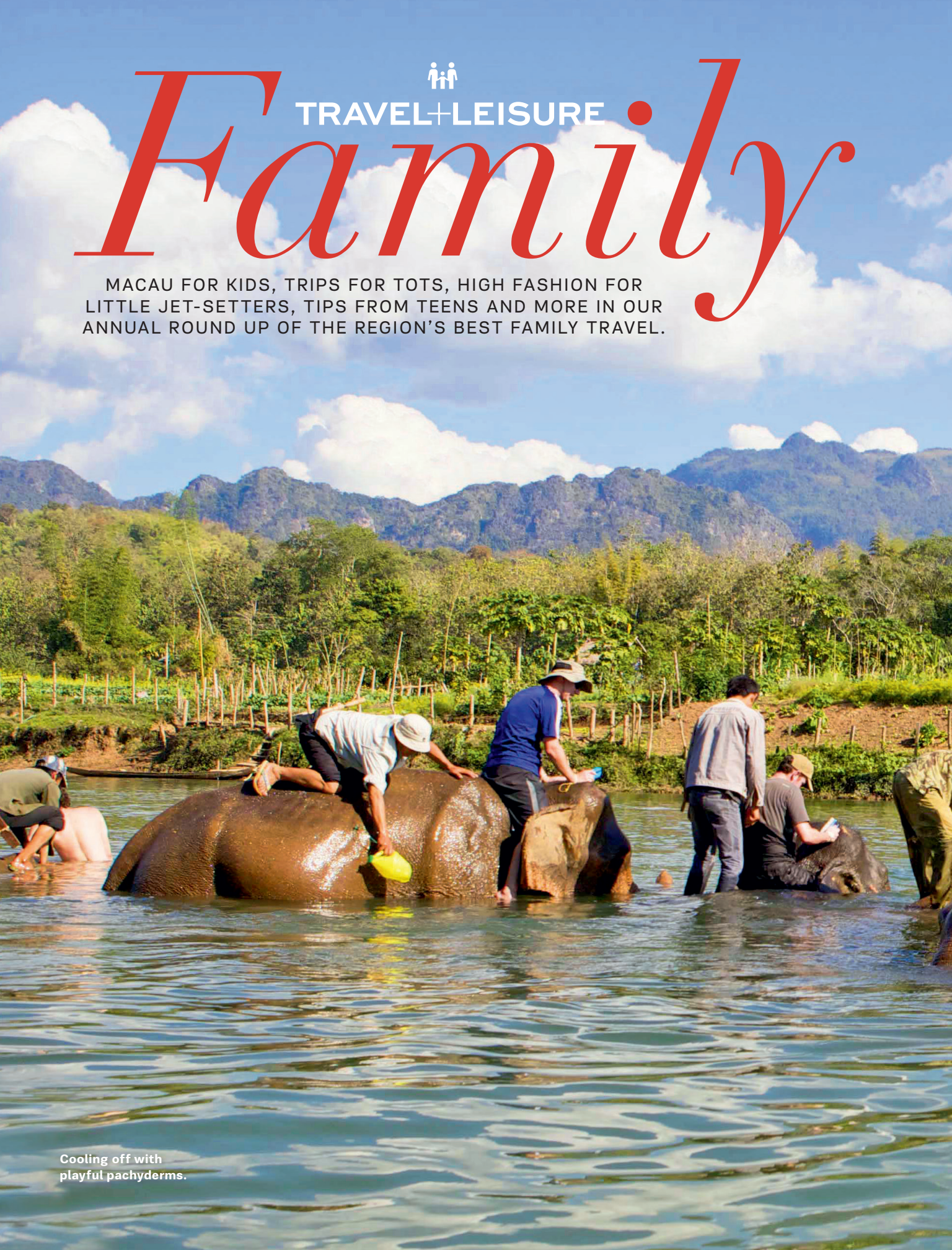
TRAVEL+LEISURE

Family

MACAU FOR KIDS, TRIPS FOR TOTS, HIGH FASHION FOR LITTLE JET-SETTERS, TIPS FROM TEENS AND MORE IN OUR ANNUAL ROUND UP OF THE REGION'S BEST FAMILY TRAVEL.



Cooling off with playful pachyderms.

