

The Fix

by Diana Hubbell



Q+A

I'M TRYING TO PLAN A ROMANTIC VACATION AND I'D LIKE THIS TRIP TO BE FAMILY-FREE. WHAT SHOULD I DO TO AVOID THE PITTER-PATTER OF LITTLE FEET?

With bit of ingenuity, an adults-only getaway—even in family-oriented Asia—is definitely doable. The trick is to do your research and find the destinations, resorts and airlines that weed out the wee ones.

Calculate timing

The easiest way to avoid the tiny travelers is to hit the road while they're still bogged down with homework.

"There are always some people who take their kids out of school for vacations, but for the most part your best bet is to avoid school holidays," says Diane Embree, one of T+L's A-List travel agents specializing in Indonesia.

Of course, the dates of those holidays will vary slightly from country to country. In general though, stay well away from big breaks such as the Lunar New Year and Christmas, as well as the summer vacation in July and August. To be on the safe side, says Laura Woo, a T+L all-star agent, just plan for "September, October and early November, when most kids are in class."

Book smart

If you really want a child-free environment, you'll have to head to the right hotel. For example, at **The Balé** (*Jln. Raya Nusa Dua Selatan, Bali*; 62-361/775-111; thebale.com; pavilions from US\$668), a Japanese-minimalist 29-pavilion retreat in Nusa Dua, guests must be 16 and older to stay. That means you can enjoy your personalized, multi-course dinners without interruption. Also in Bali, **Kayumanis Nusa Dua Private Villas & Spa** (*BTDC Area Nusa Dua*; 62-361/770-777; kayumanis.com; villas from US\$555) has the same policy, along with private butlers and a beach club for sunning. Over in Sri Lanka, the stately nine-suite **Kahanda Kanda** (*Habaraduwa Dikkumbura Rd.*; 94-91/494-3700; kahandakanda.com; doubles from US\$365) welcomes guests age 12 and over. It's a →

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

I GET SEASICK, BUT I STILL WANT TO CRUISE.

Do...



Avoid rough waters (the Bay of Biscay; around South America's Cape Horn). Instead, try river cruises or tours of the Norwegian fjords.

Don't...



Be deterred. Most new ships have stabilizers for extra steady sailing.

Do...



Book a room at the ship's center and on a mid-level deck, where you're less likely to feel movement.

Don't...



Forget your remedy of choice: ginger; Sea-Bands; Dramamine. When in distress, go to the top deck and look toward the horizon.



RIMBA by AYANA

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- 90 hectare estate above Jimbaran Bay, with the ocean-front AYANA Resort and Spa (awarded by Conde Nast Traveler readers as World's Best Spa Hotel and Asia's Best Hotel) and the forest setting of new sister hotel RIMBA Jimbaran Bali
- Spectacular sunsets, 15 world-class dining venues and bars, 11 swimming pools, Thermes Marins Spa including Spa on the Rocks, priority access to the iconic Rock Bar, and secluded white-sand beach
- Unique experiences and private dining including Kisik Jetty, exclusively for just one couple every night



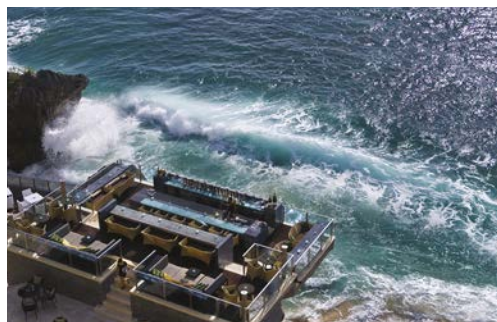
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beautiful British-owned colonial residence set on one of Galle's rolling tea plantations, complete with antique teak furniture, blue-and-white china and local curries made with vegetables and herbs grown on the premises (no need to worry about picky eaters here).

You can also get a feel for what age groups a resort caters to just by checking out their website. The more kids' clubs you see, the better the odds that you might want to book elsewhere. "I recommend that adults stay away from the main resort areas and look for smaller boutique-style hotels that are in less developed areas," Embree says. "Focusing on smaller hotels that don't offer activities for children might not guarantee a child-free environment, but at least there probably won't be quite as many kids."

Alternatively, you could opt for a resort that offers separate areas for children. The all-inclusive **Club Med** (clubmed.com) branches are family-friendly, but have designated swimming pools for grown-ups in their resorts in Phuket and in Cherating Beach, Malaysia.

Of course, if you spring for the private villas or perhaps even relatively secluded suites at any hotel that offers them, you should secure yourself a reasonable amount of privacy, even if there are little ones playing down the road.

Fly right

If you're looking to minimize the number of crying babies you run into on the plane, think about investing a little extra for your ticket. **Malaysia Airlines** (malaysiaairlines.com) and **Thai Airways** (thaairways.co.th) both ban children under 12 from the upper decks of their A380 jets. But even low-cost carriers are trying to keep the peace. **AirAsia X** (airasia.com) offers a Quiet Zone on their A330 flights between rows seven and 14, where all passengers must be at least 12 years old. Singapore's budget carrier, **Scoot** (flyscoot.com), is also crusading for quiet with a ScootinSilence zone—five rows that are off-limits to travelers under 12—plus they do not offer bassinets at all, to discourage bringing infants on board.

Get off the beaten track

Traveling with children can be

a logistical hassle under the best of circumstances and most parents don't want to complicate things further. Families tend to opt for destinations with well-established infrastructure. That means that by going to places a little rougher around the edges, you can dodge most of the kids.

"Choose activities that are more rigorous or a bit harder to get to. For example, if you want to see the Great Wall, avoid Badaling and Mutianyu, because those sections of the wall offer cable car rides, hence families are likely to be there," advises Mei Zhang, the founder of WildChina. "If you can, hike the wilder sections of the wall."

The same idea goes for other destinations too. Anything that requires a serious trek, athletic skills or even a long drive down bumpy roads is likely to deter anyone with a five-year-old in tow. Stay away from major urban museums and landmarks, or beaches within a two-hour radius of a metropolitan area.

"The more famous a place is," Zhang says, "the more kids you'll see." +

HOW BIG CAN MY CARRY-ON BAG BE THESE DAYS?

Though some airlines give you a few extra centimeters here and there, the major carriers are all in agreement: the maximum allowable carry-on bag is 56 x 36 x 23, or 115 linear centimeters. This standard has been in place for years, but in the past airlines were lenient about ensuring bags adhered to it. United, however, started enforcing its size limits in March. So to play it safe, invest in a suitcase that doesn't exceed those measurements. (See "Carry-on Champs," page 83, for our favorite picks.)

THE FINAL SAY

IF I'M PAYING FOR HOTEL PARKING, DO I STILL NEED TO TIP THE VALET?

When you're spending as much as US\$30 a day for hotel parking, tipping the valet each time he or she retrieves your car can seem like an unnecessary investment. That 30 dollars, however, goes only toward the valet's base pay, which—much like a waiter's—is calculated assuming that he or she will receive gratuities. If you don't want to hand out money each day, ask the concierge if it's possible to leave a total tip at the end of your stay: many hotels pool and distribute tips evenly to the valets.