

# Spring Break Ideas for Kids of All Ages:

Tips and Advice on Getting the most from Spring Break for Kids

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## **Spring Break Ideas for Kids of All Ages**

Spring is a wonderful time of year. The birds are singing and the flowers are blooming. The weather is getting warmer, and all of the college kids are headed to the beach for spring break.

But spring break isn't just for college kids any more. Most elementary, junior high and high schools take a week off in the spring now as well. And more and more parents are taking this opportunity to spend some quality time with the kids.

It's no wonder that spring break is becoming a popular time for family vacations. The weather isn't too hot yet, and many destinations are not as crowded during the spring as they are in the summer. And some families just have too much going on in the summer to take a proper vacation together. Kids may have camp or sports to participate in, and older teens may have summer jobs. So sometimes a spring vacation just makes more sense.

You don't necessarily have to go on a vacation to have a great spring break. You could simply participate in some activities as a family. You could find things to do locally, or you could find projects to do at home.

So what should your family do for spring break? That's something that only you and your family can decide. But in this report, you will find some great ideas for both travel and at-home activities.

### **Traveling**

Since you only have a week to work with, spring break is not the time for trips that require extensive travel. That means that if you want to go very far, it's probably best to fly. Otherwise, finding a destination that doesn't take more than a day to get to by land is wise.

There are lots of destinations that provide opportunities for family fun during spring break. Here are some places you might consider.

### **The Beach**

The beaches that are frequented by college students during spring break may not be good destinations for a family vacation, at least not at this time of the year. Things tend to get rather wild at those beaches, and safety could be a big concern. But there are plenty of smaller beaches that are ideal for families.

There are lots of lesser-known beach destinations that are less crowded and more appropriate for families than larger beaches. A travel agent can help you find a good one, or you could do some searching online to find one near you. If you're looking online, you can also usually find some unbiased reviews of each

place. These are great tools to help you decide which would be best for your spring break vacation.

Remember, just because you don't live near the ocean, that doesn't mean that your family can't go to a beach. Many lakes have beach areas on their shores that are perfect for family fun. These types of destinations are also usually less expensive than your average beach vacation, and they may feature nearby parks and nature preserves as well.

### **Amusement Parks**

Amusement parks are great fun for families. Kids of all ages love them, and most have things that parents can enjoy as well. Spring break is the perfect time to go to them, because they are much less crowded than they are in the summer.

For younger kids, parks such as Disney World are popular options. They cater to preschool and early school aged children, with lots of characters and rides geared toward the age group. There are also things for older kids to do at most parks, so you don't have to worry about them getting bored. Many parks that are geared toward children also have other parks nearby that you can visit.

Preteens and teenagers usually prefer parks with lots of wild rides, such as Six Flags or Universal Studios. Just as the parks aimed at the younger set have some activities for older kids, these parks often have rides that smaller children can ride. And if Mom and Dad prefer not to ride, they often have live entertainment that they can enjoy.

Food and drinks at amusement parks can be quite expensive. If you're looking for ways to save money, you could pack lunch for everyone and eat off premises. If you don't think to pack lunch, you might still be better off grabbing something to eat from a nearby restaurant.

### **The Zoo**

Zoos are lots of fun, and they are also very educational. Young children in particular enjoy seeing animals that they've only previously read about in books. But older kids often enjoy a trip to the zoo as well.

Zoos come in all shapes and sizes. There are large zoos throughout the country, so it shouldn't be too difficult to find one that's within easy driving distance. There may also be small zoos that are closer to you, and you could find another nearby activity to do on the day you go as well. And petting zoos, while usually fairly small, provide lots of hands-on fun for the kids.

If you are looking for a fun and educational yet relaxing activity, consider going to an aquarium. Seeing a variety of fish and sea creatures up close is quite an experience for kids of all ages, as well as adults.

## **Camping**

Most people think of camping as a summer activity, but spring is also a great time for it in some parts of the country. Campgrounds are often open by spring break, and they are almost always much less crowded at that time. Just remember to check the forecast ahead of time, because the weather can be quite unpredictable in the spring.

Camping out in a tent may be an option if you're in a temperate area, but in many places it is rather chilly at night during the spring. A camper, RV, or cabin might be a more logical choice, especially if you have small children. These also offer more of the comforts of home while still allowing you and your family to enjoy nature.

There are usually plenty of activities to participate in when camping, including such things as hiking, swimming, and boating. But it's always a good idea to bring along some toys and games to help prevent boredom. Outdoor games and sports are the most fitting for a camping trip, but cards and board games may come in handy in the event of an unexpected cold front or rain shower.

