TRIP PLANNING GUIDE

14 FOR ’14

New adventures await in the new year. Pack our best suggestions on destinations — budget or luxury, for children or for art lovers — and our slate of useful tips, then get ready for the trip of your lifetime.
Adventures for the family

BY APRIL ORCUTT

Family travel creates a lifetime of memories for children, so we've searched the country for places and activities that are extra cool. Check websites or call for information, as prices and schedules can vary by age and season.

1 **Safari West**
   **Wildlife Preserve & African Tent Camp**
   Santa Rosa, Calif.
   A cheetah and a serval prowl the hills. Lemurs and monkeys watch from trees. Zebras, rhinoceroses, giraffes, wildly striped bongos and Barbary sheep graze in a field. Visiting this wildlife preserve is less expensive than going to Africa, with an opportunity to see many of the same animals in a natural setting 60 miles north of San Francisco. Cottages and luxury tent cabins give guests a chance to experience the preserve overnight. Be sure to look for the big-eared fennec fox, the cutest critter on the veldt.
   **Info:** www.safarwest.com

2 **Cave & Mine Adventures**
   **Vallecito, Calif.**
   Adventurous families with older children might want to explore beautiful California Cavern, Moaning Cavern or Black Chasm Cavern (a national natural landmark) 60 miles southeast of Sacramento. Visitors see stalactites, stalagmites and cave rooms filled with crystals. Some cave tours involve strolling on walkways and stairs, others require hiking, climbing on ladders, crawling through mud, sliding and slithering over, under and around massive boulders. The Middle Earth Expedition for those 16 and older covers a mile of walking through knee-deep sticky clay, squeezing and crawling through uneven terrain and rafting 70 feet across an underground lake. Claustrophobes can pan for semiprecious gems or ride a zip line in the fresh air on the Earth's surface.
   **Info:** www.caverna.com

3 **California Academy of Sciences**
   **San Francisco**
   A round-the-world trip in one location, with an African Hall with 20 African penguins, an aquarium with sea creatures (including clown fish) from the California coast to the Philippines' coral reefs, and a hot and humid four-story rain forest. The rain forest represents Madagascar, Borneo, Costa Rica and the Amazon River basin with 250 free-flying butterflies and birds, 100 tropical amphibians, and reptiles and exotic flowering plants. Walk up to the 4 1/2-acre Living Roof with 1.7 million native drought-tolerant plants, but to really get out there, watch a cosmic show in an all-digital planetarium.
   **Info:** www.calacademy.org

4 **Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite**
   **Fish Camp, Calif.**
   Counselors at the Kids Adventure Club lead their 5- to 12-year-old charges on outdoor activities that, depending on the season, may include sledding, ice skating, mountain biking, archery and scaling a 25-foot climbing wall. The evening Kids Camp includes movies, crafts, games and dinner. At the lodge, fami-
lies choose among horseback riding, hiking, playing in the arcade or swimming in indoor or outdoor pools. Families can drive 30 miles north to explore Yosemite National Park or two miles south to ride on the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad. Kids Camp and Club, $40-$50.

Info: www.tenayalodge.com

5 Children’s Museum of Indianapolis

Kids love dinosaurs, and Leonardo, a rare mummified dinosaur, makes its debut in the Dinosphere on March 8. Ninety-percent of this brachiosaurus’ 2-ton body is fossilized soft tissue, and X-rays have offered clues to its internal organs and last meal. The Dinosphere is a former cinedome with a ceiling where the “day” changes at the rate of one hour per minute; colorful “sunrises” and “sunsets” happen about every half hour, with thunderstorms and other dramatic weather in between.

Info: www.childrens museum.org

6 Trilogy Excursions

Lahaina, Maui

Kids can learn to snorkel in the shallow tide pools of Hulopoe Bay Marine Sanctuary on the south side of Lanai. The full-day Discover Lanai tour includes sailing on a 55- or 64-foot catamaran to the island (with the possibility of seeing dolphins or even whales from December to April), snorkeling instructions and use of equipment and a guided snorkel tour. Snorkelers and swimmers might see a porpoise, bright yellow tang, turquoise parrotfish, striped convict tang or the state fish, the humuhumunukunukuapuaa, which is much fun to see as well. Families can also play beach volleyball, take a tour of the Lanai Culture & Heritage Center or mosey along a nature trail, such as one that goes to a view site for offshore Pu’u Pehe, or Sweetheart Rock.

