

REBECCA RECOMMENDS

Inspirational destinations & properties of excellence



Dear Friends,

As long as I can remember, family has been a part of my travel experience. Growing up as the daughter of a passionate hotelier, I explored every nook and cranny of hotels from a young age and fell hopelessly in love with the romance of travel.

Today I can see this passion alive in my young niece and nephew, Ophelia and Orlando, who have a wonderful sense of fun and adventure. My own younger years included travels to Menorca, Mallorca, France and America, and my hope is that everyone can discover the cultures, cuisines and sheer magic that exist in our world when you step outside your neighborhood — and your comfort zone.

Here we offer our favorite family destinations and programs, meant to inspire enriching and exciting vacations that will introduce the youngest travelers to our magnificent world. [Original Travel UK](#) kept us spellbound with family-friendly adventures during a recent webinar featuring [breathtaking itineraries to Scotland](#) and the [West Country and Cornwall](#). Please contact us if you would like to hear the live version and we shall put you in touch with Original Travel UK.

Coming up next week at 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 20th, is another family travel webinar by [our friends at Découvertes](#). We highly recommend you learn all their secrets for creating fabulous family holidays in France by [registering for the webinar now](#).

Exciting times are ahead at The Nare in Cornwall, where families can set out on undercover missions inspired by [the hotel's own spy novel](#). The Yucatán comes alive for all generations with [Catherwood Travels](#), connoisseurs of the region's rich archaeology, history, culture, flora and fauna. They hold the keys to gorgeous and historic [Private Haciendas](#), where magical family memories are guaranteed.

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there are any future travel arrangements with which we can assist you. We always love to hear from you.

Fondly,

Rebecca

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INDIA



Bring a sense of humour for the celebration of Holi, "the festival of colors" and one of India's oldest.

Ventours: Camel Fairs, Horse Safaris and Colorful Festivals

Holi – that Indian festival of love, sharing, laughter and color, color, color – is perfect for families of all ages. Kids and parents alike will have a marvelous time playing with colors while dressed all in white – the more colorful they get, the better! The team at Ventours can easily arrange for vacations that include festivals such as this, giving the getaway a celebratory feel.

During the Pushkar Camel Fair in November in Rajasthan, tribes and camel breeders congregate to sell and trade camels, quite a sight to see, with culture, music, animals and local villagers. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience all will remember.

In Jaipur, Ventours suggests a day at Der Amer, the estate of Udaijit Singh, set in the forested Kukas Valley behind the historic Amber Fort. The highlight is a ride on an elephant through the Rajasthani countryside, passing small hamlets and old temples. This is an opportunity to commune with these gentle giants, feeding them, bathing them and even painting them with natural colors.

Horseback riding is a must for children (and adults) who love animals and with Ventours' connections, it's easy to create a horse safari along the Aravalli Hills, geologically one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. Guests ride Indian Marwari horses, the former mounts of the Maharajas and princes of India, over the fertile plains and wild savannahs of Western Malwa and down into the vast expanse of the Rajasthani Bagar, the semi-desert surrounding the Thar Desert.



Catherwood Travels knows all the best routes for biking through colonial towns and villages.

Catherwood Travels: Whale Sharks, Cenotes & Expert Cooks

Share stories and make new memories during a family gathering on the Yucatán Peninsula, with all the details left to [our friends at Catherwood Travels](#). Instead of worrying about the wheres and whens, family members of all generations may focus on the region's archaeology, history, arts, design, nature, wildlife, wellness or culture.

Catherwood knows the best routes for biking through colonial towns and villages and the countryside, leading to crystalline cenotes or ancient Maya pyramids. Between May and September, guests can swim with gentle whale sharks. Fiestas are a way of life throughout the year, as nearly every town in the Yucatán celebrates patron saints and municipal anniversaries with everything from solemn processions to fireworks and food, food, food!

