

FAMILY TRAVEL

With everything from elephant safaris in Thailand to tipi camping in Cornwall, this special section contains inspiring holiday ideas for the whole family

PRODUCED BY
**HOUSE
& GARDEN**
PROMOTIONS

Cornish Tipis. See page 202

ACTIVITY HOLIDAYS

ADVENTUROUS TRIPS TO BROADEN THEIR MINDS



HOUSEBOATING

With its rugged coastlines, giant Redwoods and volcanic landscapes, the north coast of California remains remarkably unspoilt and under-visited. One of its prettiest spots, Lake Shasta, is a popular houseboating centre. With 365 miles of shoreline scattered with hidden coves and inlets, it's perfect for cruising with kids in tow. It's also a great place to try wakeboarding and waterskiing. *Black Tomato* (020- 7426 9888; www.blacktomato.co.uk) offers seven nights from £2,425 per person including four nights in a houseboat.

AFLOAT IN THAILAND

January saw the opening of Elephant Hills Rainforest Camp, a floating camp in the Khao Sok National Park, not far from Bangkok. The area is home to wild elephant, hornbill, rare Asian Ox and monkeys. With canoeing, jungle trekking and elephant safaris on tap, this is proper adventure. *Audley* (01993-838115; www.audleytravel.com) offers a 14-day family package from £1,350 per person, including three nights at the new Elephant Hills Rainforest Camp.



HUNT FOR NESSIE

For little people with big imaginations, Wilderness Scotland takes groups of three to four families on monster-hunting expeditions on Loch Ness. Guides well-versed in Nessie folklore are on hand while you paddle down the Loch from Fort William to Urquhart Castle. By day, you can spot otters and ospreys, and by night experience the thrills (and chills) of wild camping. Children must be 10-16. Trips cost from £445. Call 0131-625 6635; www.wildernessscotland.com

Great for family reunions... Almuña (www.arbutnottholidays.com) in Andalusia sleeps up to 16 and is an ideal venue for large gatherings. Boasting a large swimming pool, tennis court and table tennis, other activities such as riding, mountain biking, whale watching, golf and trips to crystal-clear rivers and nearby beaches can also be arranged. From £1,000 per person for seven nights.



EAT YOUR HEART OUT, HEIDI

Gstaad Palace in Switzerland has recently renovated its derelict Walig Hut. Located 11,700m up a mountain with dazzling, uninterrupted views, this traditional mountain hut now has a glamorous and cosy interior that can comfortably house a family of four. Gstaad Palace offers an Alpine night in the Walig Hut from £1,066, which includes a three-course meal with wine and champagne. Call 00-41 33 748 5000; www.palace.ch

THREE OF THE BEST KIDS' CLUBS



Gleneagles, Scotland

For outdoor pursuits, Scotland's Gleneagles offers everything from polo to training a gun dog or even driving an Argo Cat. All the high-tech facilities have top coaches to oversee the thrills of biking, golf, tennis, riding, shooting, archery, fishing, junior off-road and falconry. www.gleneagles.com



Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort, Oman

This is Oman's top family hotel where guests can float through the resort on inflatable tubes along the Lazy River. There are daily sailing programmes, a Splashpad water playground and adventure zone for children from four to 17 years-old. www.shangri-la.com



Buccament Bay Resort, St Vincent

This all-inclusive five-star resort on St Vincent in the West Indies offers a wide range of water sports, a Liverpool football club soccer school, Pat Cash tennis academy and even a Harlequin Performing Arts Academy for budding thespians. Adults can take time out in the fabulous spa. www.buccamentbay.com

SUN AND SAND

BEACH RESORTS IN EUROPE, THE INDIAN OCEAN AND BEYOND



FLY & FLOP IN SEYCHELLES

Constance **Ephelia Resort** in the Seychelles, with its 18 family villas, is the ideal choice for a relaxing break en famille. Each villa has its own pool, shaded pergola and Mac Mini system with videos, games and TV on demand. The hotel's children's club (for 4-12 year olds) is free of charge and young Jack Sparrows will adore the pirate ship, which has a rope they can swing from directly into the sea. *Elite Vacations* (www.seychelleselite.co.uk) offers seven nights from £1,675 for a family of four (half board) including flights and transfers.



