



living history

Enrich your toddler's life experience with a step back in time to a bygone era.

In the midst of our fast-paced, computer-driven, cell phone lifestyles, it's important to slow down and enjoy simpler moments with our little ones. A vacation with your toddler is an opportunity to enjoy quality time with him and share the luxury of a slower pace. In that spirit, we'd like to suggest exposing your tot to the vestiges of a simpler time with an escape to historical Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, where you can explore 18th-century streets among ladies in period gowns and gentlemen wearing tri-cornered hats and buckled shoes.

The restored capital of Colonial Virginia is open to visitors 365 days a year (hours of operation vary by season) and for scheduled evening programs. The city offers 88 original buildings and 500 reconstructed buildings to visit, so plan to stay several days. Try to work in daytrips to two nearby sites that make up Virginia's Historic Triangle, Jamestown and Yorktown.

You can even sleep in a bit of history at one of the town's 26 lodging facilities, ranging from a traditional inn-like stay in a tavern to a more private historic house with modern-day touches like a refrigerator and room service. Close by, too, is

Great Wolf Lodge, an all-suites, indoor water-park resort geared toward families.

Your first stop should be to the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. Schedules of events can be procured here, including where to catch reenactments featuring historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry. To indulge the kids in a little dress-up, rent period costumes for toddlers as well as older children: Girls can don 18th-century lawn dresses with mobcaps and boys can get decked out in white shirts,

haversacks and hats. Missives from E. Woodruff for girls and Richard Dawson for boys offer a bit of direction to parents looking for kid-friendly activities under the guise of tasks the children can complete during their stay.

Although shuttles run throughout the 301-acre Historic Area, most families prefer to see the sights on foot. Venture forth from the Visitor Center across a bridge, where the 18th century suddenly erupts. At the Great Hopes Plantation, a pit fire in a field ringed by split-rail fencing lures those looking to warm their hands. Little ones will be drawn to the oxen and sheep that

linger in the area, which are more than happy to pose for photos.

At the entrance to the town, you'll spot the Governor's Palace standing majestically at the top of the square. Fashioned after the original structure built in 1722, the mansion served as a residence to seven of Virginia's royal governors and two state governors. Farther down the green is the Wythe House. Children will be fascinated by the outhouses, which give new value to the concept of flushing.

Besides the details within the buildings, toddlers will be enchanted by looming trees with roots to balance upon.

Fancy chickens with feathery feet strut and peck the ground in front of the house. In the front parlor, flutists play tunes from the era at scheduled times during the day, and kids are welcome to accompany the music with their latest dance moves.

Horses and carriages hitched at the end of the square mark the Greenhow Store, next to which is the Greenhow Lumber House, where families can book a carriage ride. Adjacent is the Colonial Nursery, one of the stops requested by the letters the children receive with their costumes. Per the letters' instructions, kids can get their hands dirty planting vegetable seeds. Across the way from one another are the James Gedy House and the



Guardhouse, both places that children are sent via their letters from Woodruff and Dawson. Parents and children alike are schooled in the genteel at the Gedy House. Another place to perfect curtsies is at the Milliners. Movements of another sort are practiced at 11:30 a.m. (except on Sundays), when there is a short military drill at the Guardhouse.

Besides the details within the buildings, toddlers will be enchanted by looming trees with roots to balance upon, or stocks and pillory that provide photo ops with mom, dad and baby dolls alike. A nearby field stands ready to host a snack break or an impromptu game of tag. Those who love a march should plan

a visit on a Saturday between Presidents Day and New Year's Eve to catch the Fifes and Drums on parade.

At lunchtime in four dining taverns in the Historic Area, families can dine on kid- and adult-friendly fare. At Chowning's, diners spill out into the backyard to sit at picnic tables shaded by grapevine-laden arbors, where outdoor voices are welcome. Bellies full, head over to the Post Office as directed by Woodruff and Dawson. Procure letters there, then deliver them to the Printing Office, where vital information contained within them will make it into the next edition of the *Virginia Gazette*.

Next, go watch the blacksmith fan embers with bellows and hammer horseshoes into shape. Check out the herbs and potions at the Apothecary Shop on Duke of Gloucester Street. Seeing the tools used for medical treatments

making history

» **Oconaluftee Indian Village** Visitors are transported to 1750 while visiting the authentic Oconaluftee Indian Village, located in the mountains of Cherokee, North Carolina. Also in the area are the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, the stage production of *Unto These Hills* and the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual cooperative. Particularly special is Cherokee language immersion daycare for children ages 6 months to 3 years. For more information: (866) 554-4557, cherokee-nc.com.

» **Plimoth Plantation** A visit to Plymouth, Massachusetts, via 1627 may lead to declarations of "Plymouth rocks!" At the Wampanoag Homesite, guests learn how the arrival of the pilgrims impacted these indigenous people. On the grounds a few miles away, a full-scale replica of the vessel that started it all, *The Mayflower II*, is on display. Flash forward seven years from the *Mayflower's* landing with a visit to the 1627 English Village to watch the pilgrims of yesteryear go about their daily lives. For more information: (508) 746-1622, plimoth.org.



in colonial times doesn't seem to deter big brothers and sisters from requesting that a loose tooth be extracted on the spot with an archaic set of tongs.

At the eastern end of Duke of Gloucester Street, you will find the Public Gaol, Gunsmith and Capitol buildings. The Capitol has been reconstructed to look like its 1701 predecessor, the place where Virginia legislators declared their independence from England prior to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Also in the area is The Benjamin Powell House (open six days a week during summer months and holidays), where parents and children can participate in 18th-century activities such as gardening, food preparation, quoits (ring toss), pick-up sticks, checkers and top-spinning. As visitors leave the house, they'll see a ladder atop the house next door that might spawn speculation as to whether those particular colonists hoped to touch the moon. (The ladders were actually for fire safety.)

Three art museums in Colonial Williamsburg are well-suited for families: the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum and Bassett Hall. Myriad programs and hands-on activities geared toward children give all ages a new perspective on the art they're viewing. Also in store are age-appropriate art activities that correspond with works on display.

Evening programs keep the revelry going with walking tours and performances such as the Grand Medley of Entertainment, an 18th-century variety show with dancing, magic and comedy. And when the day's excitement comes to an end, families head to their period homes for the night. The moon teases from the sky, seemingly within reach of rooftop ladders. During the holiday season, cheery candles twinkle from the city's dormer windows, bidding ye all a good night.

For more information about Colonial Williamsburg, call (800) HISTORY or visit history.org. ●

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