Where to spend the nights as a family? [Private Haciendas](#) has amassed a collection of residences where modern appointments combine with historic charm. Gather in the kitchen to learn the art of handmade corn tortillas from your private cook and pick up a few words in Maya and Spanish along the way.

For large family reunions, consider [Hacienda Itzincab Cámara](#) with its spacious grounds, private space for individual families (anywhere from five to 14 bedrooms may be booked), large public rooms, full staff and menus tailored to guests' preferences. They'll even arrange a football match with local children, artisan workshops, birdwatching excursions and more. Families leave invigorated and more connected than ever.

SRI LANKA



With special family villas, beaches and safaris, Wild Coast Tented Lodge Yala opens in August.

Resplendent Ceylon: Leopards, Whale Watching & Night Safaris

[Resplendent Ceylon](#) is proud to announce the August 2017 opening of [Wild Coast Tented Lodge Yala](#), near the greatest concentration of leopards anywhere in the world. Special family-friendly villas are among the 28 luxurious tented suites offering modern amenities in the midst of a safari-style wilderness experience – all next to a fabulous beach.

At [Cape Weligama](#), all ages can set out on a deluxe whale safari to see whales and dolphins in the Indian Ocean while enjoying an opportunity to stand up paddleboard and dip into the clear blue ocean. Other memorable days could include surf lessons, kayaking through secluded coves, or day trips to Uda Walawe national park to glimpse elephants and sloth bears.

Cape Weligama welcomes families to its stunning two-story villas with expansive ocean views, massive bedrooms, sitting rooms, large and luxurious bathrooms, private swimming pools, outdoor terraces, complimentary minibar and butler service.

[Tea Trails](#) has some not-to-be-missed wildlife programs, including a night safari led by the resort's lead naturalist to look for the fishing cat, various amphibians, sleeping lizards and maybe wild boar! Visitors can become intimately involved with the conservation activities, including monitoring remote camera and observing data collected – a unique experience for kiddos.

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



Bindi and Robert Irwin, children of "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, at the family's 100-acre Australia Zoo in Queensland, where kids can hand-feed kangaroos and lemurs to their hearts' content. Photo: Australia Zoo

Southern Crossings: Coral Reefs, Crocodiles and Sheep Farms

When it's time to go truly big, your family clients will be in the best possible hands with [Southern Crossings](#). Start in the beautiful harbour city of Sydney, where Southern Crossings can arrange private day touring experiences which incorporate interactive indigenous art classes, family-friendly sightseeing treasure-hunts, or boating on Sydney Harbour with the opportunity to swim, fish, snorkel and kayak, then enjoy a delicious gourmet lunch.

Melbourne has major attractions like a giant observation wheel and zoo, but it's also the gateway to enchanting day trips to see little penguins waddle up the sands at Philip Island; a steam-train through beautiful bushlands combined with unique wildlife encounters at the Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary; and wine tasting (and a delicious ice creamery) in the Yarra Valley.

In Tropical Far North Queensland, sailing trips to the Great Barrier Reef include options to snorkel, swim or view the corals from a glass bottom boat. Meanwhile, four-wheel-drive tours head into ancient rainforests to see giant flightless casowaries and enormous crocodiles. Just an hour south of Port Douglas, Cairns offers every thrill imaginable: whitewater rafting, bungee jumping, ziplining, skydiving and scenic helicopter flights over the reef.

[In New Zealand](#), local families adore the national park system for hiking, kayaking and mountain biking. Hear what all the fuss is about when your clients return home raving about Abel Tasman's rugged coastline and the irresistible seal colony at Tonga Island. High-country farmers welcome visitors to follow the journey of merino wool in a fun, interactive, hands-on environment, with a visit to the sheep yards to see the farm guide and sheep dogs in action.

