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magazine

Travel





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LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR:

Up in the Air

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is a mom to three humans and three animals and lives in Cole Valley.

cabin on some aircraft. It was often difficult for my child-size body to get a clear view of the screen, and even if I was lucky

“An airplane is a liminal space. We’re everywhere and nowhere, offering a unique opportunity to examine our world and our place in it, to travel in our own minds.”

enough to have prime positioning, chances are, the airline was showing a movie geared toward grownups. I would attempt to read a book, but at some point, a drowsy parent would inevitably ask me to turn off my light. So I found myself opening the shade and peering out the window for hours, an activity that may sound tedious but is a gift I still cherish today.

I would press my nose against the glass, watching the lit-up grids and patchworks of anonymous towns roll out seven miles

As a child, travel usually meant visiting relatives; with my grandparents and cousins scattered widely, from LA to New Mexico to Missouri to Massachusetts, I spent a fair amount of time crisscrossing the country in airplanes, usually at night. This was back before Wi-Fi, iPads, and seatback TVs, when the most entertainment one could hope for on a flight came from a single projector at the front of the

down, landscapes slowly shifting as my plane seemed to inch across the country. Brightly lit cities gave way to large expanses of darkness, punctuated by tiny groups of lights. In these quiet moments, I imagined the lives being lived below, millions of people with millions of stories. *What would my life be like if I’d been born on the plains of Kansas or raised in a high desert city in New Mexico? What was it like to grow up in a tiny mountain town?* An airplane is a liminal space. We’re everywhere and nowhere, offering a unique opportunity to examine our world and our place in it, to travel in our own minds.

Our authors in this issue ask us to consider how we travel, and why. Laure Latham makes the case for trains, offering tips and advice for navigating the European rail system. H.B. Terrell examines the negative impact of travel on communities and the ecosystem, positing that our best choice may be to stick close to home. On Camp Mather’s 100th birthday, we are rerunning Megan Bushnell’s 2016 article on San Francisco’s family camp near Yosemite. And we are excited to launch a new advice column from Yuliya Patsay, who tackles our everyday mom challenges with wit and wisdom.

These days, downloaded movies, ebooks, and seatback TVs make it easier than ever to insulate us from our experience traversing the world from high above it. But I still enjoy putting down my device when I can and staring down at the world below, welcoming the chance to feel small and humble, reminding myself that we are each a single thread woven into the blanket of humanity.

Sonya Abrams

HOUSEKEEPING

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NEXT ISSUE: Community

Have an idea for an issue theme or article? Please email editor@ggmq.org.

This issue made possible by: Setting a world record for putting together the most overscheduled and over-caloried two-week trip overseas in the least amount of time (and might go broke purchasing extra seats for the ride home); Summer break preparations and camp-decision fatigue; Bracing for the chaos of summer

LETTER FROM
THE BOARD:

Be Bold and Go See the World

By Connie Lin



Since she has two kids in elementary school, Connie has had many earnest debates on how old kids should be before they can have their own phones.

croissants in Paris to noshing on traditional Taiwanese cuisine in Yilan at a family banquet. This year, our big trip will be to Europe to visit extended family in Bregenz, with a side trip to Italy to explore and hike the Dolomite Mountains.

While the preschool years can be challenging, taking big trips across many time zones can be easier when the kids are very young, as they already need to sleep every few hours, whether they nap at home or in the shade on the beach in Morocco. Some of my favorite memories are of my 18-month-old daughter joyfully learning how to go up and down stone steps and careening down grassy hills at Scottish castles, and later on, of my 2-year-old son becoming obsessed with horses after his first horse-drawn carriage ride around the quaint mountain village of Schwarzenberg at my husband’s cousin’s wedding.

When we were planning our trips, reading through travel tips and suggestions in GGMG’s online forums was so helpful

Summer is finally here, and my kids are itching for school to be over and for summer vacation to start. Since my daughter was 6 months old, we’ve been taking our kids to see the world, both near and far. We’ve been fortunate to be able to visit family in both Europe and Asia, introducing the kids to a wide variety of cultures and experiences, from hiking across mountain streams and lush hills in Austria to nibbling on buttery

in figuring out what gear we would need. That meant thumbs up to an Ergo baby carrier and travel stroller, and thumbs down to a car seat, as it’s not necessary for the plane and easy to pick up with the rental car. Reserving seats in the bulkhead row enables the baby to nap in the snap-on bassinet while flying internationally, and a small white noise machine eases kids into sleep on the go. What else have you found helpful when traveling with kids? Share your thoughts in our online forums, and perhaps you’ll pick up more ideas while you’re there.

You might have noticed that our events calendar is looking light, yet there are many moms like you who want to meet

“We’ve been fortunate to be able to visit family in both Europe and Asia, introducing the kids to a wide variety of cultures and experiences...”

other moms who are expecting and/or have kids of similar ages near your neighborhood. GGMG is entirely volunteer run; our events and meetups are organized by people just like you. We would love to support you in getting your idea or event started. This could be for a one-off event or ongoing series. We are also seeking to build our team across positions such as board directors and committee chairs, including communications, marketing, magazine, recruiting, and beyond. Please email recruiting@ggmq.org to learn more, and come by our monthly moms’ happy hours to meet some of our volunteers!

Connie Lin

COVER OUTTAKES



Only one shot can make it to the cover. Here are some of our other favorites.

Cover photo by Mini Anna Photography
Model: Mila (10 months)

Staycations

By Christine Chen

Take a vacation without leaving the city!

The Hotel Drisco is one hotel in San Francisco that I would love to stay in ... if it weren't just a few blocks from our house. This boutique hotel fits right into the Pacific Heights neighborhood and has complimentary extras like a gourmet breakfast, daily wine reception (which I was lucky enough to join when a friend stayed there), and chauffeur service.

Two boutique hotel options offer an escape from the city bustle for those looking for a nature staycation. **The Lodge at the Presidio**, a three-story, 42-room hotel at the Main Post in the Presidio, occupies one of five historic Montgomery Street barracks built between 1895 to 1897 by the U.S. Army to house six artillery companies, a cavalry troop, and two infantry companies. Walking distance to The Walt Disney Family Museum, it also offers free breakfast and an evening wine and cheese reception.

The Inn at the Presidio, its smaller counterpart, comprises 22 rooms (including 17 suites with fireplaces) and is located at historic Pershing Hall, an elegant home for bachelor officers when the Presidio was a U.S. Army post. It also includes the historic Funston House, a renovated officer's home, which has four rooms with original art. It is hidden amongst old Monterey Cypresses.

The East Brother Light Station Bed & Breakfast Inn is a four-bedroom 1873 Victorian home that you can rent by room or have your own private ¾-acre island with a fancy breakfast and dinner included. This unique location is on the top of an island in the strait separating San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. The visit includes a ride to the island, champagne reception, a 4-course communal dinner with wine, breakfast, and a tour that includes a fog horn demonstration. Fall asleep (or not) to waves and the sounds of the foghorn.

Cavallo Point, the Lodge at the Golden Gate, offers fantastic views, fine dining, spa services, and a cooking school, and feels like a getaway much further than just across the Golden Gate Bridge. Water sports such as paddle boarding and kayaking in the Bay supplement fitness class, massages, aromatherapy, and a meditation pool.

Canyon Ranch Woodside, Canyon Ranch's first retreat model, opened in Woodside at the end of 2019, right before the pandemic. This 38-room property is set in 16 acres of redwood forest and offers an all-inclusive food and wellness program, featuring a spa with an indoor saline pool, whirlpool, and fitness



center. Daily fitness classes, nature walks, meditation sessions, wellness talks, creative expression courses, guided mountain biking, hiking, and coaching sessions are some of the options available to visitors seeking an escape from the day-to-day grind.

For *Star Wars* fans, especially those with young kids, visit the **headquarters of Lucasfilm** you must, to seek the "life-size" bronze statue of Jedi Master Yoda. Lobby during weekdays you must explore to see *Star Wars* memorabilia including a life-sized Darth Vader. Galaxy's Edge at Disney it is not, but much more calm and cost-effective.

Grace Cathedral draws many tourists and locals alike for its architecture and worship services, but few are aware of the weekly yoga on the labyrinth that is held on Tuesdays and Saturdays for all levels, set to music for a unique, transformative experience. The spiritual experiences available go beyond the Episcopal services and include art installations, light shows, and monthly sound baths.

Night Market in Chinatown is on the second Friday of every month on Grant Avenue beginning at 5:30 p.m. Why fly to Asia when you can enjoy this monthly event? Enjoy music and sample great food from local Chinatown businesses.

Candlelight Concerts are available throughout the city. A nighttime concert by candlelight is the perfect way to enjoy popular music of top artists, without the crazy concert environment, and at more affordable prices in some of the most beautiful buildings in San Francisco. Upcoming concerts include tributes to Adele and Queen (kids must be at least 8 years old to attend).

Christine prefers to use a passport for vacations—but realizes that's not exactly relaxing—so the staycation definitely has its appeal (and much less packing).

Rentable Travel Gear for Your Child

By Jessica Perry

Are you going on a trip, but don't want to bring all of your kid's gear with you? There are many options for renting gear at your destination.