ADOPT A TURTLE

Young wildlife enthusiasts can enrol in a sea turtle education programme at the Four Seasons Resort Nevis in the West Indies and even adopt a satellite-tagged turtle and track it online when they get home. The resort has had a major facelift so the rooms are in tip-top condition. *Carrier* (0161-492 1354; www.carrier.co.uk) offers seven nights from £5,290 for a family of four including flights and transfers.

Blow-out family holiday Villa Eleana at Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc has three bedrooms, a large garden with pool and a spacious den – perfect for nocturnal teens. £8,092 per night. Call 00-33-493 61 3901; www.hotel-du-cap-eden-roc.com



TO THE MED

Costa Navarino is a new giant family resort in Messinia, southern Greece. It has two kids' clubs, racket sports, a waterpark and golf. *Abercrombie & Kent* (0845-618 2163; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk) offers seven nights from £1,195 per person on a bed and breakfast basis including flights and transfers (book by April 30, 2011). www.costanavarino.com



CARIBBEAN COOL

The Ritz-Carlton on Grand Cayman (www.ritzcarlton.com) offers an Ambassadors of the Environment programme, started by Jean-Michel Cousteau, where children aged four and above can learn about marine life. Whether you choose to stay here or five minutes up the beach at the Caribbean Club, which is a good all-round family resort, Turquoise can arrange your trip. Call 01494-678400; www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk. For more information visit www.caymanislands.co.uk

Yoga baby Shanti Maurice, Mauritius (www.shantimaurence.com), offers yoga classes for kids. Call Carrier on 0161-492 1354; www.carrier.co.uk



OUR HOLIDAYS

Hélène Darroze, chef

I was born near **Biarritz** and used to go to the Hotel du Palais with my parents for meals. It is a very special place. Jean-Louis Leimbacher has been General Manager there for over 20 years – he is utterly charming. I go there to rest and to find energy. There's a Guerlain spa and a magnificent sea-water

swimming pool. I recently went to the Prince Maurice in **Mauritius** with my daughters: Charlotte, four, and Quiterie, two. We stayed in a villa with a pool. The hotel is a dream for children – the kids' club and nanny service are very good. The Mauritian/French cuisine of the chef, Bernard Loiseau is excellent. This spring we're going to **Megève**, France, to stay in a friend's chalet. It's a lovely place with views of Mont

Blanc. Five of us are going, with our children. My friend's father is Michel Rostang, the chef, who tends to stay at the chalet the week before we go. He leaves delicious food in the freezer. His macaroni à la gratin with lobster is divine. *Hélène Darroze, recently received her second Michelin star for Hélène Darroze at the Connaught. Call 020-3147 7200; www.the-connaught.co.uk*

GREAT BRITISH OUTDOORS

FRESH AIR AND FREEDOM SPELLS OLD-FASHIONED FUN IN THE UK

Wheels on the van Forget tent pegs and tantrums. Pile your poppets into a VW camper van and get a taste of life on the road. Devon-based company, O'Connors Campers, has a fleet of 15 beautifully restored retro-chic vans for hire and provides everything from washing up liquid to baby cots, as well as suggestions of secret beaches, pubs, cycling trails and top surfing spots. From £350 for three nights. www.oconnorscampers.co.uk



THREE OF THE BEST FAMILY-FRIENDLY BED & BREAKFASTS



The Old Rectory, Suffolk

With a blissful rural setting, a coterie of friendly pets, piles of toys and yummy breakfasts, this is one of Suffolk's best finds. Doubles from £110. Call 01728-746524; www.theoldrectorysuffolk.com



Augill Castle, Cumbria

Fairytale Augill Castle, offers little cooks' courses, a forest fort and much more. This month kitchen facilities are being introduced to three of the family suites. Doubles from £240. Call 01768-341937; www.stayinacastle.com



The Manor of Plas Llanmihangel, Wales

This B&B is like a Hogwarts fantasy waiting to be explored. Susie and David Beer couldn't be more welcoming. Doubles from £35 per person. Call 01446-774610; www.plasllanmihangel.co.uk

CANAL CRUISE

Crest Narrowboats, a family-run company based in Chirk, North Wales, is now open for its second season. Its narrowboats are well kitted out and boast traditional cream-and-green livery. Plot your route through scenic Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire. From £850 a week. Call 01691-774558; www.crestnarrowboats.co.uk