Not to be missed is Rotorua, the heartland of New Zealand's Maori culture and home to incredible earth forces – steaming lakes, bubbling hot pools, bursting geysers – as well as endangered and native flora and fauna. Helicopter tours over simmering White Island (an almost constantly active volcano) are a hit, as is mountain biking through the renowned Whakarewarewa (redwood) forest.

And to be sure, Tolkien fans won't want to leave without a stop in Hobbiton for a two-hour guided tour through the set, completely rebuilt and seen as it appeared in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* film trilogies.

FRANCE



"My First Ball" at Château de Versailles takes place the evening after a Grand Masked Ball for adults.

Découvertes: A Candy Palace, Magicians and "My First Ball"

As diverse as the families you love, France is a patchwork quilt of experiences for young and old. Where else can one find a veritable palace of candy? Allow [Découvertes](#) to indulge all ages of sweet tooth at Le Bonbon au Palais, a small Parisian shop in a former 1950s classroom – and today a treasure box of delicious confections from every region of France. Delight in old-style candies, candied fruit, chocolates, calissons and more.

Begin a day of sightseeing with a family brunch at Ô Restaurant, the largest overwater restaurant in Europe. Here, in a boat-style ambience, a magician will entertain the tykes with sparks and laughs while the copious buffet will fill them up for a day of wandering the city.

For those with a curious mind – that's most children we know – there's a private tour and treasure hunt at the quirky Museum of Hunting & Nature, where kids will discover the world of each animal through observation, riddles and drawings.

While our friends at Découvertes have much more family fun up their sleeves, one of our favorites is the chance to thrill your princesses- and princes-to-be with a "My First Ball" experience at the Orangerie of Château de Versailles. Children will come dressed in their favorite gowns, wander the lovely gardens with their adult companion (dressed in white), then dance the evening away. It takes place the evening after an adults' Grand Masked Ball, masterminded by the brilliant Kamel Ouali.

THE UNITED KINGDOM



Baaa-bara Sheep is one of the many gifts for V.I. (little) P.s at The Goring.

The Goring: Family Stays with Loads of Extras

With Buckingham Palace just a short distance away, families can savor the royal treatment both inside [The Goring](#) and while out and about in the Belgravia neighborhood. When gathering nearest and dearest, from newborns to great-grandparents, [The Great Goring Family Stay](#) is ideal for celebrating together.

Full of extras, this stay includes chauffeured airport transfers and exclusive use of the hotel's fifth floor, including the magnificent Royal Suite with a dedicated footman and complimentary in-room cocktail hour. Dinner is served privately in The Drawing Room, and there are cookie-making classes for the wee ones.

When you [Bring The Family](#), children are always treated as V.I. (little) P.s, gifted with baby essentials (from lotions and potions to bath toys), a Bedtime Story Library, a Goring cuddly "Baaa-bara Sheep," and a "For Kids' Eyes Only" activity and coloring pack.



Conjure images of Peter Rabbit and Squirrel Nutkin with a trip to Beatrix Potter's home.

OTUK: Harry Potter, Riverdance Lessons & Spooky Tours

outdoors and history in the [West Country and Cornwall](#). Whatever the ages of your favorite family, there's much to do and see throughout the region, delicious food at every turn, minimal jet lag and the same language spoken (though you may disagree if you've traveled to rural areas with the strongest dialects.)

Most families will arrive via London and should stay a few days. Kids will get a kick out of traveling by vintage MINI Cooper, complete with walkie talkies, as they head off on customized treasure hunts and quests in the Natural History Museum or British Museum. There's even a Harry Potter "Tri-Wizard Tournament" experience (dragons not included.)

From London, curious families may take day trips by railroad, with OTUK arranging for a local city guide to meet, greet and start a personalized tour. Possibilities include touring a football stadium and learning a few skills during a training session with a former player. Or Peter Rabbit and Squirrel Nutkin come alive with a trip to Beatrix Potter's home, Hill Top, followed by a sweet treat from Grasmere, said to be the home of gingerbread.