Babyquip is an online service that provides every kind of gear that you may need including strollers, pack 'n plays, car seats, booster seats, feeding tables, and much more. Diapers are also available for purchase. [babyquip.com](https://www.babyquip.com)

Traveling Baby offers delivery and pickup of all the baby equipment you need at your destination. Simply log on to their website, specify which items you'd like, the type of residence where you'll be staying (private residence, hotel, etc.), and delivery can be arranged unless you want to pick it up or drop it off yourself. Napa/Sonoma, Los Angeles, Mammoth Lakes, Lake Tahoe, and more are many California destinations where you can have items delivered directly to your rental. Be sure to check ahead of time if you'd like airport delivery—not all airports are available. [travelingbaby.com](https://www.travelingbaby.com)

Sports Basement is a local Bay Area sporting gear store that provides countless rental options for outdoor activities. Items include, but are not limited to, bikes, skis, backpacking kid carriers, kids trailers (to attach to your bike), jogging strollers, all manner of ski equipment and outfits, and backpacks. You can rent by the day or by the season. [shop.sportsbasement.com](https://www.shop.sportsbasement.com)

Jessica is a local mom, writer, and travel enthusiast. She has traveled internationally many times with her kids when they were little and is sad that she missed the boat on this rentable gear while they were still small.



Travel Ethics

With Anya Kamenetz



Anya Kamenetz speaks, writes, and thinks about generational justice and raising thriving kids on a changing planet in her newsletter, *The Golden Hour*. She covered education for many years for *NPR*, where she co-created the podcast *Life Kit: Parenting*. Her newest book is *The Stolen Year: How Covid Changed Children's Lives, And Where We Go Now*. Kamenetz is currently an advisor to the [Aspen Institute](#) and the Climate Mental Health Network.

How did you become interested in the intersection of travel and climate change?

I'm interested in climate as it affects our daily lives, especially our emotional lives, and how we parent. I love traveling, and air travel is a huge component of most people's personal carbon footprint, so naturally I've come up against the contradictions of that.

You write about wanting to show your children our “beautiful, complex” world and wrestling with the guilt of it. How have you tried to reconcile that?

By talking about it and being transparent, trying to hold myself accountable, and making it an issue we discuss as a family. We now alternate between flying and non-flying vacations. I've discovered that as the kids get older and busier, they actually appreciate having low-key staycations. I've cut back somewhat on my work travel as well, which is partly a career shift.

Let's say a family of 4 generates approximately 8 tons of CO₂ emissions on a long-haul flight. How can we possibly offset that? As an avid traveler with family overseas, I wonder if buying carbon offsets actually works.

I don't know that it's useful to think in terms of offsets, because from what I understand, they don't really work. If you want to make a difference that will lead to sustainable carbon reduction, take a portion of what you spend on plane tickets and make a small monthly donation to groups you see working in your community. Monthly donors are incredibly important to small organizations because they give them dependable revenue. You could pick an organization that collects compost, or one that helps people weatherize their homes.

We give away about 10 percent of our annual income, and a large part of that is dedicated to monthly pledges to climate organizations. These include a balance of organizations that work on conservation in communities near us, those that empower local community leaders around the world (Climate Mobilization and Global Greengrants), and activist organizations that empower and direct loud calls for policy change (Climate Emergency Fund and Climate Defiance). In addition, I volunteer a small amount of my time serving on a board, and as part of a coalition pushing for decarbonization of our public schools in New York City.

I believe in behavioral change, and we have taken steps like electrifying our home and adding solar panels (info on that process here: [rewiringamerica.org](#)); but policy and collective change is more important than individual actions.

In some circles where people talk about “flight shame” they also refer to “love miles”—when you live far away from your family, it creates almost an obligation to travel or make it a higher priority!

How does one avoid greenwashing with travel in general? For example, how “green” is an eco-hotel?

An eco-hotel can mean anything at all. In general, cruise ships are quite polluting in many different ways. All-inclusive resort-style vacations tend to create a larger carbon and environmental footprint, which isn't offset by the fact that they don't wash your towels every day. Staying in smaller lodgings, using public transportation, and eating local food are all going to give you a lower carbon footprint and possibly a better experience as well, depending on your style. You can also think about visiting countries that are doing better from an environmental perspective, like Costa Rica or Sweden. And don't forget those stay-local trips!

Like you, your kids appear to be so introspective about privilege and our responsibility to the world. How did you start such conversations? What are your suggestions to grow such consciousness?

You know, my kids are people and they're growing and not always perfect, but we do our best to involve them in these conversations. I get help reinforcing this perspective from my community—from their school, summer camps, Hebrew school, grandparents, and my sister and brother-in-law, who run a nature-based experiential learning and retreat center ([allyouneedinstitute.com](#)), as well as our friends who come from different backgrounds and communities. Instead of lecturing, I set an example and ask questions to find out what they are thinking. I'm also pretty clear in my expectation that they be kind to everyone, and that they get outside every day to enjoy nature as a family.

As a person “who has the means to fly away from [my] problems,” how can I turn consideration of the implications of my decisions into real action? In other words, consciousness is the first step, but how can I make a significant change that isn't performative?

Hmm. I would say that the second step is to talk about it with people who are likely to support you and hold you accountable and take action with you—those in your household, then those you are on a group chat with. Start the conversation,



“If you want to make a difference that will lead to sustainable carbon reduction, take a portion of what you spend on plane tickets and make a small monthly donation to groups you see working in your community.”

anxiety, it is important to make room for that and not shut them down or contradict them with happy talk about how it will all be okay. It's much more honest to say, “This is a big problem and it's OK to be worried. I am here to talk about it whenever you want to, and we can also take action together.” And there are also times we can take a break and think about something else.

make a decision about the time and the money you have available to dedicate to taking action, put it on your calendar, and get it done. There's an app called Climate Action Now that gives people lots of opportunities to do things like contact elected officials or sign petitions, but even better is something going on in your community where you will get to know people and reinforce staying involved.

A lot of parents have told me that it's “not fair” to ask our kids to fix the environment. How do you talk to your kids about climate justice and not contribute to their anxiety about the environment?

I agree that it shouldn't be on our kids to do this! It really reduces anxiety the more you are engaged in solutions as a family or yourself as an adult. Then there are things we can point to around us that we're helping to do that are making a difference.

At the same time, I really respect all the range of emotions people have about this. When a kid is expressing



What I Wish I Knew Before Flying with My Baby

By Elizabeth Neal



I remember being riddled with anxiety with the thought of solo-parenting my 9-month-old’s first-ever flight. As a new mom, there was so much I didn’t know. It was only a three-hour trip, but I couldn’t tune out the fear of struggling with an inconsolable baby while surrounded by gawking strangers. I was also confronting some deep discomfort about breast-feeding in public. Cue excessive hormonal sweats.

But here’s the thing, mama. I did the damn thing. And so will you.

In honor of paying it forward—because motherhood is hard—these are the game-changing decisions and products that have made flying solo with my baby manageable (and dare I say, even enjoyable).

Plan your pre-flight logistics

If you can, book your travel around your child’s nap schedule (this helped my daughter sleep for two-thirds of her first flight). The decision to purchase a seat for your little one or carry them as a lap infant depends on three factors. Does your baby need to be on you 100 percent of the time for comfort? Do you want a break during your flight? Can you afford the extra expense?

While I completely understand being price conscious, I weighed safety, flexibility, privacy for nursing, and overall peace of mind as well. I used a combination of my Solly wrap baby carrier for nursing during takeoff and landing and my Uppababy Mesa Max car seat for naps. The upgraded leg room was absolutely necessary if you plan on rocking or transitioning your baby to their car seat.

“Make a packing checklist—and save it. You will refer to this again and again.”

Be sure to verify that your car seat is FAA-compliant (most car seats will have a sticker on the bottom with the label or you can verify in your instruction manual—keep in mind that not all car seat bases can fly). If you choose to purchase a seat for your child, they will need to occupy a window seat.

Pack essentials for ease and function

Make a packing checklist—and save it. You will refer to this again and again. Now that my daughter and I have our wings (ask for this keepsake if it’s your first flight) and are avid

travelers, we’ve been able to trim our list in half. These are the baby essentials I strongly suggest you add to your list if you want to save time and frustration.

- Child’s birth certificate
- Uppababy Mesa Max car seat (infant) / Nuna Rava car seat (toddler)
- Britax car seat travel cart (This was my favorite hack for a heavy car seat while carrying multiple bags.)
- Skip Hop diaper bag (If you don’t want to rifle through your diaper bag, my ultimate hack is to use a fanny pack loaded with the bare essentials. This saved me so much time and hassle and made bathroom trips so efficient.)
- Frida Baby portable white noise machine
- Amacool battery-operated stroller fan
- Solly Baby wrap carrier
- We Are Amma breastfeeding cover
- Milk travel bag with ice pack
- Dry snacks and/or milk
- New toy and/or teether
- Earth Mama organic diaper balm (I lather my baby’s bottom before the flight so we can avoid diaper changes until we arrive at our destination, saving extra trips and hassle.)
- Momcozy sanitizing wipes
- Purell hand sanitizer

Prepare for security screenings and flying

The most hassle-free option, if you are breastfeeding, is to nurse during the flight. If that’s not an option, bringing frozen milk in clear packaging is easiest for screening; otherwise, fresh milk and/or formula will need to be tested by a TSA agent with a strip above the open bottle. This last screening process caused me a near panic attack seeing multiple hands with germ-covered gloves handle my breastmilk, which was not always visible. It’s within your right to ask a TSA agent to change their gloves, but they can decline. This process, including a pat down, took an extra 20 to 30 minutes.

