

# A Beach



PHOTO: BEACHES RESORTS  
At the Key West Luxury Village at Beaches Turks & Caicos, crowd-pleasers include nine water slides, SurfStream simulator and Pirate Island Water Park. Oh, and the pool.



# Bonanza

FAMILY TRAVEL TO THE CARIBBEAN CAN BE HASSLE-FREE

*BY MELANIE REFFES*







Named for the initials of the resort, CeeBee Kids Club at Antigua's Curtain Bluff is rolling out the welcome mat with a roster of activities like shell-collecting lessons, Hobie Cat sails and an early buffet on the terrace.

**C**HOOSING the right resort for the entire family can be the vacation wild card. Although all offer beds for heads, only a handful make

sure the grown-ups don't need another holiday once they get home. Whether the kids are old enough to show off their new shoes or still learning how to tie their shoelaces, an increasing number of hotels are keeping kids amused with more than beach volleyball and video games.

If the kids are big enough to stay on one side or if Grandma and Grandpa are tagging along, ask for adjoining rooms. Make sure the resort has Wi-Fi for all the gizmos and devices that kids try to cram inside their backpacks and – as kids can be picky eaters – a variety of food options and big buffets.

## Beauty On The Beach

With three resorts on two islands – two in Jamaica and one in Turks & Caicos – Beaches dishes up the quintessential family vacation. From activities at the Kids Club to bartenders who pour late night shots for grown-ups, the all-inclusive resorts are among the family-friendliest in the Caribbean. With the recent addition of the Key West Luxury Village at Beaches Turks & Caicos, crowd-pleasers include nine water slides, SurfStream simulator that lets kids ride the waves and Pirate Island Water Park.

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“With partnerships such as Sesame Street, Kinect, Xbox and Scratch DJ Academy, kids can experience something new every day,” says Joel Ryan, group manager, entertainment. [www.beaches.com](http://www.beaches.com)

Brand new at the 304-room Sunset Beach Resort in Montego Bay, Oasis at Sunset is a 124-room hotel adjoining the bigger resort. Families have access to Club Mongoose, Waterpark and restaurants at the main resort although the Oasis has its own beach and Club Family rooms with bunk beds. [www.sunsetbeachresort.com](http://www.sunsetbeachresort.com)

In St. Maarten, 520-room Sonesta Maho Beach Resort is the biggest family playground on the Dutch side of the island. With tennis courts, water sports, pool, swim-up bar where Bartender Cheryl blends kid-friendly mocktails, Ocean Terrace buffet, Kids Camp and Just Us Kids program, days and nights are vacation-perfect for families.

“Kids love our scavenger hunts, water aerobics and especially making tie-dyed t-shirts,” says Nico Burgos, animator at the Kids Camp. “And their parents are thrilled with the Kids Camp where we watch the little ones during the day while the grown-

ups enjoy free time at the resort.”

[www.sonesta.com/mahobeach](http://www.sonesta.com/mahobeach)

Just south of the border between St. Martin and St. Maarten, Oyster Bay Beach offers airy suites that have adjoining rooms and kitchens, which the staff will stock with groceries prior to arrival. Facing Dawn Beach and with an infinity pool for grown-ups and a shallow one for kids, the resort offers gratis snorkeling equipment for exploring one of the most spectacular reefs on the island; Indulgence Spa for après swimming relaxation; and two restaurants including the informal Beau Beau's on Dawn Beach and the less informal Infinity serving Chef Sonia's delectable pasta creations.

“Families get our regal treatment,” says Ricardo Perez, general manager. “We pamper guests of all ages and welcome families of all sizes.”

[www.oysterbaybeachresort.com](http://www.oysterbaybeachresort.com)

For families who like animals (and what family doesn't?), Butterfly Farm in St. Martin is awesome with hundreds of the colourful critters flitting about under a tented net. For kids who ask a lot of questions, guides are on hand to explain how caterpillars turn into butterflies. For





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the best photos, arrive early when the butterflies are looking for food. Like kids, the butterflies are slightly less energetic later in the day. [www.thebutterflyfarm.com](http://www.thebutterflyfarm.com)

### Kid's Ahoy

On Aruba's marquee Palm Beach, Camp Hyatt Watapana at the 357-room Aruba Hyatt is a kaleidoscope of fun. “We teach the children Aruban history and Papiamentu, one of the official languages of the island,” says Clemencia-Gabay, staffer at Camp Watapana. “We also incorporate our ‘one happy island’ mindset with fun activities like water balloon tosses, water slide races, and designing t-shirt classes.” [aruba.hyatt.com/](http://aruba.hyatt.com/)

Resorts in St. Lucia are also jumping on the family-friendly bandwagon luring kids (and their parents) to the island with the iconic Piton Mountains. “Whether it's snorkeling, horseback riding, visiting the world's only drive-in volcano or bathing in the Sulphur Springs, there is no shortage of family-friendly activities,” says Tracey Warner-Arnold, deputy director, tourism.

At the all-inclusive St. James's Club Morgan Bay, kids can eat at four

restaurants, play at the kids' club and sign up for windsurfing and kayaking. “Little Picassos can get in on the action with jewelry making and sand crafts and when the sun sets, the fun continues with a disco and games so the parents can enjoy a date night,” says Janice Victorin, activities manager. [www.stjamesclubslucia.com](http://www.stjamesclubslucia.com)

### The Top-Shelf

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“Today, everyone travels with their children,” says Rob Sherman, managing director. “When we decided to open a kids club, I wanted it to offer our young parents a break during their vacation.” Flanked on both sides by the sea, 72-room resort is also adult-friendly with plenty of hammocks strung between the coconut palms. “Generations of kids have grown up here,” he adds. “We have so much to offer which is included in our rates, making the resort a great value for families.” [www.curtainbluff.com](http://www.curtainbluff.com)

Close to Bridgetown, Island Inn was built in 1804 as a storage facility for rum and today is part of the Historic Garrison area of Barbados. With 24 rooms, the quaint hotel is steps from Carlisle Bay Beach and ideal for families looking for an all-inclusive stay on the island. “The hotel has an intimate pool for children and with the Boardwalk Restaurant offering a menu with kids' favourites, we're a true Bajan experience,” says Peter Odle, chairman, Mango Bay Hotel Group. [islandinnbarbados.com](http://islandinnbarbados.com)

## Kid-Friendly Travelling Tips

- Find properties that offer parking and Wi-Fi for free.
- Bring a stroller with a detachable seat.
- Ask for a suite where you will have two rooms, often for the price of one.
- Saturday is the quietest travel day and best for travelling with a baby.
- Don't put essentials like wipes and diapers in checked luggage.
- Make the baby part of your trip. I took my first child with me on many trips for her first two years and even brought her to meetings. Most people love babies, so they will admire your courage in taking the baby.

(Courtesy: Bob Diener, co-founder [getaroom.com](http://getaroom.com))