



Turn the page
to find out what
makes a great
multi-generational
beach vacation

PHOTOGRAPHY ROB AND JULIA CAMPBELL/STOCKSY UNITED

All Together Now

MORE CANADIANS ARE PLANNING TRIPS THAT INCLUDE
KIDS, GRANDPARENTS, AUNTS, UNCLES AND PACKS OF COUSINS.

IF THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN, HERE ARE FOUR DESTINATION IDEAS TO
GET YOU STARTED, ALONG WITH EXPERT ADVICE AND FIRST-HAND TIPS FROM WRITERS
WHO SET OFF WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY IN TOW—AND CAME BACK HAPPY. ➔

FOR

**SOME TIME
IN THE SUN**

Sayulita Mexico

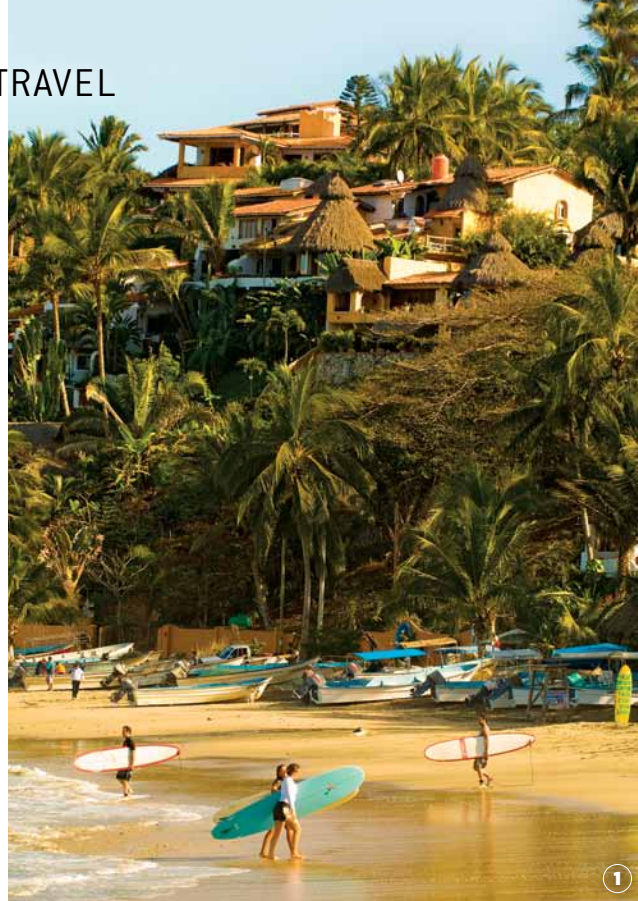
BY CLAIRE COOPER

WHAT WE DID

My family rented two neighbouring houses at the top of a steep hill in Sayulita, a beach town about an hour north of Puerto Vallarta. There were 15 of us—10 adults and five kids—ranging from five months to 71 years old.

We did a big grocery shop at the beginning of the week, with the plan to eat at home for breakfast and dinner, and leave lunch open to try the taco stands in town. We also rented kid gear from Baby Vallarta, like life jackets, a portable crib and pool toys, which were dropped off and picked up from our rental houses for about \$200 USD for the week.

During the day, we'd hang out on the beach, explore the town or shop at the craft market. There wasn't an expectation to do everything as a group, which allowed flexibility for naps and let people do age-restricted things like scuba diving or surf lessons.



1

WHAT WE LEARNED

Sayulita was a perfect choice for our range of ages and interests: it's very tourist friendly, with great beaches and food, and menus often included English translations, so it felt easy to navigate. When we looked at house rentals, a pool was our top must-have, along with a common area big enough so we could all hang out. The two we chose, which totalled about \$5,200 USD for the week, were less expensive than other rentals in

the area that we found online. What we didn't factor in was that the steep hill leading to our houses was a challenge for the oldest and youngest in our group. Still, we had a few options: heading out on foot, by cab or in the six-seat golf cart we'd rented for \$50 USD a day from a local company recommended by the home-rental agency.

Our housing choices were limited by our group size, which is why we ended up getting two. If we were to do it again, we'd try to find a place with laundry and a dishwasher.