Once you’ve boarded, before you waste time fumbling around trying to figure out how to secure your car seat, simply ask your flight attendant for a seatbelt extender, which can go right over your car seat. Also, be sure to nurse or bottle feed your little one starting at least 15 minutes before takeoff and landing to relieve the pressure in their ears.

Now, breathe. You’ve got this, mama. Wishing you smooth travels.

Elizabeth is a free-spirited creative, writer, nature lover, and mother.

Books Transport Young Readers to Wonderous New Places

By Laure Latham

What does travel mean to young readers? Whether it’s space exploration at bedtime, an insect’s perspective on garden trekking, or a scavenger hunt in a national park, reading can magically transport readers to new places and offer new experiences—sometimes from the comfort of home.



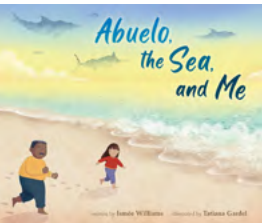
Hush, Little Rocket
Written by Mo O’Hara, illustrated by Alexandra Cook
In this adorable cosmic take on a lullaby, babies and toddlers can zoom around the solar system at bedtime. Traveling at the speed of light, they start near the sun and visit planet friends on their bedtime flight. This rhyming story is a great introduction to planets in our galaxy—and an invitation to travel vicariously in space.

Ages: 1 to 3 years



Addie Ant Goes on an Adventure
Written by Maren Morris and Karina Argow, illustrated by Kelly Anne Dalton
When Addie Ant travels from a tomato bed to another garden bed on her first solo adventure, trials and tribulations ensue. Along the way, this plucky ant meets friends and family, asks for help when she gets lost, and dares to venture out of her garden bed comfort zone. Written by acclaimed country singer-songwriter Maren Morris and former teacher Karina Argow, the book is beautifully illustrated by artist Kelly Anne Dalton. Don’t be surprised if this reminds you of a modern-day Beatrix Potter adventure—at insect level.

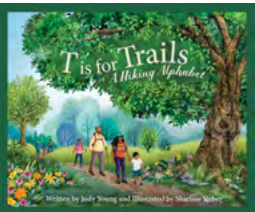
Ages: 2 to 5 years



Abuelo, the Sea, and Me
Written by Ismée Williams, illustrated by Tatiana Gardel
The young narrator visits Abuelo several times a year, and they always go to the beach near his home. Starting in summer, the child gets glimpses into the life Abuelo led before he fled Cuba. Over all seasons and several conversations between granddaughter and grandfather, we discover images from the grandfather’s childhood and early years in Cuba. Between Abuelo’s past life in Cuba and the little girl’s visits today, an ocean unites two generations of the same family. This book shows that travel does not necessarily require going places; it can also take the shape of memories and longing.

Ages: 4 to 8 years

Laure writes on marathon swimming, healthy living, and adventure travel at Frog Mom (frogmom.com), and is the author of Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She is the founder of a tech startup and lives with her teenage girls in London. She swam the English Channel in 2023. You can find her on social media @frogmomblog.



T is for Trails: A Hiking Alphabet
Written by Judy Young, illustrated by Sharisse Steber
If your family loves

being outside or is looking for inspiration, this book will do the trick. Rich with information on wildlife, national parks, and best practices (what do you do if you get lost?), this book has it all. Wonderful illustrations bring to life national parks in Canada and the United States, inviting hikers—new or seasoned—to take to the hills.

Ages: 5 to 9 years



Adventure in Grand Canyon National Park: A Mystery Adventure
Written and illustrated by Aaron Johnson
If your future travels include the National Parks, your kids will love this book series in which

a scavenger hunt takes teenage Jake and his friends into the depths of the Grand Canyon. Following clues written in an old scrapbook, the three teens travel off the beaten path, learning about survival skills, natural history, integrity, character, and friendship. Young readers will empathize with these adventures with a tint of mystery and history all rolled into one.

Ages: 8 to 11 years

The Weight of Responsibility

By Gail Cornwall

Last issue, we looked at *This American Ex-Wife*, Lyz Lenz’s fabulous rant on the personal, relational, and societal fallout from women being asked to do all the things. Now, professor Jessica Calarco offers us a sociological take on the same phenomenon.



Holding It Together: How Women Became America’s Safety Net

Calarco had a tweet go viral in 2021: “Other countries have social safety nets. The U.S. has women.” *Holding It Together* presents the evidence for that claim and elaborates, dubbing the U.S. a “DIY society.”

With data from in-depth interviews in Indiana and two large national surveys, plus an exhaustive combing of research by others, Calarco illustrates what holding it together looks like in real life. Take Sylvia, who became a surrogate parent of two when her brother and his wife got ensnared in the opioid crisis. Patricia, another woman in a low income bracket, “can’t just say no” when asked for help, knowing that friends and family members don’t have anywhere else to turn and she may need to rely on them one day soon. Women in high-income families and breadwinner moms are also “drowning” in the risk and responsibility foisted onto them, Calarco shows, and as a result, “pump the brakes career-wise to catch up with caregiving obligations at home.” Then, “when women prove they can hold it together, we thank them by giving them more to hold.”

These first few chapters contain relatable anecdotes and quotes, like one from a mother who said of asking her husband for help: “To him, it feels like I’m saying he doesn’t do anything ever. I’ve got to do baby steps, that way I don’t upset him.” Calarco repeats herself, in a way that’s totally normal for academic writing and also makes this part of the book drag a little, but it’s still well worth reading, especially since she includes factoids from studies: for example, levels of maternal guilt are higher in countries with a hole-ridden safety net and “the more time that married dads ... devote to their paid work, the more unpaid work they leave to their wives.”

But Calarco really shines when she zooms out the lens and asks why and how we got here. She begins with the Lanham Act and explains that for a brief time period in the 1940s, “in most places, mothers working in any paid job could get up to six days a week of full-time childcare with free meals and snacks ... all for \$10 or less per day in today’s dollars.” But funding was pulled and many centers shuttered. “These choices have also rippled out from childcare and served as justification for underinvestment in ... healthcare and eldercare,” Calarco writes, and “American women are still paying the price of that choice today... tasked with being the primary childcare providers for their families and also the kin-keepers, the family health managers, the family budget managers, and the head volunteers.” Women then “either find a way to carry that weight or find someone else to dump it on—usually another woman more vulnerable.”

The word “choice” is key. Calarco says that the “engineers” and “profiteers” of our DIY society made—and continue to make—purposeful, considered decisions to not offer robust social services and “forc[e] women to stand in for that net instead.” There are so many reasons why, neoliberalism and sexism chief among them, but Calarco hones in on three narratives that have duped the American people. “These myths pit us against each other. And they guilt and gaslight women,” she writes. First, there’s the myth of meritocracy. “More than 70 percent of U.S. adults believe that hard work alone—not luck or help from other people—determines who gets ahead in our society ... far higher than in many other countries.” There’s also “the Supermom myth” that incentivizes helicopter parenting and a sense of mattering for mothers that’s contingent on constant care provision.

The Mars/Venus myth posits that women are better suited for caregiving, “justifying men’s exploitation of women and ... muzzling women who try to complain,” Calarco writes. For example, like many mothers she interviewed, “Immediately after expressing frustrations with Dennis, Bethany stifles her own sense of injustice and comes to his defense.... Dennis could try to keep his

frustrations in check—the way Bethany does with the kids all day.... But the Mars/Venus myth lures them into accepting the status quo.” There’s even a dark side to husbands lauding their wives’ parenting and household management: “[W]hile husbandly reverence might seem endearing, research shows that learned helplessness manifests inequality.... And it operates to gaslight women ... because it makes their complaints seem petty, since their husbands seem so loving in lavishing them with praise.... [T]he Mars/Venus myth also makes it difficult for women to complain about their boyfriends or their husbands, so long as those men exceed the bar the myth sets.”

Together, these myths produce a “lack of will to change things,” Calarco writes. Only half of us need to believe them for reform to stall out, “[a]nd with a little voter suppression thrown in, they need even less.”

When it comes to solutions, Calarco says that “telling men to do more” isn’t a viable one, in part because it “risks forcing women into the role of gender police and cleanup crew.” But, she writes, “Other countries have figured out how to solve these problems. First, they lift many low-profit services ... out of the free-market system.” These governments also cover the cost of benefits and set stricter minimum wage laws. U.S.-based research on pandemic-era cash support for kids and universal school lunches shows that “universal programs would be so much more cost-effective [and] that over the long run, a Scandinavian-style social safety net would pay for itself.” Referring to regressive tax breaks and robber baron billionaires, Calarco writes, “We know how to fix this, and we can afford to do it. The resources are just in the wrong hands.”

