



the grand escape

Grandparents taking their grandchildren with them on vacation? No kidding.

by Kate Pocock

HOT TREND: Intergenerational travel is gaining momentum.



Farents are often too busy doing double duty, first at the office and then at home, to take long summer vacations. No wonder grandparents vacationing with their grandkids, or "grand travel," as it's called, has become such a hot trend. Grandparents often have the time, patience and enthusiasm—not to mention the resources—to take grandchildren on adventures.

My own dad, Philip Pocock, has taken three grandchildren to New York City to show them one of his favourite spots. Not surprisingly for anyone who knows him, there wasn't a single zoo or toy store on his three-day itinerary. Instead, he raced them to the Guggenheim Museum at opening time (to avoid the afternoon crowds) and guided them up the spiral ramp past the paintings, bargained for electronic gadgets at discount stores on Fifth Avenue and introduced them to a magician friend, who taught them how to make wine-bottle corks vanish. One nod to the predictable: they did whiz up to the top of the Empire State Building.

Some boutique companies and organizations now arrange almost everything for this kind of intergenerational travel—from meals, transportation and activities, right down to the smiles on your grandkids' faces.

GRANDTRAVEL

800-247-7651, www.grandtrvl.com

or grandtravel@academic-travel.com

Helena Koenig, founder of the Grandtravel travel company, coined the term when she decided to arrange a tour of a local railroad museum exclusively for grandparents accompanied by their

grandchildren. "The phone has not stopped ringing in 22 years," she laughs.

Today, her trips take grandparents and grandkids all over the world on fun, teacher-escorted luxury motorcoach tours. Surrogate grandparents such as friends and other relatives can also join expeditions to Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park or to Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

These excursions are pricey, but Koenig offers more than bus tours. Teacher escorts provide books and art materials. Tables built into the buses let kids work on projects. "On all [Paris] tours you see the Eiffel Tower," she says, "but on ours, you make it out of toothpicks!"

Italian for Beginners (July 10-21, 17-28)

So popular is her Italy tour that when the first one sold out quickly, Koenig had to add a second time slot this summer. Together the generations will ride the canals of Venice, make pasta with a Tuscan chef and throw coins into the Trevi Fountain in Rome.

Cost: \$6,595 (U.S.) per person, double occupancy; \$6,280 (U.S.) for triples. Includes hotel accommodation, meals, activities such as movies and live theatre, ground transportation, a grand-travel handbook, as well as the services of both a teacher escort and tour manager.

ROUTES TO LEARNING CANADA

866-745-1690, www.routestolearning.ca or information@routestolearning.ca

Routes to Learning Canada is a non-profit agency that specializes in educational travel opportunities. Last year, hundreds of grandparents over the age of >





50 participated in its intergenerational trips, which are intended for one or two adults and grandkids from ages nine to 15.

Once Upon a Rock:

A Newfoundland Adventure (July 22-28)

See Canada's most easterly point, Cape Spear, from the top of a lighthouse, or check out an archaeological dig and search for artifacts. You can also visit the Fluvium, an environmental education centre in St. John's with underwater viewing stations that let you get up close to the marine life of a freshwater stream.

Cost: \$1,943, adults; \$1,827, kids (open only to those aged 10 to 15). Includes ground transportation, accommodations and meals.

Whales, Sea and Sand excursion to the Saguenay (July 1-6, Aug. 19-24)

Witnessing one of the world's largest creatures break the surface and plunge back into the deep is an experience you and your grandchildren won't soon forget. And one of the best places on the continent for whale watching is the Saguenay region, just north of Quebec City. Here, where the cold saltwater of the Atlantic Ocean meets the warmer freshwater of the St. Lawrence River, currents teem with krill that feed some six species of whales. Embark on a whale expedition to spot minke, humpback, white belugas and, if you're lucky, the great blue whale. An on-board naturalist identifies species and discusses, among other things, their feeding and mating habits.

In Tadoussac, visit the Marine Mammal Interpretation Centre to handle starfish and see a unique collection of whale skeletons. Visit the Cap de Bon-Désir lighthouse, to learn about the history of its keepers, or the Chauvin Trading Post, a replica of the oldest fur-trading post in North America (it dates back to 1600). Since the area is filled with beaches, you can make sandcastles, collect rocks and play on windswept dunes. Sleep at the charming Hôtel Tadoussac overlooking the picturesque Tadoussac Bay.

Cost: July 1-6, \$1,528, adults; \$617, kids (this program is open only

to children aged 10 to 12). Aug. 19-24, \$1,584.58, adults; \$646, kids. Includes accommodations, meals, ground transportation and boat cruise on the Saguenay.

STRATHCONA PARK LODGE INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

250-286-3122, www.strathcona.bc.ca

On the scenic eastern shore of Vancouver Island, near the quaint town of Campbell River and adjacent to Strathcona Provincial Park, sits the wilderness resort of Strathcona Park Lodge & Outdoor Recreation Centre. Owners Myrna Boulding and her late husband Jim pioneered the facility's Outdoor Elder and Intergenerational adventure programs in the 1980s, and the family still devotes itself to environmental education.

