Vacations for the Generations

Whether itâ??s a once-a-year or once-in-a-lifetime family trip, vacations with multiple generations of family members become interwoven into family folklore, creating a treasured legacy that endures, even after family members pass on and new ones are born.

Many families are embracing a new style of American family vacation, one that includes three or more generations traveling together. These days, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins are often geographically scattered and leading busy lives, so family trips can be a great way to create special memories and allow different generations to create a lasting bond over a shared experience.

In fact, multigenerational family vacations have been the top travel trend for more than five years, according to Virtuoso, an upscale travel agency network. Their popularity makes sense since they provide a way to fulfill manyâ??or allâ??of what the agency identified as consumersâ?? top five motivations for travelâ??exploring new destinations, checking off bucket list dreams, seeking authentic experiences, relaxing, and reconnecting with loved ones.

Video chats and texts canâ??t fully replace actual face time with family membersâ??leading many families to plan multigenerational vacations. According to a 2016 survey from the NYU School of Professional Studies and the Family Travel Association, 60 percent of families have taken a vacation that includes a child, parent, and grandparent. Of those who havenâ??t done so, 26 percent are considering such a trip in the future.

Baby boomersâ?? active lifestyles are another contributor to the multigenerational travel trend. This generation has reinvented retirementâ??and grandparentingâ??to suit their own tastes. Many retirees are physically fit and have cultivated a taste for adventure, so if they want to share bucket list

experiences with family members, that might mean renting a European villa, hiking mountain peaks, or exploring the Great Barrier Reef.

Not surprisingly, the travel industry has responded with a slew of specialized offerings for multigenerational and grandparent travel. Organizations like Smithsonian Journeys, Tauck Bridges Family Adventures, and Road Scholar take the work out of extended family vacations with their creative packages and itineraries. Road Scholar, for example, offers unique educational trips designed for grandparent-kid teams, like exploring the hot springs of Costa Rica, seeing the French art and architecture of Lyon and Provence, and snorkeling and riding a submarine in Hawaii.

Boomers who have traveled extensively during their lifetimes can now take advantage of curated trips to guide younger generations to see the world, while deepening relationships with their grandkids. Of course, the larger the group, the more complicated travel logistics become, which is why multigenerational vacations often evolve as families grow and change.

Accommodating Travel for All Ages

Ideally, vacation plans need to have flexibility built in, so that everyone gets to engage or disengage as much as they want.

Working adults may need to allot quiet time with Wi-Fi and a laptop or join the family trip for fewer days, depending on job requirements. Older family members sometimes need special dietary accommodations or have varying levels of interest in physically challenging activities, like water sports. New babiesâ?? sleep schedules might require the group to adjust dinner reservations to an earlier hour or book a beach house with a deluxe kitchen rather than a European tour.

Spending time with extended family is paramount for Raleigh-based CAPTRUST Financial Advisor Kevin Monroe. He and his wife, Rasheeda, typically take their two sonsâ??Marcus, 11, and Derek, 8â??on vacations with large groups of relatives each spring and summer.

A favorite spot for the Monroes is the Nantahala River in North Carolina, where they hike and go white-water rafting.

â??Then, as my in-laws got older, they couldnâ??t go anymore,â?• he says. â??They couldnâ??t ride the currents but still relished seeing their family and being outdoors.â?• So, the Monroe family had to find a new approach that would work for young and old.

The family adapted. They sought out campsites that were easily accessible by car, with comfortable facilities where Rasheedaâ??s parents could relax nearbyâ??while the younger generations paddled the river.

â??Depending on the age of the grandparents, you might be limited in what you can do,â?• says Monroe. But with some creativity, everyone can be together and make precious memories that last a lifetime.

Kevin and Rasheeda celebrated their 10th anniversary by renewing their wedding vows, taking the opportunity to plan a huge family vacation in Jamaica. They chose their all-inclusive beach resort for sentimental reasons, since the couple had honeymooned there.

But from Monroeâ??s financial advisor perspective, it was also a practical choice for taking care of the groupâ??s needs.

â??Everything is on-site and planned for you. You wake up and go to the pool. Walk up to the bar for a drink. Go kayaking and jet-skiing without having to go rent all the equipment. Plus, you are not allowed to tip, and thereâ??s a lot less pressure,â?• he says.

Itâ??s also nice to have just one bill. It limits hassle when dividing up the cost, especially if just a few family members are footing the bill. With multigenerational family vacations, 61 percent of the time the cost is split between parents and grandparents, according to the NYU/FTA survey. â??Maybe the grandparents and siblings give money to you, then you pay for everyone. That way, you can pitch in to cover any shortfalls,â?• says Monroe.

The Monroe familyâ??s next trip will be in March, with a group of 14 relatives headed to Disney World. Itâ??s especially meaningful since they will be joined by Kevinâ??s parents, James and Rita Monroe.

While multigenerational family vacations can be expensive and challenging to plan, their sentimental value is beyond measure. Through time together, family members get the rare opportunity to share discoveries with loved ones, capture photos that will long be treasured, and imprint younger generations with family memories that will remain in hearts and minds for a lifetime.

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