Her big call to action is: “forming a union of care” where we all would band together to do things like “finding and closing gaps that emerge in the public care system (like the current gaps in after-school and summer break care) and closing loopholes that allow employers to get around care-promoting policies.” It’s unclear what this would look like. How do we join that cross-industry union? What would membership entail?

She might be short on the revolutionary details, but Calarco is persuasive in arguing that we need to do *something* so that we live in “[a] world where we hold it *together* rather than pretending we can hold it together on our own.”

Gail works as a mom and writer in San Francisco. Read about parenting and education from the perspective of a former teacher and lawyer at gailcornwall.com or by finding her on Facebook and Twitter.

NEW ARRIVALS



Danielle C. Baby Eleanor Moore

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Traveling with Children Is NOT Vacation

By Yuliya Patsay



Yuliya (it rhymes with Goo-lia) Patsay is Soviet-born and San Francisco-raised. She is a storyteller and voice actor. Her debut memoir, *Until the Last Pickle*, is available now!

I sometimes feel like I'm living a double life—a stay-at-home mom (SAHM) who doesn't work and a person who works and has no kids. What is this elusive balance I keep hearing about?

– Stretched in SOMA

Dear Stretched,

Boo, it's not you, it's the little piece of the world and the culture we live in—a society that expects us to pour into our kids more than ever before while remaining a high performer in the workplace. What's a mama to do? Step one: acknowledge your feelings. They are real and they matter. And they might stem from unrealistic expectations. You're neither a SAHM nor a working gal with no caretaking responsibilities, so why put that on yourself? Step two: your therapist and mine would want you to put some boundaries in place. Homemade cupcakes for the school bake sale? Sorry, not you, not this time. Step three: ask for help. Can you trade off dinner duties with your partner or even your kids? Can you divide some of the mentally taxing tasks up more evenly? If one of you owns all meal planning and production and the other owns all health-related and carpool-related duties, would that lighten the load? And if all else fails, try just dropping the ball. What is the worst that will happen if you stop cooking and cleaning? Eventually, someone will have to take the trash out, right? RIGHT??

It might be time to talk to my 11-year-old about S-E-X, but I can barely spell it, let alone talk about it. Can't I just outsource this to someone?

– Embarrassed in Eureka Valley

Dear Embarrassed,

There's nothing to be embarrassed about. It's just reproduction. Just body parts mashing together. Body parts that belong to parents. Who are probably mashing them together in the same bed we all cuddle in on Sunday mornings...OH MY GOD!!! YOU'RE ALL DISGUSTING.

OK, I can see how having that conversation with your kids can be tricky.

So prepare yourself by reflecting on your own experience. How did your family handle this topic? That can get the ball rolling on how you want to approach the conversation differently.

Next, familiarize yourself with accurate information and age-appropriate language about puberty. There are tons of resources including books, educational websites, and even podcasts that can help you. One of my faves is *The Puberty Podcast*.

Find the right time to start a short, casual conversation and follow up often. It's not a one-and-done conversation, but a series of chats that open the door for ongoing dialogue and position you as the trusted grown-up to talk to. Acknowledge the awkwardness: it's OK to admit that this conversation feels awkward for you. This can help normalize the subject and reduce any tension. But do answer questions honestly, and if you don't know an answer, it's fine to say you'll find out and get back to them. Make sure your child knows that what they're going through is normal and let them know it's OK to feel confused, scared, or curious about the changes happening in their bodies. By approaching the topic with openness, honesty, and empathy, you can help your child navigate puberty confidently and healthily. Remember, the goal is starting the conversation and keeping the lines of communication open as they grow.

For more, check out the article on puberty in the June/July 2023 Discovery issue of [GGMG Magazine](#).

Whenever I return from traveling with my children and people ask me how my "vacation" was, I am at a loss for words. Obviously, traveling with children is NOT vacation. Can we please invent a new word for this?

– Pissed in the Presidio

Dear Pissed,

Who are these people who dare label travel with children as vacation? Once you are a parent, anything that you do WITHOUT your children is considered vacation: grocery shopping, a root canal, even a colonoscopy counts. I asked ChatGPT your question and it proposed that "a better word to describe travel with children, especially one that captures the unique experience of family dynamics, learning, and adventure, is 'family journey.'" This suggestion made me stabby. How about humpdays? Slogfest? Tell you what: once I take a real vacation, I'm sure I'll come up with something!

Returning to Running After Pregnancy

By Brian Feeley, MD, and Nirav Pandya, MD

How do you get back to running after having a baby? "Wait 6 weeks and go ahead and get started!" A quick check of Reddit says: "Do your Kegels and get to it!" That's probably the advice most new moms get when trying to restart exercise after childbirth. But it's not that easy! Labor and delivery isn't a hamstring strain or a brief vacation. Everything has changed: from the daily schedule to physiology to nutritional needs. So how do experts recommend returning to running postpartum?

First, it may be time to ask yourself: *Am I a runner? Do I still want to be a runner?* From an evolutionary perspective, points out Harvard's Daniel Lieberman in his book *Exercised*, we may not be well designed to be runners: "Being upright has ... disadvantage[s]: when running, we lose the use of our spines as stride-extending springs. Watch a slow-motion video of a greyhound or a cheetah galloping. When it lands on its back legs, its hind paws land below the shoulders as its long, flexible spine curves like a powerful bow, storing elastic energy." Humans don't have that. Indeed, only about 15 percent of people participate in running, and only about a third of those will ever run a 5K, the most popular race distance. So despite what you see in Golden Gate Park, runners are likely the evolutionary exception, not the norm!

"First, it may be time to ask yourself: Am I a runner? Do I still want to be a runner?"

There is no consensus on exactly when to return to running. Most experts in a recent *British Journal of Sports Medicine* study suggest waiting until after any birth injury has healed. The experts, when polled, also agreed that runners must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Part of the challenge when determining safe return to running postpartum is the lack of clear guidelines. Is your pelvic floor stable enough to support repetitive high-impact activity? What is your dynamic balance like? Are you having symptoms of incontinence? It may be worth visiting a women's health physical therapist who can provide expert guidance on the best way to start running again during this time.

Lindsay Orberta, a nutritionist at the UCSF Womens' Sports Medicine Center, says: "While you may want to race (quite literally) back to your pre-pregnancy weight, your new energy



demands are astonishingly high. Exclusively breastfeeding mothers experience an average weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds per month without exercise. That's because you're burning an additional 400 to 500 calories per day just producing milk in the first 6 months, in addition to your usual daily activities." Once exercise is added, a real risk of under-fueling results. Orberta continues, "Most breastfeeding

runners need 1.7 to 1.9 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily, which should be evenly spaced throughout the day. Yes, you read that right! It's a lot of protein. For example, a 145-pound woman (65.7 kg) who runs 3 miles, 3 times a week, would need 112 grams of protein per day minimally, spaced out as 30 grams of protein at every meal, along with a snack that has 22 grams of protein. Focusing on that 30-gram dose at each meal is critical for maintaining muscle mass."

It is also important to ensure you're drinking enough water before and after running during lactation. Orberta recommends that you drink 16 ounces of water 90 minutes before any run to adequately hydrate, and consume at least 16 cups (!) of hydrating fluids daily to support adequate milk production. Any non-caffeinated beverage contributes towards this fluid goal: water, carbonated water, milk and milk alternatives, smoothies, fresh fruit juice, and decaffeinated herbal teas all help keep you adequately hydrated for running.

When returning to running, there are some increased risks, such as stress fractures to the pelvis and hip for several reasons. Breastfeeding and sleep deprivation change your estrogen and parathyroid hormone levels, which increases bone turnover. If there is continued pain with running in the hip and pelvis, you should stop until you can see a sports medicine physician. Muscle strains, particularly in the lower back, are common as well. While there isn't much information in the literature, these doctors typically believe that a balance of strengthening and core stability will help those muscles recover and support a running program.

Ultimately, when thinking about running after baby: take your time to do it right, ramp up carefully, and focus on proper nutrition, hydration, and rest.

Brian Feeley, M.D., is the Chief of the Sports Medicine Service at UCSF. He has five children, four in San Francisco schools and one at UCLA. Nirav Pandya, M.D., is the Chief of the Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery Service at UCSF and is a father to two children in Oakland. You can find them on Twitter or listen to their podcast, 6-8 Weeks: Perspectives on Sports Medicine.



Travel Doesn't Make You a Better Person

Does international travel really expand one's mind, or just one's sense of privilege to occupy space abroad?

By H.B. Terrell

We've all read the articles: "Health Benefits of Traveling Abroad," "How Travel Enhances Creativity," "Travel Makes You More Empathetic." As someone who loves to visit places that are new to me, and has become aware of the toll that long-distance travel takes on our rapidly warming climate, I decided to ask—is travel the only, or even the best way to cultivate a life of exploration and empathy?