COURTESY OF ELEPHANT VILLAGE

10 TRIPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOU'RE TEN

1 SWIM WITH THE ELEPHANTS.

Riding elephants is fun... bathing is even better. For a cool experience, splash it up with these gentle giants in the river with **White Elephant Adventures Laos** *(white-elephant-adventures-laos.com).*

Lion family, Singapore Zoo.

2 TAKE A TRIP TO THE ZOOS

Our region has some of the world's best zoos. Here are four cities to walk on the wild side.

→ **Taipei Zoo** The largest zoo in Asia has all kinds of cool critters to check out. *english.zoo.taipei.gov.tw; NT$60 per person.*

→ **Singapore Zoo** Night Safari and Kidzworld are just some of the cleverly designed features at the Lion City's animal kingdom. The attractions, which house more than 2,800 animals, are spread throughout the city, and merit several days of exploration. *zoo.com.sg; standard tickets S$28 per person, with various combination passes for the different parks.*

→ **Taronga Zoo, Sydney** With more than 4,000 animals from at least 350 species, not to mention an admirable conservation program, this zoo sets the bar high. *taronga.com.au; A$44 per person.*

→ **Kuala Lumpur Bird Park, Malaysia** Fine, feathered creatures flutter all over the free-flight aviary, a massive open space where kids can see Indian blue peacocks and others flashing their plumage. *klbirdpark.com; RM48 per person.*

3 GO ON AN EPIC CHINA ADVENTURE

Forget about the palaces and pagodas; instead build a Middle Kingdom docket chock full of awesome stuff no one else's kid is doing.

→ **Toboggan the Great Wall** A great reason to climb the wall is so you can slide down it. Carts come equipped with brakes, and two-seaters are available for parents with extra-small ones, meaning the ride is thrilling but still safe. *Mutianyu section of the Great Wall; mutianyugreat wall.net; cable car and toboggan combination ticket RMB60.*

→ **Ride camels along the Silk Road** In Dunhuang, Gansu province, let your kids channel their inner explorer and venture off on the path set by ancient spice traders. *travelchinaguide.com; four-day tour packages with camel ride and accomodations from US$469 per person.*

→ **Travel to a distant world** The towering limestone karsts of Zhangjiajie National Forest, part of UNESCO site Wulingyuan Scenic Area in Hunan province, are so surreal they inspired scenery in the film *Avatar*. Your kids may not see any aliens, but they should watch out for monkeys. *Three-day national park passes RMB248.*

Camel rides in Dunhuang.

Classic Khmer moves.

4 DO A LITTLE DANCE

Traditional Khmer dance features gorgeously ornate costumes that your kids will love. The best part is that when they see a show or sit in on a class run by **Cambodian Living Arts**, the ticket fee goes towards helping other children pursue their passions. *cambodianlivingarts.org; US$15.*

FROM TOP: DARREN SOH; ©CHRISTOPHER HERWIG/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF CAMBODIAN LIVING ARTS

Kids play chefs at Kidzania, Bangkok.

5 GET THE BEST OF BANGKOK

Non-stop fun for the juvenile jet set.

→ **The Artist's House** Thai shadow puppets are an ornate display sure to keep the kids entertained. *Baan Silapin; Soi Wat Thong Sala Ngarm, Phasi Charoen; 66-83/034-9858.*

→ **Kidzania** Children enact their grown-up fantasies as pilots who fly simulation planes, firemen who spray real hoses, and much more. *bangkok.kidzania.com; tickets Bt650 for children four to 14, inclusive of all activities.*

→ **Siam Park City** Need a great way to escape the scorching temperatures? Head to the waterpark, complete with a massive wave pool. *siamparkcity.com; US$30 per adult.*

Studio Ghibili Museum, Tokyo.

6 TOUR TOKYO MUSEUMS

Trust us—this beats the pants off a school field trip.

Start your urban trek at the **Tokyo Toy Museum** *(Yotsuya Square, 4-20 Yotsuya, Shinjuku-ku; 81-3/5367-9601)*, a repurposed elementary school where just about everything is interactive, then head straight to the **Studio Ghibli Museum** *(ghibli-museum.jp/en)* for a visit with Totoro, Kiki and many other popular animation characters from films released by the studio. End the day with a dessert at the **Jiyugaoko Sweets Forest** *(2-25-7 Midorigaoka, Meguro; 81-3/5731-6600)*, a confectionary complex decorated with whimsical pink trees.

