

Tips on Making Family Vacations Educational

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Family vacations are a time to un-wind, “disconnect” and have fun with your family. They are also wonderful opportunities for learning. Whether your summer plans take you an hour from home or to another continent, travel can be a springboard for learning new skills. Every destination has distinct traits to draw upon – a foreign language, local customs, landmarks or a unique natural setting. Here are some ideas to make your summer vacation a meaningful learning experience.

If you are traveling to a foreign country have your child keep track of foreign exchange rates. Mentally converting the cost of lunch from dollars to another currency is great multiplication and division practice.

Put your child in charge of planning routes and reading maps. Factoring in time, distance and modes of transportation add to the complexity of this skill.

Have your child keep a travelogue, writing a descriptive review of the day’s activities.

Ask your child to manage part of the family budget. Keeping a ledger of how much the family spends on gas on a road trip is a good review of subtraction and decimal skills.

Have your child read a novel that relates to where you are traveling. Their reading experience will be enhanced by relating the story to your surroundings. Ask your child to make comparisons between the author’s descriptions and experiences and his or her own. This will promote comprehension and inferential-thinking skills.

Bring along a travel guide that includes information about the landscape and natural setting of your destination. Make your child the family ‘naturalist’ and have him teach you one important fact each day about the indigenous ecology, including plants and animals.

Keeping an art journal is a meaningful way for your child to visually capture a day’s adventure or site. Have your child caption his or her drawing with a phrase or sentence.

Add a little history by bringing along a novel that is set in the location you are visiting, but in a different time period. Make this a family reading experience by either reading aloud during downtime or an audiobook during car travel. This will promote fun family discussions while teaching your child about the city or country you are visiting during a different time in history.