Turns out, I was focusing on the headlines and engaging in some hardcore confirmation bias, because reading these articles reveals that the health, creativity, and empathy benefits actually come from travel-adjacent activities like seeking out new experiences, being outdoors, walking more, disconnecting from technology, engaging with others, and rest. In fact, these positive effects may occur in spite of travel, not because of it.

Tourists looking for "authentic" experiences are typically in search of superficial interactions, where the cultural practices and traditions of local or Indigenous peoples are transformed into performances for popular consumption. Meanwhile, self-sustaining paths to livelihood get lost, leaving these communities dependent on outside visitors. Travelers tend to avoid exposure to the realities of their hosts. How can empathy exist in such an unequal dynamic?

The colonial roots of tourism

Taking part in mainstream tourism—the history walks, the museum guides, the architecture plaques—reinforces the erasure of the inhabitants of a place. The sanitized versions of history at most tourist sites are designed to reinforce the comfort level of the traveler rather than challenge their view of the locale, whether that

is a major metropolitan city like Beijing or Casablanca, or a village such as Dürnstein, Austria or Caye Caulker, Belize—known as being "off the beaten path," yet somehow still a destination listed in the guidebook.

Americans with the money to do so visit places that they imagine to be untouched oases of escape or history-laden cosmopolitan cities. They enjoy the luxury and leisure they can afford, which has been designed for their pleasure. They then leave often without regard to the local people. This cycle creates a local dependency on tourist dollars, which shapes the economy in ways that benefit tourists at the expense of local people, their values, and their cultural capital. There is no real investment in the place other than what the vacationer wants to experience. Colonizers extract land and loot with no regard for the inhabitants; tourists might acquire a cache of stunning photos for social media feeds, score an "authentic" souvenir, and interact with a pool boy serving up a Mai Tai on the beach. As late historian Hal K. Rothman put it, "Tourism and the social structure it provides transform locals into people who look like themselves but who act and believe differently as they learn to market their place and its—and their—identity."

When locals begin to be perceived as an ethnic attraction, individual community members' lifestyle decisions are no longer tied to practical needs but can have dire economic outcomes for the entire group. A 2019 report published by the Travel Foundation, Cornell University's Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise and EplerWood International unpacks tourism's hidden costs, from managing sewage to

social effects like displacement and undermined community values. In some cities, like Dubrovnik and Venice, tourists outnumber locals. In others, native languages, cuisine, and religious practices constitute a deeper change to the locale than any change in the visitor. In a 2022 study on the cultural impacts of tourism in Ethiopia, researchers quantified the negative aspects

“Travel some, not too much, mostly on the ground, in a way that benefits locals and minimizes harm.”

of tourism as a commoditization of the target society's culture, erosion of the communities' socio-cultural assets, and fostering the hyper-capitalist production or import of inauthentic cultural objects for tourist consumption.

Beach hotels displace coastal fishing communities; golf courses are built atop First Nations burial grounds; Indigenous people are employed as low-wage labor at tourist sites that claim to promote their land and culture; and rampant water consumption supports an infrastructure of inequity.

According to research by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourists consume between 117 and 211 gallons of water per day, depending on the season and the area. Compare this figure to the average person's water consumption, at 34 gallons per day. And then compare that to the highest consumption figures, which occur in the tropical belt: 528 to 904 gallons of water per day, per room. This amounts to a 520 percent increase in water consumption for the average person on the

average vacation. In the tropics, if we generously assume a family vacation with four family members, vacationers use 565 percent more water resources than the average consumer.

"Once you can see the problem, then you can begin to imagine different futures," says historian, activist, and tour guide Kyle Kajihiro. This is why he co-founded DeTours

with fellow native Hawai'ian Terry Keko'olani: to contradict the narrative of "island time" and the myth of a serene and unconflicted Hawai'i. Kajihiro and Keko'olani began hosting DeTours more than 20 years ago to "de-center the outsider, who never should've been at the center to begin with." They guide tourists to points of interference on the Islands to tell the history of the kingdom of Hawai'i before it was overthrown by the United States military.

Option 1: Don't travel

If rest and relaxation in an unfamiliar locale no longer seems worth the deception required of local performers to maintain the mask of paradise for your benefit, and if the exploitative, silencing, and obliterating effects of cultural imperialism in the tourism industry trouble you, then you can opt out.

Hökūlani K. Aikau, co-editor of *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai'i*, explains, "The multibillion-dollar global tourism industry says that if you can afford to travel to a place, you have a right to all that is there. [Detours] does not support this logic." The book reminds tourists that they are not entitled to all things Hawai'ian, because the Hawai'i of their imagination is obliterating the Hawai'i of its indigenous Kānaka Maoli inhabitants. This logic holds for any travel destination.

"There's this false adage that travel opens minds," says travel journalist and hospitality consultant Travis Levis. "Travel does not automatically make you a better person." Researcher Joseph Cheer conducted a study which suggested an othering bias amongst Western tourists, especially when they limited their interactions to transactional encounters in hotels



or shops. Like health benefits, creativity enhancement, or improved mental health, empathy is not a guaranteed effect of travel.

Have you ever considered taking the week off work to stay home and read a novel? Reading can more reliably open one's mind to the experiences of others. A study conducted by The New School for Social Research found that reading fiction significantly improved emotional intelligence scores over the non-reading control group. Another study's findings showed that people who read about fictional immigrants hold lower levels of negative bias toward people of races and ethnicities different from their own. Reading fiction "requires people to enter characters' lives and minds and by doing so, it increases people's capacity to understand other people's thoughts and feelings," writes Claire Cain Miller in her *New York Times* piece "How to be More Empathetic." Miller also suggests reading about the lives and struggles of groups different from your own, whether it be in history books, essay collections, or autobiographies. Reading fosters curiosity about others' experiences, requires our full attention, and often challenges our biases (what we think we "know").

If we can get the effects of travel without the 5-ton carbon footprint of a 10-hour round trip flight, and without the colonialist-capitalist destruction of the places we visit, then why not make leisure time at home the gold standard for spending our time off? The staycation is familiar to most, but is often seen as a necessity, something that takes the place of what you'd prefer to be doing, which is vacationing. For those who enjoy traveling too much to give it up just yet, you can challenge yourself not to travel like an imperialist.

Option 2: Travel better

"There are ways to visit a place that pay attention to the impositions of hospitality," says Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, co-editor of *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai'i*. "Many Indigenous cultures have a protocol for hospitality that understands it as a relationship of exchange and obligation between host and guest, with Native sovereignty at its heart. Under the conditions of capitalism, this gets perverted."

Transformational travel experiences require effort and commitment. Hazel



Tucker, author of a study on empathy and tourism suggests embracing "unsettled empathy." This entails learning about the culture one plans to visit—including the uncomfortable legacies of colonialism, slavery, genocide, and displacement undergirding its history—and seeking out the kinds of experiences that will yield "encounters between strangers," which Tucker says prompt "empathetic-type imaginings" that support understanding of place.

"The tourism industry provides the mask to conceal the violence of this arrangement and naturalize its presence," says Kajihiro. "This valley might look beautiful, but it's stolen land littered with bombs... This hill we're crossing sits over the Navy's massive underground fuel tank complex that's leaking jet fuel near Honolulu's main source of drinking water."

Gonzalez asks travelers to visit with a mindset of allyship; rather than pleasure-seeking, might visitors also support people like Kajihiro and Keko'olani in making change—giving instead of taking? "I hope that [readers will] feel unsettled," says Gonzalez, "in a way that makes them create more space in their head in terms of their assumptions and anticipations of an encounter with this place might shift from how it has been so commonly framed."

Proceed mindfully

"Having a socioeconomic status that allows you to afford vacations is a rare privilege in the history of humanity, and with that privilege—with that freedom—there is an obligation to consider others who are less free to choose their own adventures," says philosopher Christopher Riendeau. He suggests considering whether one's activities "maximize the health, well-being, and freedom of the local people" before embarking.

Are we contributing to the reliance on tourism as a major source of economic sustainability? Do we see the local people primarily as instruments of our own relaxation? Or are we willing to do the work to support the causes, efforts, and have conversations about the history and experiences of those who inhabit the place we will visit only for a short time? If we respect their space by using their resources sparingly, living lightly on their land, and engaging with the people who live there in a conversational rather than in transactional mode, we become more equal partners in the mutual act of hospitality, i.e., giving back, as we take.

Riendeau uses Michael Pollan's ethos on food to provide a rule of thumb for cultivating a mindful life that includes travel: "Travel some, not too much, mostly on the ground, in a way that benefits locals and minimizes harm." Multinational corporations replicate the same experiences across cultures, flattening the reality of a place, but when Indigenous people and local inhabitants are directly involved in the decision-making around tourism, an equal exchange of knowledge and empathy can occur, resulting in the benefits touted in error as the universal effects of travel.

H.B.'s top travel experiences include accidentally crashing and being welcomed into a quinceañera at LOST-themed "Bharma" in Barcelona, literally getting lost among the half-hidden alleys of Venice and coming upon a small empty square festooned with residents' laundry blowing in the breeze like party flags, and using her high school French to work out a deal with a Paris hostel owner who spoke no English to accept random lady travelers in her 2-bed room so she could save on her bill as a 20-something solo traveler.