In Ireland, OTUK can organize a special Irish dancing lesson taught by a principal dancer from Riverdance -- all with a gift of handcrafted dance shoes. The Obamas' daughters, Malia and Sasha, experienced this and absolutely loved it!



Munros are mountains in Scotland that are over 3,000 feet high, and people love to "bag" them.

The Torridon: Munro Bagging, Gorge Scrambling & Sea Kayaking

Infuse family life with a little (or a lot of) fresh air at [The Torridon Hotel & Inn](#), where the glorious surroundings draw all ages outdoors. Active teenagers love the fast-paced options, from gorge scrambling to mountain biking. They'll be quick to put their devices down to learn the art of coasteering (they'll Instagram it later, to be sure).

Parents can take a break of their own to try rock climbing, sea kayaking and Munro bagging, all with outstanding views of Loch Torridon and the surrounding hills. Afterwards, they may toast their achievements with one of 365 whiskies at the hotel's Whisky Bar. Even grandparents can enjoy the action here, with luxury sea tours and a stroll through the estate's 58 acres before afternoon tea.

At day's end, families can join together back at the inn for a wholesome and hearty dinner at the 3 AA Rosette restaurant and a few pints of local ale. Accommodations include family-dedicated rooms as well as The Boat House, a two-bedroom deluxe private cottage at the lake's edge.



Great Fosters is a Tudor hunting lodge near major historic sites, including Henry VIII's Hampton Court.

Great Fosters: Gateway to Windsor, Hampton Court and LEGOLAND

For families seeking a place to gather, with ample activities for all generations, [Great Fosters](#) and the surrounding area are a resounding hit. Despite its historic significance, the house doesn't exude an ounce of stuffiness or formality. Instead, it wholeheartedly welcomes children of all ages.

Day trips to nearby sights are a delight. Windsor Castle – the oldest and largest inhabited castle – is open year-round, even when The Queen is in residence (unless a special event is taking place). Plan your clients' visit around the Changing of Guard, and consider arranging an open-top bus sightseeing tour, Windsor Duck Tour, a horse-drawn carriage ride through Windsor Great Park or a boat trip on the Thames.

The young ones do, of course, love nearby LEGOLAND, and garden lovers in the group may wish to visit Wisley, the flagship garden of the Royal Horticultural Society, or The Savill Garden, part of the Royal Landscape.

Nearby Hampton Court dates back to medieval times and was once home to Henry VIII and his six wives. Another close destination is Runnymede, the meadow on the banks of the Thames where King John sealed the Magna Carta in 1215. Do keep in mind that Great Fosters does not have an elevator, but offers a number of ground-floor rooms in the Cloisters, accessible from the lovely courtyard.



Families can live out their royal fantasies at Aldourie Castle, an exclusive-hire estate in Scotland.

Aldourie Castle: Nessie Hunting, Falconry & Other Royal Pleasures

Families who want to feel like royalty can be indulged at [Aldourie Castle](#), where everyone from precocious toddlers to aging great-grandparents will find countless pleasures. This private Highlands castle on the shores of Loch Ness boasts acres of grounds, and families may think of it as their own home for a weekend or longer.

While hard-working parents may opt for a romantic boat ride on Loch Ness, the kids will enjoy water sports, canoe trips, traipsing through a private woodland, clambering around in the tree house and playing hide-and-seek in the old family graveyard.

Grown families will love the four-poster bedrooms and tours of local distilleries, as well as falconry days on the estate and mornings spent on the prestigious golf courses nearby, Castle Stuart and Royal Dornoch. Once they've conquered the outdoor world, families can relax together in the comfort of the castle, over dinner, with the fire roaring and the conversation flowing.



Families may undertake "Operation Snare" aboard the Alice Rose, The Nare's luxury motor launch.

What fun The Nare has in store for families this summer! It is publishing [To Snare A Spy](#), a short new thriller set on Cornwall's ravishing coastal scenery. The book will be available for sale April 20th, when "Operation Snare" will begin "spy missions" for resident guest agents.