Strathcona has won many awards, including recognition from the United Nations Environmental Program for its ecological stewardship—protecting the wilderness and passing it on to future generations. Overlooking the Upper Campbell Lake and surrounded by a spectacular range of peaks, the site is ideal for introducing your grandchildren to canoeing, kayaking, rock climbing or just a healthy appreciation of nature.

Outdoor Discoveries (July 8-14, July 15-21, Aug. 12-18)

Rock climbing's not just for kids. "The grandchildren watch their elders and think this is awesome," says Gai Kay, office manager at the resort. Spend quality time with the kids and swing across a zip line, swim in the clear lake or tackle the ropes course. Or just sit by the fire to tell stories about what the world was like when you were young. There's an overnight canoe trip, but if you'd rather not sleep in a tent, get a ride back to the chalet and return in the morning to have breakfast with the grandkids.

Cost: \$795 for grandparents, \$560 for children ages nine to 14. Includes meals, equipment, guided activities and six nights' accommodation in a timber-framed chalet.

SIERRA CLUB OUTDOORS

415-977-5522, www.sierraclub.org

Hundreds of outdoor adventure trips from the Sierra Club focus on conservation and respect for the environment, a philosophy readily adopted by today's youth. And many Sierra Club outings are designed specifically for multigenerational groups.

Just for Grandparents and Grandkids (Aug. 8-13)

This trip offers six days of picnics, hikes, fun and accommodations in ski-lodge-style sleeping quarters about 56 km from Lake Tahoe. Grandchildren as young as six can join this "big summer-camp-type experience" (as one staffer described it) on a forested hillside in the Tahoe National Forest in California.

Hike along the Pacific Crest Trail, swim in an inner tube on a mountain lake or just hang out at the lodge and take a nap on the >

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deck. Summer here also means glorious wildflower displays. Enjoy it all amid the rustic charm of the Clair Tappaan Lodge, with its enormous fireplace, spacious living room, cozy library and outdoor firepit. Built by Sierra Club volunteers in the 1930s, it offers a variety of sleeping options, from small two-person cubicles and family rooms that sleep eight, to large dorms with bunk beds. Sitting at 7,000 feet above sea level, this lodge was designed for hardy travellers. And remember, everyone helps with chores.

Cost: Aug. 8-13, \$525 (U.S.), grandparents; \$425 (U.S.), grandkids. Includes meals, activities and accommodations.

EDUCATIONAL ODYSSEYS

877-676-9400, www.educationalodysseys.com

For more than 25 years, Educational Odysseys has been organizing educational tour programs. Its mission: offering more than just vistas of towns, villages and mountains seen from a bus window, it provides genuine hands-on experiences of peoples, their philosophies

and cultures. Their Family Connections division focuses on trips for parents, grandparents and kids ages eight to 17. (More than half the trips are now booked by grandparents wanting to take grandchildren on once-in-a-lifetime adventures.) Besides the trips below, the company offers tours to the Costa Rican rainforest and Greece.

New York City

This tour of the Big Apple takes you to highlights including Ellis Island and the historic Lower East Side Tenement Museum, where young costumed characters show you what life was like in the Jewish quarter in the 19th and early 20th century.

Cost: \$2,395 (U.S.), grandparents; \$2,195 (U.S.), grandkids eight to 11; \$2,295 (U.S.), 12 to 17. Includes five nights' accommodations, most meals, ground travel and admission to attractions.

Harry Potter's England and Wales (July 5-15)

Visit movie locations for the famous film, including the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (the magnificent 900-year-old Gloucester Cathedral), as well as Gringotts Wizards Bank. Explore some of author J.K. Rowling's favourite childhood haunts, such as Chepstow Castle and the Forest of Dean. Then, travel to Wales (whose flag, incidentally, is one of the world's oldest and is emblazoned with a dragon). Back in the capital, the London Eye ferris wheel will substitute for flying on broomsticks.

Cost: \$5,283 (U.S.), grandparents; \$5,083 (U.S.), grandkids ages eight to 11; \$5,183 (U.S.), ages 12 to 17. Includes round-trip airfare from Boston, accommodations, ground transportation, most meals, activities including visits from special lecturers or guests, admission to museums or attractions.



For information on booking your flights or other vacations to take with your grandkids, contact your nearest Sears Travel in-store location, call 866-359-7327 or visit www.SearsTravel.ca.

Trip Tips for First-Timers

What if you've never travelled with your grandchild before? How old is old enough? And what if your grandkid gets homesick on the first night out of town?

Virginia Smith Spurlock is the author of *Traveling with Your Grandkids* and a grandmother to nine children. "More people are travelling with their grandkids these days," she says. But before you even mention a trip to the children, get the go-ahead from their parents. If Mom and Dad are hesitant, suggest a trial overnight stay in a nearby hotel.

- Once the itinerary is confirmed, it's essential to get a letter from parents giving permission for the trip and a notarized statement permitting you to sign for any medical attention.
- What about homesickness? Do what comes naturally. Cuddle her, get her to tell you how she feels, tell her that you understand her feelings and then

quickly get involved in a new activity. Call home and speak excitedly of your plans for the next day. Come morning, your grandchild will probably have changed her mind.

- For further tips, order *Traveling with Your Grandkids* (AAA, 2001) at www.chapters.indigo.ca (\$18.50 plus shipping).



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