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Europe by Train: A Magical Way to Travel

All aboard! A taste of travel freedom.

By Laure Latham

Until I moved to the United Kingdom in 2012, I lived in places where it was easier to drive or fly from Point A to Point B rather than to look at alternatives by train; two-car households were the norm rather than multi-train-pass households. The truth was, I hated driving or flying everywhere. I wanted to enjoy the scenery, I wanted to know what was going on outside. My first taste of travel freedom was my decision to ditch cars and rely on public transport in London. That meant using buses, tubes, and, more importantly, trains.

Trains in Europe are the best way to travel anywhere, to take in the sights and culture without compromising on comfort. If you plan your trip well, it is cheaper to travel by train than by plane. If you want to reduce the stress related to airports or confusing road signs, trains are a breeze. If you like the idea of going to sleep on a train and waking up in another country for breakfast, you'll love the new golden age of sleeper trains.

While fully fleshing out all possible train travel journeys in Europe could take days, here are a few highlights that will get you excited about your future European trip.

Advantages of train travel in Europe

Everywhere in Europe, airports are located far from city centers and require forward planning to get to the airport, include luggage restrictions, and require extra time to go through immigration or customs. Trains, for the most part, remove all that pain and offer low-carbon and time-effective solutions.

The simplicity of train travel is definitely a major factor for many people who love traveling across Europe. Because train stations, and the bulk of rail infrastructure, were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they usually connect city centers and have remained very relevant in an age of convenience. You can literally take public transport or a short taxi ride to a station, show your ticket, and settle down to enjoy the scenery, without any of the stress related to plane travel.

Planning your train trip

To find the most convenient way to travel from Point A to Point B, or the cheapest, start by looking at [The Man in Seat 61](#), the online bible of train travel in Europe, run by train travel guru Mark Smith.

This website includes a travel planner and information on where to book train tickets, and it also offers suggestions that you may not have considered before, such as "Train and Sail" packages, where you can travel by train and ferry to your European destination. Mark Smith reviews trains all over Europe and beyond, providing pictures of carriages and meals on trains, features of sleeper cabins, and luggage rules for each carrier.

Most train trips can be booked directly on national rail websites for each country in Europe, where you will find the best fares and passes. However, if you'd rather use a platform that aggregates all timetables and fares across borders, [Trainline](#) is a user-friendly tool with which you can organize your family trip in one single app. Note that some country-specific deals are only available on national rail websites, so shop around before getting your tickets.

For amazing deals, [Eurail](#) passes allow unlimited travel on trains run by the national rail operators and various other private rail carriers in 33 European countries. On some trains, you can just hop on and show your pass. On other trains, mostly high-speed and long-distance, you need to pay a minimal booking fee for seat reservations. Eurail passes are particularly popular with students and backpackers because they are such a great value and make European travel easy from city centers.

Family-friendly features on European trains

Some trains in Europe also offer sweet perks for families:

- On Austrian regional trains, find the Family Zone, compartments where kids have room to play.
- On Swiss Federal Railways, all double-decker InterCity trains on long-distance routes include a Ticki Park family coach (jungle-themed play space).
- On Dutch Railways ICE International trains, look for the Kleinkindabteil, a compartment for families with tots aged 3 and younger.
- On Norwegian trains on the Bergen Line, enjoy a free playroom for children, with an adjoining area seating the whole family, and the guarantee that luggage,



strollers, and changing tables are within easy reach.

- On French trains, book an Espace Famille, a space reserved primarily for families, and if you want to travel light despite bulky luggage, book a Service Mes Bagages to have your luggage collected and delivered.
- On intercity trains across Finland, you can often find kids' play areas featuring libraries, slides, and child-size wooden toy trains to climb on, as well as safety gates to keep younger passengers contained.
- On train services in the Czech Republic, child-friendly compartments are designed for kids aged 6 and under and include toys, funny pictures, and screens with interactive games.

With family budgets in mind, most train operators in Europe offer free or half-price tickets to young children.

Sleeper trains in Europe

Before COVID, sleeper trains were mostly distant memories, having been scrapped decades ago for budget reasons and to make way for plane travel. Largely due to increased environmental awareness—and the reframing of slow overland journeys as enjoyable rather than endurable—Europe is seeing a welcome sleeper train revival with compartments worthy of design magazines.

United Kingdom

Fall asleep in London and wake up in the Scottish Highlands or in Cornwall. That's

the idea of the two sleeper train lines in the UK, the [Caledonian Sleeper](#) and the [Night Riviera Sleeper](#). On both lines, you can book seats or cabins (with beds and, sometimes, ensuite bathrooms), and enjoy the restaurant car before going to bed.

On the Caledonian Sleeper line, book connecting cabins for snuggling up by the window and reading bedtime stories with a hot chocolate. On the Night Riviera line, cabin guests can use railway station lounges and showers at Paddington, Penzance, and Truro, as well as eat a complimentary light breakfast on board. And remember, if all of this sounds like too much, just put the magazine down, close your eyes (or not) and just breathe.

Brussels to Prague

The brand new Brussels to Prague night train stops in Dresden and Berlin en route to Prague, as well as Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The service offers a variety of sleeper cabins, couchettes, and seat compartments. It is especially designed to connect off-the-beaten-path Europe by night, stopping in out-of-the-way destinations that aren't on your typical tourist map—look up Bad Schandau or Ústí nad Labem to get an idea. This company aims to add new sleeper train routes each year, so keep an eye out for their expanding network.

Austria

Austria's Nightjet is a sleeper train operator serving 25 European cities, connecting Austrian cities to Italy, Switzerland, and Croatia. In a nod to modern lifestyles, Nightjet accommodates special diets for its





Photo by Laure Latham

on-board meals by advance reservation. Families can also reserve couchette compartments to enjoy privacy and comfort on the train.

France

In France, the national railway company, SNCF, runs domestic overnight routes (Trains Intercités de Nuit) to and from Paris. Passengers can hop aboard in the City of Lights and wake up by the Mediterranean or even in the Alps, with popular destina-

around 11 hours—sometimes for less than the price of a restaurant dinner.

An option for a Berlin to Malmö, Sweden train journey is to take a sleeper train that only runs in the late spring and summer. The leg where the train ferry crosses the sea is between Sassnitz in Germany and Trelleborg in Sweden.

The Chocolate Train

[The Chocolate Train](#) unsurprisingly runs in Switzerland, between Montreux and the

train consists of stately “Belle Époque” Pullman 1915 vintage coaches on most of the trip. Other highlights include coffee and chocolate croissants after leaving Montreux, free admission to La Maison du Gruyère, and free admission to Cailler’s chocolate factory in Broc.

The Jacobite Steam Train

Also known as the Harry Potter train, the [Jacobite Steam Train](#) travels through the Scottish highlands from Fort William to Mallaig via the famous 21-arched Glenfinnan viaduct—famously featured in the Harry Potter movies—which overlooks Loch Shiel and the Glenfinnan Monument. It is very popular and requires advance booking.

In hindsight, my most memorable train rides have taken place in Scotland, enjoying the gorgeous Highlands scenery outside the window, and in Switzerland, hopping on small train lines that look like they were designed for a miniature mountain set. I also love that by taking the train, I can reduce the carbon footprint of a single trip by 90 percent—and walk to the dining coach for food and drinks. If you’re looking for something special for your budding engineers or train lovers, make sure to travel by train in Europe. You won’t regret it.

Laure writes on marathon swimming, healthy living, and adventure travel at Frog Mom ([frogmom.com](#)), and is the author of Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She is a writer and lives with her teenage girls in London. She swam the English Channel in 2023. You can find her on social media @frogmomblog.



Photo by Laure Latham

“If you’re looking for something special for your budding engineers or train lovers, make sure to travel by train in Europe. You won’t regret it.”

tions including Toulouse, Nice, and Bayonne. There are no sleeping cars with 1- and 2-bed compartments, but you can book a 4-berth compartment for sole, dual, or triple occupancy.

Special trains in Europe

Ferry trains

There are two routes left in Europe where trains get shunted onto ferries to travel by sea and resume on train tracks on the other side. The trip from Italy’s mainland to the island of Sicily is one of Europe’s best kept train secrets, with the train “boarding” the ferry at Villa San Giovanni on the mainland then off again at Messina in Sicily. The train will then take you all the way to Sicily’s capital in Palermo, which means that you can travel direct by train from as far as Rome to Palermo—a journey of

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Take Your Family to Camp

Camp Mather offers San Francisco families an escape from city life and an opportunity to re-engage with nature in a supportive community.

By Megan Bushnell

As Camp Mather prepares to celebrate its 100th season in operation, we are proud to republish this article, originally featured in the December 2016/January 2017 Inclusion issue. Details have been updated to reflect current camp policies.