As hotel owner [Toby Ashworth explains in his preface](#), the book's hero and heroine have left some unfinished business. Aspiring spooks staying at The Nare may go undercover as agents, completing Noah and Clemmie's original mission.

"Landings and insertions may be required to be made from Alice Rose anywhere on the Fal and Helford Rivers" as families explore the Roseland Peninsula's outstanding natural beauty. (Undercover agents can also proceed solely overland without maritime involvement.)

If your clients would like to become involved with a bit of undercover agency work, just let us know when they might be available. Meanwhile, learn more about [noted spy novelist Jon Stock](#), the author and a frequent guest at The Nare.



At the newly opened Oddfellows on the Park, guests may explore parkland on vintage-style bicycles.

Oddfellows: Where Playfulness is a Requirement

At the newly opened [Oddfellows on the Park](#) in Bruntwood Park, design is important, service is crucial and playfulness is a requirement. Guests can explore 100 acres of parkland in a pair of Wellington boots, or borrow vintage-style bicycles to cruise around.

It's just a short taxi ride to Manchester, where some of the UK's best art galleries, theaters and shops await amidst the amazing architecture for which the city is known. A bit farther afield – yet not too far – lie historically stately homes and gardens, such as Lyme Park and Tatton Park.

As wonderfully eccentric as families tend to be, Oddfellows Chester boasts [four separate apartments](#) on a cobbled street, with their own parking – perfect for generations traveling to England together. Quirky British interiors are to be expected from this favorite boutique brand, yet the apartments come with enough space to, well, swing a cheetah!

There are two double bedrooms, bathrooms and plenty of living and dining space. Nearby, all ages can explore the UK's largest zoo, Chester Zoo, take in a show at the new Storyhouse theatre (opening this summer) or even try a daredevil high wire course at Go Ape in Delamere Forest Park.



At Calcot, the family rooms are large and many have separate bedrooms for children.

Calcot Named The U.K.'s Best Family Hotel

Set on 220 acres in the Cotswolds, [Calcot](#) was named the Best Family Hotel in the UK in the “Hoteliers’ Hotels Top 100 List” – quite a coup as the judges are industry leaders who know the exceptional level of detail that goes into making a memorable family vacation. And they are quite right: Calcot is fully geared up for smaller guests. The family rooms are large and many have children’s separate bedrooms fit for tiny princes and princesses.

Calcot's Ofsted-registered crèche is highly praised, while those eight years or older can amuse themselves with PlayStations, board games, books, movies and other activities in The Mez. Add a mini-football pitch, assault course, woodland gymnasium, nature trail, pirate play ship, clay pigeon shooting, tennis, swimming and the opportunity for horseback riding, Segway rides and disc golf, and you have the perfect ingredients for a great family break.

Families are encouraged to explore the gorgeous countryside by bicycle, or simply head off on foot, complete with packed lunch or snacks. There are even dedicated times for younger guests in the heated indoor pool at the renowned [Calcot Spa](#).

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Younger guests receive a VIP welcome that invites them to hunt for their own white Scottie named Pippin.

Gallivanting at the G&V Royal Mile Hotel Edinburgh

What little tyke won't be wowed by a VIP kid welcome, complete with gifts, cookies and a treasure hunt? [G&V Royal Mile Hotel](#) spoils the younger set with a welcome letter, coloring book and the presentation of their Edinburgh Passport, inviting them to hunt for Pippin, the hotel's adorable white Scottie dog.

They'll seek throughout the restaurant, lobby and reception, gathering stickers in their passport, then earn a certificate once they've found him. Tuckered out at day's end, they'll find their own Pippin, along with some Pippin-shaped cookies to munch before lights out. Parents will find treasures of their own along the Royal Mile and historic Edinburgh, just outside the front door.

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