos Cove) are being joined by newcomers every year. Opening this April in Parga is the MarBella Elix (marbella.gr), designed for families with a teenagers' adventure club plus a host of activities to do together; Creta's new Cayo resort offers a child-friendly experience; while Cyprus's recently opened Amara combines high-end luxury, fine dining (including restaurants by Nobu and Locatelli) and a fab spa, with a family-friendly outlook, a kids' club and various pools at the beachfront site. *Rooms at Amara from €398 (amarahotel.com)*

29 IT'S SCILLY SEASON
...But not on Trecco. The smartest of the Scilly Isles is made for multi-generational holidays. It is privately owned and car-free, neatly groomed from its heather-covered hilltop to its semi-tropical gardens – great for grandparents seeking a tranquil escape – and its beaches really are the stuff of legend: glittering white sand, Caribbean-turquoise shallows, and few people. New to the estate's collection of cottages and New England-style beach houses is the four-ensuite-bedroom Light-house cottage; set beside the sand. *Sleeps 10; from £2,000 per week (trecco.co.uk)*

30 NAMIBIA ROAD TRIP
Told operator Families Unlimited, the Desert and Skeleton Coast to Etosha National Park, looking out for the Big Five. The journey ends at Okonjima private reserve, staying with the AfricAction Foundation, a family-run estate near the Tuscan border with a 1,000-year-old castle and a clutch of farm buildings renovated and opened as a hotel. There is no need to leave the 3,700-acre estate: take cookery classes, go cycling or horse riding, fishing or padel-boarding on the lake, or foraging with the in-house expert among the

Overseas holidays and travel within the UK are currently subject to restrictions. See Page 3.