Have you heard of Camp Mather? Soon after I moved to San Francisco, I started to hear mutterings about this mystical “family camp.” I was immediately intrigued because as a kid, I lived for summer camp. As a newly minted Californian and mom, I wanted to learn more: Could I really share my love of camp with my children years before sending them off to camps of their own? Does a place actually exist where I can sing campfire songs with other parents and kids and not worry about what we are going to eat for breakfast in the morning? Yet a part of me wondered if this so-called family camp was merely a vestige of a bygone era, a last holdout in the San Francisco hinterlands celebrating peace and love through drum circles. I decided to find out more.

Your chance to experience a little bit of history

It turns out that Camp Mather, located on a 337-acre site west of Yosemite National Park, originally housed laborers during the construction of the nearby O’Shaughnessy Dam. Reincarnated as a family camp, this beautiful wooded oasis in the middle of Stanislaus National Forest has hosted up to 1,500 families every summer since the 1920s. Generations have grown up attending Camp Mather, and its importance to the San Francisco community cannot be overstated. Regina Jenkins, GGMG mom of two, has attended Camp Mather both as a child and a parent. Attending Mather as a kid meant she had “relationships with other kids for [that] week unlike any I had at home. The freedom and independence of walking arm in arm with my new best friends was a feeling I’ll never forget.” She plans on taking her children back to experience the same summer magic whenever she can.



The camp is managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (SF Rec and Parks) and gives priority to residents of the city. From early June through roughly mid-August, families stay

Mather, this is the norm. As former GGMG mom Sonia Weiss put it, “You don’t have to worry about your kids the whole time you are there—it’s a safe environment to have fun every day in nature.” The family camp

“At home, city kids may not typically roam free unsupervised by adults; but at Mather, this is the norm.”

Sunday through Saturday in either tents or cabins and eat meals in a communal dining hall with expansive outdoor areas. The cost of a week’s stay in 2024 ranges from \$322 (campsite) to \$1,367 (six-person cabin), plus an additional \$312 per adult and \$181 per child for food. There is a pool, a lake, horse stables, a ropes course: all the trappings of your typical summer camp, but sized appropriately for adults, little ones, and everyone in between. Veteran campers tell me that anyone can stay at Camp Mather, but kids over 4 will be able to participate in most physical activities and handle the rough terrain.

The family that camps together, stays together

Perhaps the most important part of being at camp is the opportunity to unplug from the modern, high-tech San Francisco lifestyle while recharging a connection to the natural world. Camp cabins provide electric lights, creaky wooden dressers, cots, and mattresses. There is exactly one electrical outlet per cabin, and no Wi-Fi or cell service. At home, city kids may not typically roam free unsupervised by adults; but at

experience also enables and fosters friendships between families in a way that’s unique to the location. Those camp activities that keep the kids entertained (archery, swimming, canoeing) allow mom and dad to actually have adult conversation *with other adults*. Can you imagine? If



you can’t imagine that, perhaps it’s time to look a little more closely into this family camp idea. Moreover, no parent has to cook or clean up after any meal for six full days at Mather. Yes, you heard me: No cooking. No dishes. No meal planning. For six days.

But what will we eat?

You may be wondering how on Earth little Bobby will survive without organic granola and freshly squeezed pomegranate juice in his earthenware cup each morning. This is where camp mentality kicks in: it’s classic camp food, and one week of it won’t kill you. Sure, you may miss a few antioxidants, but think of the social benefits of having your entire family eat the same food that everyone else at the table is eating, at the same time. The concept of sharing meals and conversations with others is one many of us are unable to emphasize during our day-to-day existence in the real world. Besides, to dull the pain of forgoing typical foods from home, you can always bring your own alcohol.

Although communal dining is meant to be a simple, one-size-fits-all solution, Camp Mather is very accommodating to attendees with medically restricted diets or food allergies. Marni Rosen is a mom to twins, one of whom must follow a very strict diet that requires Rosen to bring food prepared at home wherever they go. She said the staff was extremely accommodating and

made “everything possible” so that her family’s experience was not hindered and they could also enjoy the communal eating concept.

Everyone sing “Kumbaya”

Everyone is welcome at Camp Mather every week, but during Inclusion Week, the camp provides additional programming and support for families with a child or other family members who are Deaf/ hard-of-hearing or have a disability. Trained staff members, including two Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists, were on hand during Rosen’s visit, to ensure the full camp experience was available to everyone. Thanks to this program, Rosen’s son was able to go on a canoe ride and participate in other camp activities which would have been impossible in almost any other setting. The camp’s American Sign Language (ASL) class gave her whole family an activity to do together that supplemented communication skills in which her (hearing but communication-challenged) son was gaining proficiency at home.

If you check the box on the Inclusion Week application to indicate that a member of your family is Deaf or has a disability, a specialist will check in with you once you are registered to offer a therapeutic recreation assessment and ensure that specific needs are met. In the weeks leading up to her first stay at Mather, Rosen admitted that she talked on the phone to her liaison “at least six or seven times,” during which she was able to discuss all the details about her son’s special diet and mobility challenges so that they were prepared for the week. During Inclusion Week, the staff plans special field trips (to the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, for instance), as well as special time-slots for activities like archery and the ropes course, that will accommodate family members who are Deaf or have disabilities.

The Inclusion Week staff are available at mealtimes to help parents who may have multiple children or special diets or equipment to manage. The staff also provide a “chill zone” by the lake every afternoon, with sensory and other activities available for children and youth to enjoy while parents soak up the sun, enjoy a swim, or read a book nearby. Finally, staff plan a family picnic to give everyone a chance to meet each other and socialize. Inclusion Week at Camp Mather will be celebrating its twelfth year this summer (they had to miss two years during the pandemic) while Camp Mather celebrates its 100th anniversary. A program that began with about a dozen inclusion-seeking families attending camp during Inclusion Week now consistently sees 40 to 45, constituting half of all the families attending during that particular week.

Though Rosen’s family hasn’t attended Inclusion Week for some time now, the two years in a row they did she was thrilled with the experience. Rosen says “the fact that Camp Mather even has an Inclusion Week makes it a special kind of place you can’t find



just anywhere.” The staff is always looking for feedback and suggestions to improve the experience. Lucas Tobin, Supervisor for Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion and ADA Coordinator at SF Rec and Parks, said that some of the most positive feedback regarding the week “is from the families who don’t have a [family] member with a disability, because they love the exposure their kids receive and the community it builds.” It is truly a special week to stay at Camp Mather.

Saving Camp Mather

In August of 2013, the catastrophic Rim Fire burned over 400 square miles in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Fire crews went to heroic efforts to save Camp Mather, ultimately using a risky but effective backfire to save it. Unfortunately, other nearby camps, including the City of Berkeley’s Tuolumne Family Camp, did not survive [editor’s note: Berkeley’s camp was rebuilt and reopened in the summer of 2023]. The fire has served as a reminder to friends and loyal attendees that Camp Mather is truly part of the wilderness, which is why it remains such a unique and precious gift to San Franciscans. Third-generation campers like Weiss’s kids will continue to spend a week at Camp Mather every year that the lottery allows them, and those of us who have yet to visit will surely join them soon.

So start filling out your application today—the lottery begins in December 2024.

Megan is a former marine biologist who spends her time trying to get two little girls to experience as much of the outdoors as possible. Her kids would LOVE Camp Mather. She should take them.

How to “win” the lottery

The application for Camp Mather, similar to many popular activities in San Francisco, appears overly complicated. This is where insider tips can make it less of a headache, since this is really about summer fun.

REGISTRATION

- You must have an active SF Rec and Parks account and pay an application fee to enter the lottery. Visit sfrecpark.org’s Camp Mather page for step-by-step instructions on how to fill out the lottery application.
- The application asks you to list everyone who will attend. You can make changes to this after you receive your assignment, and people can come for partial weeks.
- You cannot change the primary reservation person; that person must be there at check-in. You can change the other people on the reservation until 2 weeks before your check-in day.
- Remember: if you don’t get a reservation via the lottery system, you may still get one from the waitlist, so don’t give up hope!

CHANGING YOUR RESERVATION

- Email matherreservations@sfgov.org with the name, age, date of arrival, and date of departure for each guest that you are changing.
- Each time you make changes to your registration it incurs a fee (\$24 in 2024), whether you are making one change or many.

PRO TIPS

- Children under 2 years old don’t count towards the headcount in cabins or tents.
- You can select two cabin size choices (or a tent site) and three choices of weeks to attend. The more flexible you are—particularly if you can attend Week 1 in early June—the greater your opportunity to get a cabin through the lottery.
- The six-person cabins are least often requested, likely because they are the most expensive option; a tent site, which can accommodate up to six people, is the cheapest option.
- You can request a lakeside or dining-hall-side accommodation and SF Rec and Parks will try to accommodate (but can’t guarantee). The walk from the dining hall to the pool and lake is less than half a mile, and is very easily traversed using bikes/scooters.

GGMG
COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Homeless Prenatal Program
School Supply Drive

Coming in July, GGMG will be supporting a back-to-school gift drive with the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP), which provides services to moms experiencing housing and financial insecurity in San Francisco. You will be able to purchase school supplies, such as backpacks, for children of HPP’s clients as they get ready to return to school in the fall, or make a monetary donation.