3



2



1. A hillside house might have amazing views—but also lots of stairs. 2. Ask if your rental house has board games (lots do!) so you don't have to pack your own little pieces. 3. An easy-to-drive golf cart is a fun way to cruise around Sayulita's narrow streets.

Expert tip

For a beach trip during the high season, early January is a good bet. "Pricing is down just after New Year's, but hasn't gone up yet for reading week," says Heather Stewart, manager of group and corporate travel sales at CAA Travel Services in Ottawa. Many all-inclusive beach resorts have more availability in April and May. Above all, avoid holidays if you can.

PHOTOGRAPHY [BEACH] STEVE BLY/ALAMY; [GAME] COURTESY OF CLAIRE COOPER; [GOLF CART] MLADN61/GETTY IMAGES; [ZIPLINING] MIKE TAUBER/GETTY IMAGES; [CHAIRS] LEVENTE BODO/GETTY IMAGES; [COTTAGE, FAMILY ON DOCK] COURTESY OF KARAN SMITH; [HORSE] ROBERT MCGOUEY/ALAMY; [ANNE] PROVIDED BY SULLIVAN ENTERTAINMENT

**MORE
BEACHY
IDEAS**



Costa Rica often gets overlooked, Stewart says, but both the interior and the coast are great destinations with a range of rental homes, resorts and exciting activities.



Dominican Republic is a popular option with good prices, according to Stewart, and resorts in Punta Cana offer everything from bungalows to family rooms and suites.

FOR

THAT CANADIAN COTTAGE LIFE



1. We loved the big deck facing the lake; what you can't see are the steep stairs down to the water.
2. The cousins spent most of our stay on the dock.



Without motorboats, this lake was perfectly peaceful

Lac-Ste-Marie Quebec

BY KARAN SMITH

WHAT WE DID

We found a log cottage near Lac-Ste-Marie, Que., through a Facebook listing. My sister and nephew flew from British Columbia to Ottawa. Then we loaded up our car with coolers, car seats and swimming noodles, and drove the 90 minutes to the property. We got a bit of a deal—it cost less than \$1,000 for the week—but most rentals in the area run between \$1,000 and \$1,400.

We quickly settled in for a week of cottage life: sleeping in, spending hours on the dock, picking wildflowers in the fields

for the table and eating lunches together on a patio overlooking the lake.

Without a packed sightseeing to-do list, we found time to catch up, whether over drying dishes or vying to not go bankrupt in a game of Monopoly.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Cottage rentals are a natural fit for holidays with the whole family, and Lac-Ste-Marie is particularly nice because it's close to both Ottawa and Montreal. The area also has plenty of small towns full of independent shops,

roadside vegetable stalls and cheese producers.

Before renting, ask a lot of questions: is the lake safe for kids? Is it deep entry or shallow? It might seem obvious, but we've ended up at other cottages where the lakefront wasn't even suited to wading. With this rental, we didn't realize it was perched on a cliff with a zillion stairs down to the water. Luckily, our kids were old enough to manage the stairs and listen to rules about not going down to the water without an adult. And the lake itself was deep, clean and quiet—no motorized craft allowed.

Expert tip

"Find a location that will check off all the boxes for the family," says Ashley Clarke, a CAA Travel Planner in Oshawa, Ont. "Renting a house is always a great way to travel with your family. Any trip involving grandparents will be a memorable one, but also ask for their input and suggestions. You never know, they may surprise you with what they want to do."

MORE COTTAGE IDEAS



Alberta's **Banff** region—Canmore, Lake Louise and Jasper—has plenty to offer for every age and energy level, Clarke says, from horseback riding through the mountains to scenic road trips and high tea at the Fairmont hotels.



Consider a cottage in **Cavendish, P.E.I.**, for farm country, beaches, fishing villages and Anne of Green Gables history.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL

FOR

A TASTE OF EUROPE

Italy

BY KARAN SMITH

WHAT WE DID

It was more than just Nana—there were aunts, uncles, cousins, a great big brood reuniting at the family home. First, though, I snuck in a side trip to Venice and Rome with my husband and kids, because you don't have to do everything together.