ACROSS THE CHANNEL

LORD OF THE MANOIR

From May, the British owners of a 1750s manoir, La Goziniere, are making its west wing available to families to rent. It has 11 acres of parkland, a treehouse and swimming pool. From £341 per week. Email p.bear@wanadoo.fr



LE CAMPING

Alain Dominique Perrin, former CEO of Cartier has revamped a campsite on the île de Moirmoutier in France. His new beachside creation has 230 pitches and more than 100 stylish tipis and 'cocoon'. Call 00-33-25 139 5138; www.camping-les-moulins.com



TIP-TOP TIPIS

Cornish Tipi Holidays in St Kew offers camping with a difference. Tents are equipped with everything from firewood to fishing lines, along with gas lanterns, candles and pots and pans for cooking on your own campfire. The tipis are dotted around a lake teeming with trout, so there is plenty of opportunity for the kids to make friends while you sit back and wait for a bite. Tipis cost from £320. Call 01208-880781; www.cornishtipiholidays.co.uk



COUNTRY PURSUITS

Bowwood House (www.bowwood.org) in Wiltshire recently gained a Visit England Four Star Gold Award. Its beautiful grounds, perfect for hide-and-seek, are open from April 1 for the summer, and its adventure playground with a pirates galleon, slides, aerial rope walks and trampolines, will keep those with a head for heights happy for hours.



SPANISH SIGHTS

Barcelona, with its weird and wonderful Gaudi buildings will appeal to children with vivid imaginations. At the Mandarin Oriental, the concierge can suggest family days out such as a zoo trip, cable car to Montjuïc Castle or a picnic on the beach. *Kirker Holidays (020-7593 2288; www.kirkerholidays.com) offers three nights from £998 including flights, transfers and a sightseeing guide.*



PICNIC WITH POOH

With the new (traditionally-animated) Winnie the Pooh film coming to cinemas this spring, Ashdown Park Hotel (www.ashdownpark.com) is offering a Winnie the Pooh afternoon tea. It's a perfect pre-film treat with 'hunny' sandwiches, Rabbit's carrot sticks and pots of sweet tea, set in the Sussex surroundings of what was once the inspiration for Hundred Acre Wood.



BONDING BREAKS

The Kids and Me (www.thekidsandme.co.uk) has cornered the single-parent market with trips of derring-do and bonding in the Arctic Circle, Wales, Morocco and Corfu. Founder Richard Gould, a single dad himself, takes groups from £550 per person a week.



PIRATES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Jumby Bay in Antigua has recently launched its Camp Jumby programme for 3-12 year olds. With three on-island pavilions accommodating Camp Jumby, children are encouraged to explore the island with programmes including Little Chefs, Wildlife & Ocean Adventures, Discover Science, Pirates of the Caribbean, Dance & Sing, and Day at the Beach. *Elegant Resorts (01244-897538; www.elegantresorts.co.uk) offers seven nights all-inclusive from £6,400 per adult and £6,150 per child including flights and transfers.*

'C' IS FOR COOL

Heritage Le Telfair in Mauritius has opened its 'C' Beach Club. With two restaurants, a pool, DJs, beach volleyball, football, Wii game consoles and the overall look inspired by Nikki Beach Miami, it's got all the right ingredients to avoid alienating cool kids. *Scott Dunn (020-8682 5020; www.scottdunn.com) offers seven nights from £1,940 per person on a half-board basis including flights and transfers.*



TROPICAL FUN

Beaches Boscobel Resort & Gold Club (www.beachesresorts.co.uk) in Jamaica has unveiled a new range of child-friendly services. The Sandals resort now offers a full-service kiddie station at one of its restaurants, the Barbeque Park, serving ice cream, popcorn, cookies, fresh fruit and shaved ice. Along the coast at Negril, Beaches Sandy Bay has introduced a Tween lounge, Xbox 360 gaming area and an under-18s nightclub. These are all-inclusive resorts so you can budget up-front for the whole holiday.

EASTER TREAT... For proper indulgence, The Dorchester's Easter family package includes interconnecting rooms, cookies (for them) and champagne (for you) from £355. Valid from April 17-25. Call 020-7629 8888; www.thedorchester.com