Look out for more information, including the link to an Amazon wishlist through which you can purchase supplies, on the GGMG forum in the coming weeks. Please consider either purchasing specific supplies or making a cash donation. Any amount helps!

“HPP is a nationally-recognized family resource center in San Francisco that empowers homeless and low-income families, particularly mothers motivated by pregnancy and parenthood, to find within themselves the strength and confidence they need to transform their lives.” The agency serves over 3,500 low-income and homeless families annually, providing a variety of programs and services to help families become healthy, stable, and self-sufficient.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

The DEI Committee Needs Volunteers!

The mission of GGMG’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Committee is to build a safe and supportive atmosphere for all GGMG members through education and community outreach. We organize events and share resources that enhance equity and inclusion within the organization. **We are currently seeking a new Co-chair as well as Committee Members.**

Examples of Co-chair and Committee Member duties include:

- Write and/or edit articles for *GGMG Magazine* 6 times per year (every 2 months)
- Plan and execute webinars, including speaker outreach, that enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization. Past examples of themes have included: talking to your kids about race, land acknowledgement, and a spotlight on diverse kids entertainment.
- Coordinate and execute drives for non-profit organizations that bring awareness to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Represent the DEI Committee at GGMG events, such as Spring Fling and Fall Fest
- Additionally, for the Co-chair role only:
 - Serve as a liaison with the GGMG Board and Committees
 - Coordinate allocation of tasks among DEI Committee members
 - Recruit and onboard new DEI volunteers

Please contact us at diversity@gmg.org if you are interested in volunteering.

MEMBER SUPPORT

Member Support Is Seeking a New Co-chair!

The mission of the Member Support Committee is to change a member in need’s life for the better and create a sense of community amongst our members through support, drives, and special events. Member Support exists to provide assistance to our members experiencing challenging times or who are in crisis.

Examples of committee duties include:

- Coordinate meal delivery for members in need
- Coordinate and execute drives to benefit local nonprofits
- Manage the Member Resource List to share valuable resources with members, including crisis, abuse, and child therapy resources
- Proactively monitor the forums and manage requests for member support needs
- Organize events that meet the needs expressed by members, including CPR and self-defense classes

Please contact us at member.support@gmg.org if you are interested in volunteering.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Friends branch of the Partnerships Committee collaborates with local organizations and businesses to provide substantial discounts and resources for our members. We aim to develop mutually beneficial relationships with businesses in the Bay Area that provide useful services to mothers. Our goal is to work preferentially with small local businesses run by women and/or people of color in an effort to promote their professional advancements in our society.

The Partners branch of the Partnerships Committee manages our relationships with our large Partners including the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco (JCCSF) and UrbanSitter.

Committee duties in Friends:

- Input new offers by local businesses (Friends) looking to provide substantial (20 percent or more) discounts to GGMG members
- Maintain our relationships with our current Friends
- Seek out potential new Friends who provide services useful to our members
- Negotiate new business discounts
- Update members on new discounts

Committee duties in Partners:

- Maintain relationships with current Partners and seek out new Partners
- Negotiate new business discounts to expand the discount offerings for GGMG members
- Outreach for new Partners of interest with preference to small local businesses run by women and/or people of color

Open Roles:

- Committee Co-chair in Friends (1 hour per week)
- Committee Co-chair in Partnerships (1 to 2 hours per week)

To volunteer, email partnerships@gmg.org.

VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- Extra special extended benefits from our partners
- Professional development opportunities
- Membership fee reimbursement after one year of service

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Monthly Queer Family Hike

Join queer families for a walk/hike, which includes casually mingling/chatting, discussions on agreed-upon topics, and just sharing unique experiences and issues we have encountered as queer families. All queer families are welcome!

- Date:** First Saturday or Sunday of each month
Time: Typically 10 a.m. to noon
Place: TBD
Cost: Free for members
Contact: Email Dy Nguyen for details (dy.nguyen@gmail.com)

Moms Supper Club

Explore new restaurants in the city, enjoy dinner and drinks, and meet new moms in your community! Details for each venue will be announced through gmg.org.

- Date:** Quarterly on Thursdays
Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Place: TBD
Cost: \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members
Contact: Email Lydia Weiss for details (Weiss.lydiab@gmail.com)

Monthly Bernal/Glen Park Moms Night Out

Each month we will visit a different venue in our neighborhood, moms only! After kiddo bedtime, enjoy a drink and some appetizers with other mothers.

- Date:** The second Thursday of every month
Time: 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Place: TBD (different place each month)
Cost: Free for members

Monthly Moms Happy Hour

Join us for drinks and appetizers at a local restaurant to meet and connect with other moms in San Francisco. There will be a different venue in neighborhoods all around the city each month. Info will be announced two weeks before the event.

- Date:** The third Thursday of every month
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Place: TBD
Cost: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members
Contact: Text or email Jessie Lee for details (Leejessiesf@gmail.com) or 415.518.6402



Marina/Pac Heights/North Beach Monthly Moms Happy Hour

Drop in anytime for drinks and appetizers with other moms!

- Date:** First Thursday of every month
Time: 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Place: Wildseed, 2000 Union St.
Cost: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members

Sunset Stroller Walk for Mommies (and Babies!)

Calling all Sunset (and surrounding neighborhoods) mamas and babies! Would you like to meet neighborhood moms, grab a coffee, and enjoy a stroller walk together? We’re organizing this stroller walk for you! You’ll meet at Black Bird Bookstore + Cafe before you go for an hour or two of fresh air, light exercise, and great conversation!

- Date:** Second Friday of every month
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Location: Black Bird Bookstore + Cafe, 4541 Irving Street
Cost: Free for members
Contact: Email Jessica Meyers for details (jessnmeyers@gmail.com)

Register for events at gmg.org/calendar unless otherwise noted.

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The Road Too Traveled

By Vi Huynh-Dvorak

For me, taking family trips is like giving birth. After the pain and suffering is over, some form of mama amnesia takes hold, and not long after, I elect to repeat the process. As I logistically and emotionally prepare for a trip this summer, I reflect on trips past and wonder what the hell I'm doing, especially because we are road trip people. Long-distance hauls with small- and medium-sized children is a form of torture. When I think about my experience, I take on that faraway look in my eyes that's typically reserved for trauma.

We typically head to the Sawtooth Mountains in Idaho, but in the last couple of years, we've been heading to the Land of Enchantment, otherwise known as New Mexico. It's a 19-hour drive from San Francisco, with a night's rest. As we prepare for the long drive this summer, I will repeat a change I made last year, when I made the drive alone with my three kids. Instead of powering through, I added more days, more



their time limit just turned off.

Our hotel offered some peace. The base of Dove Mountain boasted serene mountain desert views and quiet. It was especially useful when my kids pointed out the injustice of one kid eking out an extra minute on their iPad after the time limit turned on. Because of all the vegetation, there was no echo, so their shouts were muffled by the ancient Saguaro and native plants of the Sonoran Desert.

On our last day, after a nine-hour haul, we made it to our destination. I found myself looking up legal ways to dose my kids. For a desperate second, I considered Benadryl, but stories of possible hyperactivity made me loathe to take a chance.

I turned a two-day drive into five and I did it with just me and three kids, our dog, and our guinea pig,

who refuses to die from old age. The kids fought like banshees and then quieted down whenever I employed a time-tested method: with the child locks on, I rolled down every window in the car, and suddenly everyone was engulfed in a windstorm. Sometimes I just rolled down one window, like the empty passenger side, and that mind-numbing Helmholtz resonance effect kicked in, stopping every kid mid-sentence.

I had moments when I seriously questioned travel altogether. *Will my kids really remember this or is it just an opportunity to beg for more screen time in a different time zone, national park, or place of interest?* Naturally I wondered what kids did before the advent of smart devices, but rather than guilt-trip myself over how things used to be or what wimps parents are nowadays, I leaned into the sheer media gluttony and embraced the relative peace.

Perhaps the best part for me of the long drive was the early mornings when everyone was sleepy and quiet. I sipped my coffee and watched as the sun rose in the distance. In those moments, I could reflect and tell myself once again: *it's not so bad.*

Vi lives in SF with her family, dog, and guinea pig. In her spare time, she sources banned books for her children, and collects rare houseplants. She is antisocial and strives to be ungovernable.

“Will my kids really remember this or is it just an opportunity to beg for more screen time in a different time zone, national park, or place of interest?”

stops and more rest. In doing so, the focus shifted from the destination to the journey. This sounds idyllic, like a platitude for growth and inner peace: “It’s the journey, not the destination.” I assure you that it’s not, but it does have its merits when I choose destinations with my wants and interests as opposed to a kid-centric one.

Last year, we detoured into the Yucca Valley in California. We made a trip at night to view the Milky Way inside the national forest. It was a sight to behold: the other-worldly shapes of the Yuccas cast against the dark blue, moonless night with the stars above. The experience was punctuated by my kids fighting over who saw more stars.

Our next stop—a seven-hour drive—was Tucson, Arizona. I had always wanted to see a Saguaro cactus and Tucson did not disappoint. My kids enjoyed a new fight in another national park and then got the privilege of ignoring the sights by burying their heads in their iPads, because it was noon and



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