Then all of us gathered in Calabria in southern Italy, where there was space for different plans. The kids and parents played at the beach, while the aunts and uncles chatted on the shaded patio with the matriarch, Bisnonna Pepina. Everyone met up again for great big meals of tomato penne, soppressata and homemade wine.

We stayed with family, but it's easy to find rental homes through companies such as Airbnb and to take the train between destinations by booking tickets through the ItaliaRail website. There are also plenty of tour companies offering itineraries to fit any age and activity level, like Adventures by Disney, which has week-long trips starting at about \$5,000 USD.



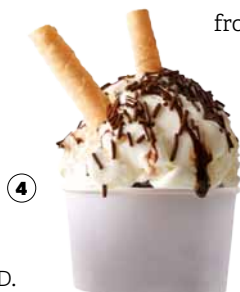
1. Older kids can swim at Calabria's Capo Vaticano. 2. Explore villages like Scilla, but know that the oldest and youngest might not want to climb every hill. 3. Even the cars can be a novelty in Europe. 4. Gelato is the ultimate kid-friendly Italian experience.



WHAT WE LEARNED

Italy is ideal for family travel even if you don't have relatives there. Its cuisine is crowd-pleasing, from antipasti and pizza to wine, and its history and culture are embedded in the landscape. So even if one member of your party gets bored at the Sistine Chapel (talking about you, my tween!), you still get a taste of Rome just crossing the sculpture-laden bridges or voting on which gelato shop to hit next.

Renting a car is helpful for rural retreats in Europe, but don't get talked into an upgrade. When we picked up ours from the Avis counter at the Calabria regional airport, we ended up with a station wagon that felt like driving a Hummer in the country's narrow streets and even smaller parking spots. If you need more room, it might be worth renting two smaller cars; ours was about \$350 for the week.



Expert tip

When planning a multi-generational trip to Europe, think about your family's collective dreams, but don't neglect the essentials, says Krisanne Butler, a CAA Travel Planner in Charlottetown, P.E.I. How many bathrooms does your group require? Any accessibility needs? "Concentrate on your basic needs, and make them part of the planning process to make sure your trip best suits your family," she says. And don't overplan. "Remember, it is a vacation."

PHOTOGRAPHY [BEACH] SLOW IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; [SCILLA] ELYA MARTSEVA/GETTY IMAGES; [KID AND CAR] COURTESY OF KARAN SMITH; [GELATO] DAVIZRO/GETTY IMAGES; [PARTHENON] MCCOOL/ALAMY; [QUEEN'S GUARD] ENVIRONMENTIC/GETTY IMAGES; [DISNEY] COURTESY OF DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC.; [HARRY POTTER] COLLECTION CHRISTOPHEL/ALAMY

MORE CULTURE-CENTRIC IDEAS



In **Greece**, consider Athens for its landmarks, and Crete or Rhodes for the food and beaches, Butler says.



The U.K. is wonderful for families seeking history and nature, especially London and the South West of England, with its green hills and high cliffs.

FOR

A BIG ATTRACTION



1

Disney World

BY LISA VAN DE GEYN

WHAT WE DID

Visiting the most magical place on earth requires a keen dedication to organization. I spent more time planning our trip to Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando than I spent planning my wedding. No detail was disregarded; no minute unaccounted for.

It started with accommodation. I had my heart set on Disney's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa, the most lavish of their on-site properties. But with eight of us—my family of four, including daughters aged seven and five, three grandparents and one aunt—a three-bedroom condo owned by a friend 10 minutes from the parks seemed like a more practical choice, especially for \$80 USD a night.

I rented two cars and sussed out the closest grocery store for breakfast items and snacks. In addition to reservations for dinner with the girls' favourite princesses at Epcot's Akershus Royal Banquet Hall and FastPasses (which let you visit popular rides at a specific time and wait in a shorter line), I arranged

two rounds for the golfers at the Palm course for about \$90 USD per person.