Info: www.sailtrilogy.com

7 National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame

Fort Worth

Designed to honor women “whose lives exemplify the courage, resilience and independence that helped shape the American West,” the museum celebrates, among others, former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor; painter Georgia O’Keeffe; sharpshooter Annie Oakley and even the plucky animated cowgirl Jessie from “Toy Story 2.” The grabber for kids is the bronco ride. They sit on a toned-down training bull while a video camera rolls. The footage then is sped up and mixed with old rodeo footage to create the illusion that the visitor is a rodeo champ.

Info: www.cowgirl.net

8 Rancho de los Caballeros

Wickenburg, Ariz.

The guest ranch has plenty of activities for families, such as swimming in the 60-foot-long pool, exploring local ghost towns and hiking and horseback riding in the Sonoran Desert. The ranch also provides scheduled activities for kids while their parents play golf or relax at the spa. Kids can learn to ride horses or play tennis, go on scavenger hunts or have fun with tie-dye. They might even take a guided hike around the ranch to look for bunnies, lizards and tarantulas.

Info: www.ranchodelos caballeros.com

9 Canyonlands Ballooning

Moab, Utah

In the cool of the early morning, a maximum of 14 guests float over stunning red-rock landscapes in or near Arches and Canyonlands national parks. The pilot points out geologic formations eroded by wind and water and tells humorous stories about the early days of ballooning. Sometimes the balloon scoots close to the ground in Mill Canyon so kids can grab leaves off the cottonwood trees. Other times it drifts over the Marching Men or Tower Arch or Uranium Arch on Courthouse Plateau. Passengers might see bobcats, foxes, coyotes, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope or even a rare mountain lion. At eye level, even a red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon or golden or bald eagle might be sighted.

Info: www.canyonlands ballooning.com

10 Rosa Parks Museum

Montgomery, Ala.

The Cleveland Avenue Time Machine in the Children’s Wing appears to be a typical 1955 Montgomery city bus. However, it has no tires, looks as if it’s being held aloft by soft purple light and low fog, and is “driven” by a robot named Mr. Rivets. During the 20-minute journey on the bus, passengers time-travel through strange and colorful lighting patterns and look out large windows to “meet” Harriet Tubman, Dred Scott and Homer Plessy. As the bus “drives” to the 20th century, passengers see those who worked to end discrimination and segregation.

Info: www.bit.ly/KLjIy

11 Paws for Adventures

Fairbanks, Alaska
Start 'em easy with a 20- to 60-minute sled-dog ride behind friendly Alaskan huskies who are used to people and being petted. Children older than 12 might enjoy mushing school for three days of training on groomed trails; winter-hardy families with older kids may enjoy overnight sled-dog trips, which can be customized.

**Info:** [www.pawsforadventure.com](http://www.pawsforadventure.com)

### 14 Schaffer's High Sierra Camp
**Sattley, Calif.**

Except for one long summer weekend when it offers a family camp, Schaffer's overnight summer camps are for kids only. Activities include hiking, backpacking, white-water rafting, rappelling, ropes courses, archery, drama, improvisation and dance, such as tap, jazz or hip-hop. The camp is 10 to 15 miles from a dozen Sierra lakes for guided excursions for swimming and kayaking, but the emphasis is on trying new things and making friends.

**Info:** [www.highsierracamp.com](http://www.highsierracamp.com)

**travel@latimes.com**

### 13 Woodward at Copper
**Copper Mountain, Colo.**

During the summer, daring parents can join their teens and tweens in learning tricks and jumps at this facility for developing ski, snowboard, skateboard, BMX bike or mountain-biking skills. Participants start indoors on trampolines, then move to specially developed skis and boards on wheels that simulate the feeling of being on snow. Finally, they end up outdoors on "park-and-pipe" real-snow runs. Are you ready, parents?

**Info:** [www.woodwardatcopper.com](http://www.woodwardatcopper.com)

### 12 Captain Memo's Original Pirate Cruise
**Clearwater Beach, Fla.**

Prepare for two hours of high-energy activity on the 70-foot-long, three-masted Pirate's Ransom as it sails the Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf of Mexico. Crew "pirates" tell tales about high-seas high jinks while they paint wispy mustaches and tiny goatees on little faces. Between water-gun battles and playing musical chairs, little buccaneers watch for bottlenose dolphins and hunt for treasure — "gold" coins hidden on the ship's deck. Older privates may prefer on-deck dancing to rock 'n' roll, country or the blues.

**Info:** [www.captainmemo.com](http://www.captainmemo.com)

**travel@latimes.com**

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**THE DINOSPHERE** at Children's Museum of Indianapolis is a former cinedome.