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## 71pc of affluent parents opt to upgrade accommodations for family trips

Posted By *Sarah Jones* On November 21, 2016 @ 4:00 am In [Featured](#), [Industry sectors](#), [News](#), [Research](#), [Travel and hospitality](#) | [No Comments](#)

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[1]

Promotional image for Ritz-Carlton Dallas' Suite Sleep package

Affluent parents are increasingly bringing their children with them as they travel first class and stay at luxury properties, creating a growing need for kid-friendly amenities.

In a survey of individuals with incomes of at least \$100,000 conducted by Top Flight Family, 43 percent of respondents had stayed with their children at a five-star hotel or resort. Whether looking to foster togetherness or looking to give children an educational experience, parents see travel as a valuable opportunity for their kids.

"The luxury family traveler represents one of the fastest-growing segments within the luxury travel market," said Carmen Sognonvi, founder and publisher of Top Flight Family. "Affluent parents place a high value on travel, both emotionally and monetarily.

"Nearly 87 percent of affluent parents said they travel 'frequently' or 'occasionally' with their children," she said. "And affluent households are spending an average of \$23,000 per year on family travel. Compare that to the average American family, over half of which spend only \$1,000 to \$4,999 on family travel per year."

### **Bringing the kids**

Luxury travelers with children are not shy of spending some money for an experience. While almost half said they spend below \$1,000 per person, respondents on average reported spending \$1,500 per person for each trip.

For a family of four that travels the survey average of 4.1 times a year, this equals \$23,000 over the course of 12 months.



[2]

### *Affluent parents look for conveniences when traveling with children*

When traveling with kids, most parents opt for a hotel. Sixty percent said this was their preferred accommodation, compared to just 17 percent who opted for a vacation rental.

Lower on the list, 13.5 percent said they would stay with friends and family, while a mere 4.4 percent would book a timeshare and 3.5 percent would choose Airbnb as their preference.

"I was surprised to see how low Airbnb ranked among affluent families' preferred accommodation options, especially given its surging popularity among travelers in general," Ms. Sognonvi said.

"Affluent parents actually ranked it even lower in favorability than staying with friends and family.

"Airbnb does have great luxury properties, so I believe there's an opportunity for the firm to better showcase that inventory on its site," she said.

When traveling with extra guests, parents are most likely to splurge on an upgraded room layout, such as trading in a standard room for a suite. Suites top the list of preferred accommodation type with 49 percent opting for this room type.

"I was struck by the fact that affluent families overwhelmingly prefer suites to any other type of room option when staying at hotels and resorts," Ms. Sognonvi said. "Nearly half picked it as their favorite, over villas, standard guest rooms and adjoining guest rooms.

"When I travel with my own family, suites are my favorite option too. They allow me to put our kids to bed early on the living room pull-out couch, then close the bedroom door and stay up a bit later with my husband," she said. "But more often than not, when we go to book a suite online, it's hard to tell from the description whether the suite is a true one-bedroom, with a door that closes. We usually end up having to call the hotel to make sure. I'm sure other family travelers deal with this issue, too.

“There are a couple of opportunities here for luxury properties. First, they can more actively market their suites to luxury family travelers. Second—and this is a very simple fix—they can review the descriptions of their suites on their Web sites to make sure it’s clear whether there’s separation between the living and bedroom areas.”

Around a third of parents would pay for kids clubs at hotels, giving their children age-appropriate activities while giving the parents some downtime. Eighteen percent would opt for club-level access for their children, while 14 percent showed interest in childcare services while on-property.



[3]

*Image courtesy of Peninsula New York*

Even with parents looking for some time off, togetherness was the number one reason for traveling as a family. The services provided on properties and an escape from schedules gives families the chance to connect free from stresses.

Similarly, 20 percent said seeing long-distance relatives was their top reason for traveling with their kids.

Almost a quarter, 23 percent, listed the educational experiences accessible via travel as their top reason for traveling as a family. Further, 65 percent would be open to letting their child skip school for a trip, looking at journeys as a chance to bring to life what they learn in the classroom.

In a generational divide, Gen X parents are twice as likely as millennials to list seeing family as their top reason for trips, while millennials are twice as likely to view education as the number one reason to bring the kids.

Continuing the idea of teaching children to be more globally minded, vacations that offered activities and adventure were the top choice. This was followed by beach vacations, an option favored most by those with young children.



[4]

### *Four Seasons Seychelles' Wise Ocean program*

A parent's chosen destination is tied partly to their income.

Those who make at least \$400,000, are seven times more likely to travel with their children internationally than those with incomes of \$100,000-\$149,000. This wealthiest group among respondents took about one international trip with their children a year.

The likelihood of venturing outside their country of residence also increases as a child gets older.

### **Preparing properties**

A number of hotels have rolled out initiatives that center on family-friendly travel.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts' Le Meridien is reimagining play time to "redefine the future of family travel."

The brand has begun to roll out a number of kid-friendly initiatives across global locations that will connect children to culture, art and design. With family and multigenerational travel on the rise, hotels will need to implement far-ranging initiatives to ensure that the grandchildren, the grandparents and those in between are all satisfied ([see story](#) [5]).

Similarly, Four Seasons Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat in Côte d'Azur, France signaled the change of seasons with new family-friendly offerings.

The hotel positioned itself as a family getaway destination complete with a revamped Kids' Club and other activities that aimed to please the kids as much as they do mom and dad. Family travel is on the rise, and staying out in front of the trend will help Four Seasons gain a reputation as an ideal chain for families ([see story](#) [6]).

"As luxury properties design their children's programming, they should keep in mind that nearly a quarter of affluent parents said that they take trips primarily to enrich their children's education and development," Ms. Sognonvi said.



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