



Keeping it all in the family

TV presenter, model and mum **SYMANTHA PERKINS** is an ambassador for magazine *Holidays With Kids*. With her swim-king husband Kieren and their three children, she has been researching stories, their most recent treks being to Tasmania and Aspen

WHEN I was a child, family holidays were a once-a-year event, something we looked forward to, like Christmas.

Perhaps it was the cost, dad working long hours or mum feeling it was safe to let us to run amok around the neighbourhood. Whatever the reason, we spent most school breaks relaxing at home.

Back in the 1970s our annual family vacation was fun but hardly adventurous. We rarely strayed far from home usually renting a Gold Coast unit or in Kieren's family, a farm stay at Cedar Lake.

Our own kids can hardly believe dad was a teenager before he flew on a plane or that mum suffered through family car trips without air-con or a DVD, a feat I certainly applaud my parents for because there's no way we'd make the Sydney-Thredbo drive without "entertainment".

Nintendos and DVD players have

helped banish the dreaded "are we there yet" chant but another tip for avoiding road-trip hell is to involve your kids.

Start with trip planning. For our recent Tasmania holiday we researched the Apple Isle on the net and each of us chose a Tassie destination to visit.

Harry, 9, wanted to see Tassie Devils; Georgia, 10, was keen to paddle at Freycinet; Charlie, 2, fixated on kangaroos; Kieren chose glowworm caves and I settled on the Tahune airwalk. These spots became our touring guide and it was a fabulous family adventure.

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

Now more than ever, Aussie families are on the move, with mums leading the charge.

Like most working mums I'm always on the lookout for ways to spend quality time with my kids. Sometimes you need a breather from the drudgery of making school lunches or impressing the boss at work.

"Mini-breaks" are not only great sanity savers but terrific family memory-makers. And if I can also get a massage on the side while the kids frolic in the pool, even better. In our home we divide our holidays into relaxing vacations or hard work trips. Both have fun at the centre, but one

just means more washing and organising for mum.

Skiing is a hard-work vacation with kids but the only holiday that truly grows with the family.

True, I will spend the next three weeks washing after skiing, but the exhilaration of snow definitely makes up for it. Australian on-mountain accommodation is convenient but will slim the purse, so why not try a farm stay in Jindabyne? And get the best of both worlds, as we discovered.

In the morning we'd eat brekkie and then drive 20 minutes to the NSW ski fields. We'd ski all day, eat a late lunch on the top of majestic snow-dusted Mt Kosciuszko, ski down and head home to the farm.

After a warm bath we'd settle in for a sunset drink and watch our resident mob of kangaroos drop by.

Unlike beach holidays, no matter how old the kids get they will always want to come with you because it's so much fun.

Unfortunately, our kids are the better skiers. They've been on skis since they were two and Kieren and I only started when we were 30, so they're destined to leave us behind on the slopes.

We recently skied in Aspen, in the US and the snow was magnificent. If you are thinking of taking the family on an overseas ski trip, Aspen is definitely a place to consider.



DESTINATION

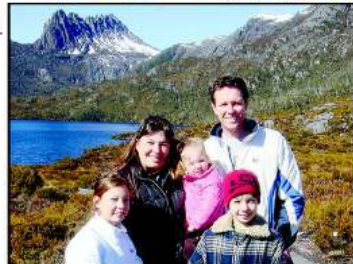
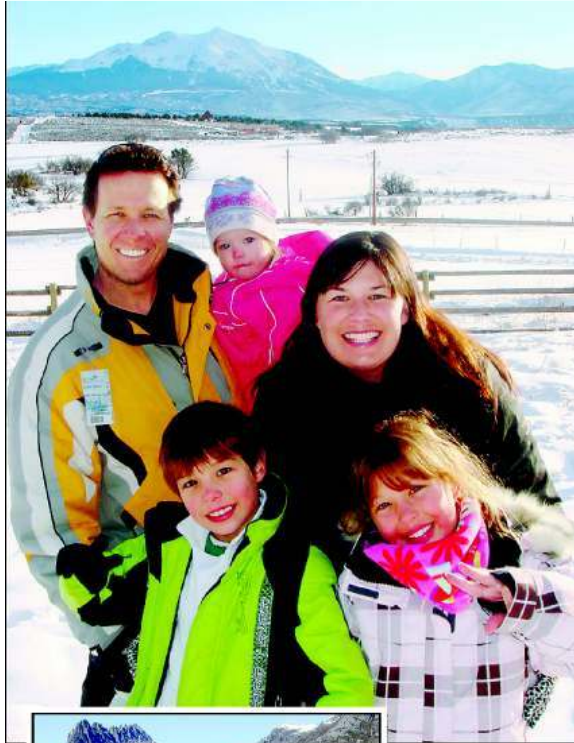


TASMANIA

GETTING THERE: Options include flying Virgin Blue to Hobart or taking the *Spirit of Tasmania* car ferry on the overnight voyage from Melbourne to Devonport for a self-drive holiday, ph 1800 634 906, www.spiritoftasmania.com.au

STAY: For accommodation options at places including Freycinet Peninsula, Strahan and Cradle Mountain, ph 1800 420 155, www.puretasmania.com.au

DETAILS: Tourism Tasmania at www.discovertasmania.com



TIME WITH THE KIDS: Swim champ Kieren Perkins and wife Symantha holidaying in Aspen with their children Charlie, Harry and Georgia. **INSET:** The Perkins clan take in the spectacular Tasmanian views

The choppers, the choppers

YOU would hope London's latest luxury hotel project includes soundproof windows – it will be at the city's busiest heliport.

Plans have been announced for a 70-bedroom luxury boutique-style hotel at London Heliport, Battersea.

It will also house a state-

of-the-art executive aviation facility, with VIP lounges and meeting rooms providing panoramic views across the heliport, which sits on a jetty on the Thames.

Heliport manager, PremiAir, owned by upmarket hotel chain von Essen, has just expanded its executive helicopter fleet to 17, saying

there has been a rise in bookings for corporate events, including shooting and golf weekends.

It arranged more than 100 helicopter charters during last year's Royal Ascot race meeting.

Details: www.premiair.co.uk
www.londonheliport.co.uk