



Back to the good old days

By LAURA CENCIGH-ALBULARIO

WITH today's mums and dads juggling busy work schedules with raising their children, holidays have come to represent crucial bonding time for families.

This need not mean matching clothing and in-car sing-alongs a la the Griswold family.

According to Helen Hayes, editor-at-large of *Holidays with Kids* magazine, today's parents are fast-tracking their family bonding with adrenaline-inducing activities that all family members can enjoy, and outdoor-based leisure time such as camping trips.

"Families are tending to have holidays together like in the old days," she says. "They want to spend more time together during their holidays, rather than doing separate activities. They're looking at trekking, cycling and kayaking."

Skiing is also experiencing a renaissance on the family front, with more families taking overseas ski holidays to places like Colorado, Utah and Japan.

"Camping is another type of holiday that's really back on the agenda," Ms Hayes says.

"Holiday parks are not daggy old caravan parks like they were 20 years ago. You can get fantastic villas which are a really good affordable option, they have everything you need, are often in really good beachside positions and allow families to get back to nature."

For hard working parents who want the option of having some quiet time away from the children, cruises are a popular choice, as well as resorts which offer a kids club.

"Cruises are also popular for those with teens as some have fantastic teen clubs, whereas they used to be a bit forgotten," Ms Hayes says.

MSC cruise lines, for example, offer a "teen card" which gives teenagers the freedom to purchase their own meals and activities and also serves as a room key.

On the domestic front, Queensland remains a key destination for those with children of all ages, thanks to its beaches and wide array of theme parks.

For short getaways, the Blue Mountains and Port Stephens are popular amongst families at all times of the year. Wollongong is emerging as a top pick due to the growing number of apartment-style hotels being developed along its shores, and its proximity to leisure attractions such as Jamberoo Action Park and the Illawarra Fly Tree Top Walk.

Budget airlines such as Jetstar, Virgin Blue and Air Asia have made international travel more affordable, and destinations such as Japan and Vietnam are gaining momentum in the family market.

"More website savvy families are looking for deals and booking ahead online," Ms Hayes says.

"With the internet, children

have becoming more involved in planning their family holidays.

"Teenagers are often doing the research, whereas beforehand, their parents would just tell them where they were going."

TRAVEL TIPS ▼

- To save money on accommodation, try travel auction website www.ubid4rooms.com where bidders can nominate the price they're willing to pay for a room. For last-minute holiday specials, visit www.wotif.com

- Holiday apartments or holiday rental houses are a good alternative to hotel rooms as they offer more space. If staying in a hotel, paying a little more for a room with a kitchenette can help save money in the long-run by cutting down meal costs.

- Be mindful of travelling times. If driving a long distance, research towns or attractions along the way beforehand to break up the drive.

- When exploring a region abroad, consider hiring a house or apartment and using it as a base from which to make short trips, rather than continually moving.

- Check the maximum temperatures before flying to tropical destinations, as younger children can be particularly sensitive to such a sudden change in temperature.



Quality time: Ski trips are enjoying a renaissance with families



Home comfort: Swissotel children's room



Colourful Tokyo: Japan is gaining momentum as a family favourite

Top deals here and overseas

● **SYDNEY:** For a holiday close to home, Swissotel Sydney is an ideal base from which to explore all our CBD has to offer. Its specially-designed children's rooms have a large selection of toys and colourful bed linen, and sufficient space to romp. Rates for a classic twin room for two adults and two children start from \$259. From \$429, guests can stay in an interconnecting room for two adults and two children. Both deals include buffet breakfast.

Bookings: call 9238 8888 or visit www.sydney.swissotel.com

● **ASPEN:** The combination of four mountains with two vibrant towns and a selection of activities makes Aspen a dream destination for a family ski holiday. Alpine World is offering a 10-night package for a family of four at Timberline Condos Snowmass from \$6780 per family. It includes

accommodation in a studio loft condo with a full kitchen, eight day lift pass and equipment hire and return Aspen Airport transfers. Prices are based on stays between January 6-16 2009 for two adults and two children under 12. Flights not included.

Bookings: Call 1300 138 311 or visit www.alpineworld.com.au

● **LINDEMAN ISLAND:** For a fuss-free family holiday, Club Med Lindeman Island is offering a stay and eat free deal for children up to 11, as well as special prices for teens. Sports and activities include circus school and bungee bounce, a choice of tours and all day kids club for two to 11 year-olds. This deal is valid until April 30, 2009.

Bookings: www.clubmed.com.au

● **BALI:** New Horizons Holidays is offering a six-night package at Melia Bali Villas and Spa Resort from \$2034 per adult and \$930 per child including airfares and taxes. Daily buffet breakfast, gym and Kids Club admission are included. The offer is available for travel until October 31, 2008. Conditions apply.

Bookings: www.newhorizons.com.au



Mums seek quality breaks with the family

A RECORD number of mothers in the workforce has led to more families seeking holidays in Australia, a new survey has revealed.

Family travel magazine *Holidays with Kids* conducted the study of 2500 Australians and found that nearly all of them (95 per cent) travel within the country annually.

More than two thirds took domestic breaks with their families three or more times a year.

In 2006 a similar survey found 60 per cent of readers travelled domestically each year, with less than one third of them taking local breaks three or more times.

Tourism Australia says the family travel market is the fastest-growing sector of the nation's tourism industry.

The Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast topped the poll as the most popular family holiday destinations and the NSW Tweed Coast came a close second.

The top three all boast sun, surf and sand.

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the proportion of families

with dependent children who have both parents in the workforce has peaked this year at 57 per cent.

And the Australian Government's Office for Women says 4.7 million women are now employed, with an unprecedented one million entering the workforce over the past decade.

Women's salaries have risen 25 per cent over the past decade, providing more income for quality family holidays.

The magazine's editor, Cathy Wagstaff, says as more mothers get paid jobs and family lives become even busier, more parents, especially the mums, are organising short breaks around Australia each year.

This gives mothers a chance to relax and spend quality time with their children and restore the all-important work/life balance, she says.

And, mothers who work often don't want to cook and clean during the holidays so they are opting for more luxurious holidays where they and their families can get the pampering they feel they deserve for all their hard work, Ms Wagstaff says.