## **Museums**

If you're looking for an educational destination for your family trip, a museum is a great option. There are lots of museums that are designed with kids in mind, providing hands-on activities and exhibits that they can relate to. These are great for the young and the young at heart.

Teens might enjoy going to a museum that fits their interests. Sports museums are popular among teenage boys. Antique automobile museums, music museums, film museums, and collectible museums are some other ideas that might appeal to preteens and teenagers.

Unusual museums are popular among young children and older ones alike. Ripley's Believe It or Not has several museum locations throughout the United States, as well as in several other countries. It features all sorts of odd and unbelievable exhibits. Other unusual museums include ones dedicated to toilet seats, Jell-O, and dirt. These may sound strange to you, but they tend to pique kids' curiosity.

## **Skiing**

Many ski destinations are still open when it comes time for spring break. This is great news for families who love winter sports. And for those who have never been skiing, most resorts offer lessons.

Kids can learn to ski at a fairly young age. Many ski programs offer lessons to kids as young as four, and a few offer them even younger than that. But if you have a child that young, it might be a good idea to go to a ski resort that offers child care, just in case he's not ready or interested. Or, if possible, you could do a trial run with a one-day ski trip first.

## **Visiting Family and Friends**

Spring break is a great time to visit family and friends that you don't see very often. It's important to make plans well in advance, however, so that they can clear their schedules for the week.

Visiting family and friends is a very economical spring break option, especially if you can stay at their house. It gives you and the kids a change of scenery, making activities that they do regularly at home new and exciting. A simple family dinner and trip to the movies is somehow more special when it takes place away from home.

## **Road Trips**

Who says you have to go to one particular destination during spring break? Short road trips are great ways to bond as a family while participating in a variety of activities. They're also ideal if different family members have very different ideas about what they would like to do on spring break.

Since you only have a week to work with, you probably won't get to go a great distance. So a good course of action would be to find destinations that are within a few hours' drive, and take one route out to the farthest one and a different route back home. This will allow your family to make the most of the time you have.

If you have a primary destination in mind, there are trip planning tools online that can help you find other places to go along the way (as well as good hotels to stay in). If possible, making a list of places that are feasible and letting all family members have a say in the final decision is a good idea. That way, you can make sure that everyone gets to go to at least one place that they are excited about.

Some towns and cities have festivals during spring break that are great for family fun. Your local paper, or newspapers of nearby localities, is a good place to look

for information about them. Incorporating these into your road trip can provide a nice change of pace.

## **Cruises**

Many people don't think of taking the kids on a cruise, but cruises are great for families. There are even cruise lines that specialize in entertaining families with children. Many have activities on the ship for people of all ages, and the stops at various ports provide even more opportunities for family fun.

The key to having a great family cruise is doing plenty of research. Booking a cruise with the wrong line could put your family on a boat full of newlyweds, and that's probably not what you had in mind. Checking the cruise line's website or requesting information by mail will help you decide which cruise would be best for your family.

Keep in mind that although some cruise lines provide childcare for young children so that adults can participate in activities on their own, it may or may not be included in the price of the package. It's also important to make note of what kind of rooms the boat offers. Family suites are available on an increasing number of ships, and they are economical as well as convenient. These are some other things that you might want to research beforehand.

## **Spring Break Travel Tips**

Traveling for spring break is lots of fun, but it also requires careful planning. If you wait until the last minute to throw a trip together, it can result in a lot of headaches. You might miss out on some of the activities that the family wants to do, and the added stress can really put a damper on things.

Here are some pointers to ensure that your spring break travel goes smoothly:

- \* Make travel arrangements and reserve rooms well in advance. Many travelers want to wait until the last minute to try and scoop up deals, but this is usually a mistake when you're planning a family vacation. It could prove difficult to book travel and find accommodations for the entire family on a moment's notice.
- \* Try to make a list ahead of time of the things you will need to bring. If you don't get around to it, at least make a list of the things you take as you're packing. This will help prevent everyone from leaving things behind when they pack up to come home.
- \* Make plans ahead of time regarding how you will keep tabs on the kids and what they should do if they are separated from you. This is especially important if you're going somewhere that may be somewhat crowded, such as an amusement park.

\* If all of the kids are not coming along, make sure the ones at home can get in touch with you at all times. Keep your cell phone with you and turned on, and give them the number to your hotel. This will result in greater peace of mind for both the parents and the kids.

