



a fun escape

For a getaway that's sure to please, visit a luxury resort with a soft spot for kids.

Longing for a luxury vacation but don't want to leave your toddler behind? We have good news: Some exclusive resorts, known for their pampering prowess, have begun directing their focus specifically toward families. La Costa, the 400-acre hotel facility near San Diego, California, best known for its opulent tennis and golf facilities and renowned spa, is among them. Having recently undergone a \$140-million renovation, La Costa has embraced a new goal: to bring families together.

Imagine arriving at this plush resort in the coastal city of Carlsbad, California, to see your tot beam with delight as she is greeted with a VIP check-in, complete with face-painting, balloon animals and a welcome goody bag. Before heading to your lavish accommodations, strategically placed for a tranquil view of the verdant golf courses and gardens, you pick up a Nintendo Game Boy on loan for your little one to play with.

You head to your deluxe one- or two-bedroom suite, complete with a 42-inch flat-screen television and the DVD player you requested, so your tot can enjoy her favorite shows as you keep an eye on her from a sumptuous soaking tub in the ample bathroom. Or, even better: You settle into one of La Costa's new Villas, featuring one, two or three bedrooms, living and dining areas and a full-service kitchen.

Beyond room service, moms and dads can find a respite from cooking at the resort's two restaurants and six other eateries. Most offer the SunPower Kids menu, with choices ranging from veggie burgers to rice/chicken/veggie bowls. Classics like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and macaroni and cheese are featured, too. Well-suited for tiny taste buds is the longtime favorite and recently renovated Legends Bistro, where guests can linger over vistas of the lake and South Golf Course while indulging in California cuisine. Families dining on the Legends Patio may be prompted to romp on the golf course afterward. Another option, the BlueFire Grill, offers up regional, coastal cuisine in a hip, Southern California Mission-style setting. On weekend nights, live music on BlueFire's outdoor patio will inspire folks of all ages to boogie under the stars. For food on the fly, The Marketplace

sells salads, deli sandwiches and TCBY Yogurt, or guests can grab a bite at the outdoor Splash Poolside Bar & Café or the Spa Café. To catch the latest sports competitions or animal shows on TV, play a game of Go Fish or just enjoy a cozy family night by the fireplace, visit The Club Lounge.

Making the most of Southern California's climate, La Costa supplies a variety of activities for all ages. Opportunities for water fun abound via seven heated outdoor pools. The resort's new Splash Landing features three pools and an interactive water play area. Two water slides there are for big kids (over 48 inches tall), but a third lets little ones (36 inches and up) get in on the action. For more formalized aquatic activity, 30-minute private and semi-private swim lessons are available at the Resort Pool.

On dry land, 17 tennis courts, along with clinics and lessons, let parents work on serves and volleys, while a twice-weekly Tennis Tots program initiates 4- to 8-year-olds to the sport. Families can take golf lessons together at the La Costa Golf Academy, then test their new skills on the resort's two 18-hole courses, at the driving range or in practice bunkers.

But the pièce de résistance in the eyes of the younger set is Kidtopia, a supervised children's program for kids 6 months to 12 years old. Kidtopia boasts an indoor



tree house, an electronic dance/game floor and a 600-gallon saltwater reef tank. A separate infant/toddler room is equipped with cribs, high chairs and age-appropriate toys. Themed days bring out children's inner pirates, cavemen and astronauts. Kidtopia runs daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Reservations are required; certain capacities apply. Children under 3 who are not

bathroom-independent are limited to a two-hour maximum stay per day. Older kids can enroll for full (\$80) or half (\$45) days, or \$16 per hour. Kidtopia After Dark, which consists of arcade games, pizza and a movie, is offered seasonally on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. to children 3 and up for \$55 per night.

Other regular kid-friendly La Costa events include bingo games, scavenger hunts, and "Radical Reptile" and "Mad Science" shows. Arts and crafts seminars, including ceramics, tie-dye and Stuff & Fluff Animal Workshops, and nutrition, sandwich-making or cookie-making classes will enrich you and your little ones. On summer evenings, take in a film under the stars: Dive-In Movies, shown outdoors by the pool, come complete with popcorn and other snacks for purchase, as another day of family fun draws to a close.

To learn more, call (800) 854-5000 or visit lacosta.com. ●

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more tot-friendly **GETAWAYS**

CHESAPEAKE BAY » **The Tides Inn**

Located on a peninsula overlooking Carters Creek, The Tides Inn has been a popular family river getaway for more than 61 years. Surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers, the Virginia resort provides built-in fun such as sailing and fishing. The Crab Net Kids program entertains 4- to 12-year-olds with crabbing, sand sculpting, swimming and nature exploration, and themed days such as Wacky Water Wars and Captain Hook's Revenge. Also available: golf, tennis, cycling, bird watching and croquet. Families can take sailing lessons or make their way downriver on paddleboats, canoes and kayaks. » **Call (804) 438-5000 or visit tidesinn.com.**

NEW MEXICO DESERT » **Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa**

Located on a Native American reservation, the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, teaches families about Pueblo and New Mexican culture through the Srai-Wi ("My Children") program. Classes teach how to make everything from pottery and drums to bread and adobe bricks. For children ages 3 to 12, Camp Tamaya is a supervised program of games and arts and crafts with a Native American bent. The whole family can enjoy golf, tennis, swimming and yoga, and for the adventurous, hot air ballooning, horseback riding and nature walks are available. Nighttime calls for desert-sky stargazing or Saturday tribal dances. » **Call (505) 867-1234 or visit tamaya.hyatt.com.**

VERMONT COUNTRYSIDE » **The Tyler Place Family Resort**

Situated on 165 wooded acres on the shores of Lake Champlain, The Tyler Place Family Resort in Highgate Springs, Vermont, has been hosting families for 75 years from late May to early September. Hayrides, scavenger hunts, capture-the-flag and horseshoe games hark back to days gone by. The surrounds are just right for picnicking, and tots will love the tree fort, pirate ship and garden just for them. Even better are children's programs geared to nine different age groups, including infants. » **Call (802) 868-4000 or visit tylerplace.com.**