



Go north, mum and dad

Children are the ultimate judges of what makes a good family holiday destination, writes **Kristie Lau**.

When it comes to holidaying with the littlies, sunshine and surf remain as desirable as ever. A survey has shown that Queensland was Australia's favourite family holiday destination in 2007.

The annual survey by travel and lifestyle magazine *Holidays With Kids*, published in the summer edition out this week, found that beach resorts across the Sunshine State were the hottest of hot spots throughout the year, due to the various types of water sports and activities they provide.

Holidays With Kids editor Cathy Wagstaff says the survey can be used as a great planning tool for this year. "There is no more reliable inspector of a family friendly resort than a parent, and of course the harshest critics of all are children themselves, who are very fussy when it comes to living it up away from home," she says. "The results of our annual survey, therefore, should come in handy to other families seeking an ideal holiday destination."

1. Paradise Resort, Gold Coast

This resort takes the survey's top honours for child-friendly escapes. The two-hectare development is in Surfers Paradise and only a short stroll from the Gold Coast's long stretch of white sand beaches. The resort has 51 family rooms, each with a second bedroom off the main – a fabulous drawcard for families as the kids are given their own play space and parents can enjoy some privacy. The resort also features 15 junior bunkhouse rooms, each featuring PlayStations, chalkboards, free use of DVDs and a play desk. Again, the kids' area is separate from the rest of the room. There are also plenty of outdoor activities, including four swimming pools, but the resort's \$1 million construction, Zone 4 Kids, is its biggest attraction. The fully supervised on-site theme park includes several play areas, including Underwater World, made up of submarines and slides, and Magic Garden, featuring a brightly coloured ball pit.
122 Ferny Avenue, Surfers Paradise.

Phone 1800 074 111, see
www.paradiseresort.com.au.

2. Sea World Resort, Gold Coast

Situated on Broadwater Beach, Sea World Resort has its own private beach access as well as monorail access to Sea World theme park. There's also a 50-metre heated swimming pool with a private waterfall and kids can be entertained at the resort's free kids' club. The service provides indoor and outdoor activities including arts and crafts, discos and themed nights and access to a 24-hour Intensity Gamezone, which features a range of video games. Resort rooms offer PlayStation access and consoles can be hired from reception.

Sea World Drive, Main Beach, Gold Coast.
Phone (07) 5591 0000, see
www.seaworldresort.myfun.com.au.

3. Club Med, Lindeman Island

This Club Med offers families a range of child-friendly activities for different age groups. Children between four and 10 are invited to join Mini Club Med, a fully supervised kids' club that offers a range of indoor and outdoor activities such as swimming, beach volleyball, kayaking, tennis and windsurfing. Once the kids sign up, they're provided with a full-day's schedule that includes lunch and snacks. Children aged between 11 and 17 are invited to join Juniors Club Med, which offers older kids more flexibility to create their own fun during the day. Activities include dance lessons, artistic workshops, group sporting challenges and rollerskating. The resort is surrounded by World Heritage national park and features two extra-large swimming pools.

Lindeman Island, Queensland. Phone
1300 855 052, see www.clubmed.com.au.

4. Novotel Twin Waters Resort

This Sunshine Coast resort is popular for its impressive range of activities, including Club Dolfi for children aged between two and 12.



The club offers face painting, craft and cooking classes, popcorn and movie nights and themed parties among a whole load of indoor and outdoor activities. Club sessions run three times daily and morning and afternoon tea is provided in the club's cost. In-room babysitting is available for children under two. Children over 12 are invited to while away the days in an outdoor play centre featuring electronic game machines, air hockey and pool tables.

Ocean Drive, Mudjimba Beach, Twin Waters, Sunshine Coast. Phone (07) 5448 8000, see www.twinwatersresort.com.au.

5. Hyatt Regency, Coolum

The Hyatt Regency impressed voters with its natural bushland and rainforest surrounds, and kids' club called Camp Hyatt. The club is divided into four sections, catering for different ages, and runs three four-hour activity sessions daily. Arts and crafts, story-telling, kite flying, archery, beach games, canoeing and themed nights are just some of Camp Hyatt's scheduled activities. The rooms are all situated within the resort's gardens.

Warran Road, Coolum Beach, Sunshine Coast. Phone (07) 5446 1234, see www.coolum.regency.hyatt.com.

6. Couran Cove Island Resort

On South Stradbroke Island (a 40-minute ferry ride from the Gold Coast), this resort features access to 22 kilometres of surf beach. It's a perfect venue for families in need of relaxation. The resort offers babysitting services and a Kites kids' club for children aged between three and 12. Activities include treasure hunting, boatbuilding, T-shirt painting, sand castle competitions, mini-Olympic games, themed nights, clown school and a whole range of water sports. Club sessions run three times daily.

South Stradbroke Island, Queensland. Phone 1800 268 726, see www.couran-cove.com.au

7. Reef View Hotel



Hamilton Island's four-star hotel offers views over the Whitsundays and is located right in the middle of Hamilton Island's landscaped tropical gardens. The resort is a popular place for families to take advantage of the island's vast range of child-friendly indoor and outdoor activities, including go-cart racing, fishing, snorkelling, waterskiing, windsurfing, sailing, diving and cruising. For a large portion of this year, children are able to stay and eat free at the resort.

Check the hotel's website for specific dates. *Hamilton Island, Queensland. Phone 137 333, see www.hamiltonisland.com.au.*

8. Rydges Capricorn Resort

In Yeppoon, about 40 kilometres north-east of Queensland's beef capital, Rockhampton, and situated on 20 kilometres of coral reef coastline, this resort features plenty of child-friendly activities. There are water sports, wetland tours, rainforest canoe adventure tours and horse riding as well as 25 free on-site activities. Mini-golf and tennis are included as well as access to pool noodle toys, boogie boards, surf skis, kickboards and a water slide. There's also a children's playground and several walking tracks.

Farnborough Road, Yeppoon, Queensland. Phone 1300 857 922, see www.rydges.com.

9. Turtle Beach Resort

The resort is located 20 minutes north of Gold Coast Airport and seven minutes south of Surfers Paradise. Turtle Beach has two children's wading pools, a children's playground, two arcade games rooms, a cinema and nine barbecue areas. One-, two- or three-bedroom fully self-contained apartments are available and all feature either large patios or balconies. The resort also has two lagoon pools and two lap pools so families are never short of somewhere to cool off.

2346 Gold Coast Highway, Mermaid Beach, Queensland. Phone (07) 5595 6666, see www.turtlebeachresort.com.au.





Top marks ... (clockwise from above) a junior bunkhouse room with PlayStation; a family room at Paradise Resort; sailing at Club Med Lindeman; Cirque Espace at Novotel Twin Waters.

10. Great Keppel Island Resort

This 3½-star resort located 15 kilometres off Queensland's Capricorn Coast, close to Rockhampton, features a kids' club that runs two sessions daily for children aged three to 12, with meals and snacks provided. Activities include arts and crafts, beach games, orienteering adventure tasks, drama performances and a range of sports. Water sports include sea kayaking, catamaran sailing and snorkelling. Beach sports include cricket, soccer and volleyball. The resort has five swimming pools and two tennis courts and offers a babysitting service. There's also an underwater observatory on the island.

*Great Keppel Island, Queensland.
Phone 1800 245 658, see
www.greatkeppelresort.com.au.*