\* If you're open to the idea of your kids bringing a friend along, let them know ahead of time so that you can have time to make arrangements. Squeezing an extra person in at the last minute can prove difficult. And if you don't want to take anyone extra along, say so up front. This will help ward off requests that you can't accommodate.

\* If you're taking young children on a long trip, don't forget to bring plenty of activities to keep them occupied. Getting some new coloring and activity books, and keeping them a secret until you're already on the road or in the air, can be a huge help in fighting boredom.

### **Local Activities**

Not every family can travel during spring break. Parents may not be able to get the week off of work, or there just might not be enough money in the budget for a trip. But that doesn't mean that your family can't have some spring break fun. There are plenty of things that you can do locally as a family. These include:

- \* A day at the park
- \* A trip to the skating rink
- \* Bowling
- \* Going to the movies
- \* A trip to the local museum
- \* A hiking trip
- \* Rafting or kayaking
- \* Sports such as basketball or tennis
- \* Visiting local historical attractions
- \* Enjoying live theatre or a concert
- \* A picnic at a scenic overlook
- \* Going to the local game room

Even simple things like a movie night at home or a special shopping trip can make spring break special. Spending time together as a family is the main objective.

These and other favorite activities are great for spring break when you can't travel. Combining one or more of them with dinner at a nice family restaurant will make for a fun and memorable family outing while staying close to home.

## **Volunteering**

A growing number of college students are opting to spend their spring breaks volunteering instead of hitting the beach. This is a nice idea for families as well. Doing something to help those in need makes a great family activity.

Although very young children won't be able to do much, school aged kids can often find small ways to help. And teens and preteens can do a great deal for volunteer organizations. Getting the family together for a worthy cause is good for the kids, and it can help them fulfill community service requirements at school as well.

Going on trips to far away places is an option, but it's not at all necessary. Volunteer opportunities can be found close to home. Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and church groups can always use help.

## **Spring Break Projects**

If you're not going anywhere special during spring break, the family could work on a project together at home. This will accomplish two things: It gets the family together for some quality time, and you can get things done quickly.

Gardens make great spring break projects. Young children especially enjoy digging around in the dirt, and the extra help is great for Mom. If you like the idea of a garden but are unsure which bulbs and seeds you can plant this time of year, buying plants from a nursery will make things easier for you.

Redecorating the kids' rooms is another fun project for spring break. Kids often jump at the chance to decorate their rooms in a theme of their choosing, so they will probably be happy to help. If everyone works together on each room, you can probably get them all done within a week's time.

Arts and crafts are fun to do during spring break as well. There are lots of spring craft projects to be found online and in magazines. Kids can make bird feeders or windsocks. The whole family could get together and paint a mural on one of the walls. Or you could simply supply the art and craft items and let the kids come up with their own projects.

## **Letting the Kids Do Their Own Thing**

Sometimes your kids might want to go on trips with their friends for spring break. Older children may want to stay home instead of going on the family trip. And sometimes a child may have his own ideas about things he wants to do during his time off from school rather than participating in family activities.

It can be crushing when your child doesn't want to participate in the trip or activity that you worked so hard to plan, but sometimes it's best to let him do his own thing during spring break. This is especially true for teenagers, who are trying to develop a sense of independence. As long as the request is reasonable and your child has established trust, there's nothing wrong with him wanting to do something different.

If you're going on a trip and your teen is staying home, or vice versa, it is important that you let him know what is expected of him. Establish times that he should call you if he is away, or plan to call him at certain times if you are traveling. Go over the rules of conduct to make sure he understands them, and then send him off (or leave him home) with your blessing.

### **Is It Over Already?**

Time flies when you're having fun, so it may seem like spring break is over way too soon. The kids may be reluctant to come back home and go back to school. But it has to happen, so the best thing we can do as parents is make it as painless as possible.

If you travel during spring break, try to get back home two or three days before the kids have to go back to school. This will give everyone time to unpack and relax a little before going back to their normal routines. It will also give the kids time to adjust back to their normal sleep patterns.

If you must return the day before school resumes, try to keep the kids from sleeping in the car. If they do, they will not be tired that night, and they won't get enough rest for school the next day. Try to be home at least a few hours before bedtime to give them a little time to get back into school mode.

If your family spent spring break at home, it will be a little easier for the kids to adjust. But if they've stayed up late all week, they too will need to ease back into a more moderate schedule before they go back to school.

Spring break is a grand opportunity for families to have fun and spend quality time together. Whether you plan a trip to a fancy resort, take a road trip to some nearby destinations, or hang out together at home, spring break can be a great time for you and the kids to bond. Planning ahead will help everyone make the most of it.