7 THE BEST PLACES FOR WINTER SPORTS

→ **Sledding at Everland, South Korea** This all-purpose theme park out in Yongin, Gyeonggi-do, sets up a ride called the Snow Buster, which hauls children's tubes to the top of a slope, then lets them careen down. It's a bit of a schlep from Seoul, but worth the trip. *everland.com; park day-pass W44,000.*

→ **Skiing at Niseko, Japan** Teach kids how to safely swoosh down the slopes at one of Asia's top ski areas. *Niseko Village Snow School; niseko-village.com; kids' group lessons from ¥8,000.*

→ **Ice skating at Houhai, Beijing** The extensive lakes in this city park, which wind around historic *hutongs*, freeze in the winter, making them a popular place for families to strap on their skates. *Multiple vendors around the three lakes rent skates for roughly RMB20 per day.*

Powdery pursuits at Niseko Village.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF KIDZANIA; COURTESY OF NISEKO VILLAGE; COURTESY OF STUDIO GHIBLI MUSEUM

BABY TALK **Baby sprinkle** *(n.) Baby showers are usually reserved for first pregnancies only, while a more low-key version, known as a 'sprinkle,' is the celebration of all subsequent children. Let the sibling rivalry begin!*

Running the shores of Hikkaduwa.

8 CATCH SOME WAVES IN SRI LANKA

Learn a sport, tackle a new ride, or take in the local marine life.

→ **Ride the Surf** Even little ones can learn how to board at either Hikkaduwa or Arugam Bay. *Surf Lanka; surflanka.com; lessons from US$30.*

→ **Watch Whales** Track down blue whales, dolphins, orcas and whale sharks on this family-run ship that sets sail from Mirissa Beach. *Raja & the Whales; rajaandthewhales.com; Rs6,000 per person.*

→ **Go Banana Boating** Hang on for dear life as the boat bounces and weaves through the waters of the Bentota River, in Aluthgama. *Sunshine Watersports Center; srilankawatersports.com.*

9 SAVE THE ANIMALS

Conservation and vacation go surprisingly well together, especially if there are aspiring young Captain Planets in the family.

→ **The Borneo Big Three** This Malaysian eco-haven spoils environmental tourists for choice. **Turtle Islands Park** *(turtleisland borneo.com; RM60 plus RM10 camera fee per person)* off of Sabah allows visitors to witness new hatchlings being tagged and documented. Proceeds go to turtle research and aid. If you like your animals cute and furry, **Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre** *(Sepilok Rd., Sabah; 60-88/248-698; RM30 per person)* nurtures orphaned baby apes. Meanwhile the **Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary** *(proboscis.cc; RM60 per person)* is home to island's funniest-looking primates.

→ **Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre, Indonesia** Conservationists in Suluwesi started this center to rehabilitate victims of animal trafficking. Volunteers can see sun bears, orangutans, cockatoos and other fab fauna. *tasikoki.org.*

→ **Chengdu Panda Breeding and Research Center** At Sichuan's famed attraction you can see these cuddly bears roam in a large, natural-looking habitat. *panda.org.cn; RMB58 per person.*

The Panda Breeding Center in Chengdu.

Water villas, Gayana Eco Resort.

10 RIDE ROADS AND RAILS

→ **Borneo: Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, to Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei** This island has a continent's worth of biodiversity, and the day-long drive is one of the best ways to take it in. Stay at the **Gayana Eco Resort**'s over-water villas *(gayana-eco-resort.com; villas from RM905)*, then swim in Asia's largest man-made saltwater lagoon pool at **The Empire Hotel & Country Club** *(theempirehotel.com; family rooms from B$360).*

→ **Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai, Thailand** For two-and-a-half hours, pass through some of the lushest tropical jungles anywhere. Stop at **Charin Garden Resort** *(Mae Suai Dist., Chiang Rai; 66-5/391-8628; Bt35 per slice)* for a slice of the owner's homemade pies.

→ **Perth to Sydney, Australia** Cross this starkly beautiful countryside as you travel from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific in your very luxe steel steed on the **Great Southern Rail** *(greatsouthernrail.com.au; cabins from A$1,849 per person based on double occupancy).*

— DIANA HUBBELL

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BABY TALK **Sip and see** *(n.) An alternative to the traditional baby shower, this event takes place after the baby is born, so guests can meet the new addition, and the mom, no longer a human incubator, can enjoy a big flute of bubbly.*