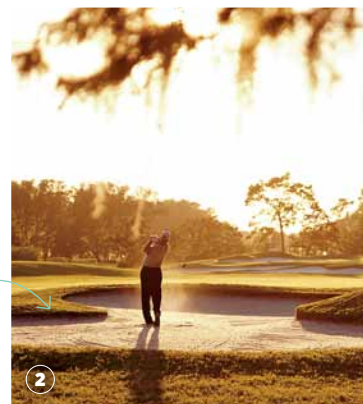
The focus of our Disney adventure was getting characters' autographs, and I made certain we all knew we'd be waiting an hour for Sleeping Beauty. We spent a full day at Disney's Hollywood Studios, two at Magic Kingdom and one at Epcot.

WHAT WE LEARNED

We had a limited budget, so it was a huge bonus when grandparents were willing to contribute financially. In our case, that meant picking up some meals, snacks, souvenirs from nearly every store we passed and Memory Maker, Disney's photo package, so everyone could be in the pictures.

Travelling with the grandparents helped with logistics, too. The kids' grandfather excelled at waiting in character lines while we darted to get drinks and use restrooms, and my mom jumped in—as I'd requested—when I was down to my last nerve with our little one.

1. Parents and grandparents might enjoy getting in touch with their inner princess. 2. If not, Disney World has an abundance of golf and shopping options.



2

Schedule tee times for a built-in break from the parks

Expert tips

"Disney lends itself really well to multi-generational travel, because there's something for everyone," says Tracey Guay, a CAA Travel Consultant in Thorold, Ont., who specializes in Disney trips. If someone in your group doesn't want to visit the theme parks, there's plenty more to get them in vacation mode, from golf courses and spas to a huge outdoor shopping area. The key is realistic expectations. "Decide what kind of trip you want. If your focus is getting character autographs, make sure everyone in the group understands that," she says.

And don't be afraid to split up. "Let the grandparents sit by the pool while you carry on at the park, then meet up for dinner," Guay adds. "It's nice to want to be together, but scheduling a little time apart is okay."

ANOTHER THEME-PARK IDEA



We didn't hit **Universal Orlando Resort** on this trip, but the mega-popular complex has several themed areas, including the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, that we'll definitely consider as the kids get old enough to imagine themselves at Hogwarts.

PLANNING MAKES PERFECT

CAA TRAVEL SERVICES' HEATHER STEWART ON
THE TOP FIVE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ANSWER BEFORE
BOOKING A MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRIP



CLAIRE COOPER

1

How big is your group?

At CAA Travel, we can put together a group trip of any size, but to get group pricing you typically need 10 adults. You may get a benefit such as free seat selection or a private group transfer at your destination with a group of more than 20. You can also get a resort bonus for a certain number of people, but that varies by resort.

2

Who's travelling?

We always start by getting a general idea of who will be travelling to make sure you get the right fit. We want to find out up front if there are any allergies, medical conditions or mobility issues—for example, if someone needs to be on ground level. Some countries do better with dietary restrictions, and many resort chains, such as Dreams and Hard Rock, are very good with allergies and have been for years.

We also ask questions to get an idea of where you've travelled and if you have particular interests like culinary or adventure activities.

3

When do you want to go?

For a group trip, we recommend booking eight to 10 months ahead of time, especially if you want the same flights. Cruises or sun packages could be booked as early as 14 months ahead, which might give you what's known as an early booking bonus—I've seen savings of almost \$400 per person for booking by a certain date.

There's also a better choice when you book in advance, especially if you want a particular room category at a resort or rooms in a block on a cruise ship.

4

Where do you want to stay?

There are more accommodation options than there used to be.

At CAA Travel, we can book in multiple systems with multiple wholesalers. We even have access to the Expedia agent site and the home rentals there.

In places like Florida, there are good options for both short and long stays, and lots of homes with multiple bedrooms. For a beach destination, some Zoëtry and Hard Rock resort locations offer villas with their own plunge pools or suites with dining areas and well-equipped mini-bars.

5

What's your budget?

We ask what you want to spend, the number of people going and what you want to see—and help you dream a little. It's important to figure out your must-haves and be prepared to compromise when necessary so the group can travel together.

But we always say no price is guaranteed until paid in full. Things can fluctuate right up until the moment you book. **CAA**