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canoe_family
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spring free!

As a parent of a toddler, you may be enjoying your last years of vacation-scheduling freedom before you begin squeezing family trips into school breaks. So, take advantage of your tot's freedom and get away with him this spring. Even if older children already have you planning around school days, you can still take a green-season holiday by booking a trip over spring break. We suggest providing fun for your child while treating yourself to a welcome respite at a tranquil

yet entertaining spot like the Sunriver Resort in Central Oregon.

It's not uncommon to catch sight of a doe and her fawns out for a stroll on the way to Sunriver, located 15 miles south of the city of Bend along the banks of the Deschutes River at the foot of the Cascade Mountains. At the resort, you'll find kids testing their training wheels on bike trails, squealing in the wading pool and building sand volcanoes in the play yard to emulate those found in the nearby mountains.

get with the program

At this 3,800-acre family resort, events for spring include kite flying and Easter egg hunts. Warmer months bring concerts and fireworks, and winter unleashes holiday caroling, gingerbread-house decorating, teddy-bear teas and elf tuck-ins.

Whatever the season, targeted fun awaits 3- to 10-year-olds at Fort Funnigan. Highlights of this center's 3,400-square-foot fenced yard include a teepee, and the indoor play area sports a mini climbing wall. Arts and crafts and science projects keep little hands busy; theme days herald everything from pirates to wizards. Special activities include clown school and field trips to the stables, marina, and nature center on-site and to the Fall River Fish Hatchery. Day and evening sessions can include lunch and dinner and run year-round on Fridays and Saturdays. Spring break, like most holidays, has an extended schedule. In summer, Fort Funnigan is in full swing six days a week, and 3- to 5-year-olds can also participate in Sunriver Adventure Camp's Guppy Camp, held at Fort Rock Park. Even infants can get in on the fun in the Deschutes Public

Immerse yourself and your toddler in seasonal fun with a trip to this Oregon river resort.

Library's Baby Steps and Preschool Story Time programs.

The Outpost is a gathering place for families. To pique the interest of older siblings, it houses an arcade and sessions for making everything from pottery and birdhouses to candles and personalized T-shirts. Toddlers will vie for time at The Bear Factory™, where they can stuff and dress their own plush toys and in other activities designed just for kids under age 3.

sport support

Sports facilities are abundant. Three pool complexes on the main property provide for lots of water fun: The Lodge Pool area has a wading pool for tots; the North Pool plays host to swimming classes; and the South Pool complex has a 50-foot water slide for adults and older children.

Guests age 5 and up can take tennis lessons on the resort's many indoor and outdoor courts. Parents can introduce older toddlers and school-age siblings to golf at a family-style nine-hole course, (one of four courses on the property), where child-friendly holes range from 60 to 185 yards in length.

for budding explorers

The Bike Barn keeps guests supplied with wheels for pedaling along the 35 miles of

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bikes on the bridge_CMYK
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bike paths through meadows, mountains and wetlands. Another way to ride is on horseback from the resort stables. Children over age 6 can saddle up for lessons or 30- or 60-minute rides, while 2- to 6-year-olds can go on Shetland pony rides. Hay wagon, carriage and (in winter) sleigh rides let families bask in equestrian togetherness.

For views from the water, set off with your crew from the marina up the Deschutes River by canoe, kayak or raft. The current will carry you lazily along a six-mile stretch, at the end of which a shuttle will transport you back. River fishing and paddleboard lessons are also available for all ages.

observation options

At Sunriver Nature Center and Observatory, little ones learn about native plants and animals via hands-on exhibits and classes for ages 4 to 10. Tots can enjoy nature talks and walks in botanical gardens and wetlands, and visit the observatory for daytime solar viewing and night moon- and stargazing.

Another way to take in the stars on summer evenings is from one of the resort's golf courses. Picnic blankets unfurl for concerts; kids can get their faces painted and do arts and crafts. Also at night on the fairways are challenges with Frisbees and golf and Bocce balls that glow-in-the-dark. The South Pool often comes alive at night as well. When dusk falls, it's not the water slide that calls to youngsters, but the promise of watching "Dive-in Movies" while afloat in the swimming pool-turned-theater.

» around the bend ...

Sunriver Resort may seem like a town in itself, but if you have the opportunity to explore nearby attractions in Bend, Oregon, your kids will love these.

With its extensive indoor and outdoor exhibits, Bend's High Desert Museum introduces visitors to both a bit of living history and the wildlife of the High Desert. A working homestead and sawmill display how life proceeded day to day in the 19th century; a stagecoach and shepherd's wagon represent modes of transportation from years past. Children will love meeting high-desert animal inhabitants from otters and porcupines to wild bobcats and golden eagles. Kid-specific exhibits let young ones crawl in a mock spider web and zip down a rock slide. Treasure hunts, crafts, puppets and storytelling inspire tots as well. For more information, call (541) 382-4754 or visit highdesertmuseum.org.

Devoted entirely to kids, Working Wonders Children's Museum is located in Bend's Old Mill District. Interactive, hands-on exhibits like Kidville allow youngsters to run a town the way they see fit, and in Kidstruction they can build a town to their standards. The Passports exhibit showcases different cultures, while MindStein's Lab and Kaleidoscope Corner let little ones tap into their scientific and artistic sides. The Pitter Patter area is designed with infants and toddlers in mind. For details, call (541) 389-4500 or visit workingwonders.org.

family rooms

The Sunriver Resort is so large it's more like a small town, but transportation inside is easy via shuttle. A plethora of accommodation choices offer casual luxury. Families wanting to be in the thick of the action can stay in Lodge Village, walking distance of the resort's main lodge and other activity sites. These 250 guestrooms and suites boast warm northwestern décor, wood-burning fireplaces, mini fridges and balconies or patios with views of the Cascade Mountains that let in the fragrance of surrounding pines. The lodge suites' continental kitchens are perfect for supplying toddlers' small, frequent meals. In one of the 33 River Lodges beside the river, kids can watch ducklings take their morning swim and hear the rhythmic croaking of frogs at night.

Another option for families are more than 400 furnished rental homes and condominiums. Along with fully equipped kitchens, these have home entertainment systems, fireplaces and gas barbecues. New to the resort, the 400-acre Caldera Springs community, a couple of miles from the main property, proffers luxurious three-bedroom custom cabin rentals. The opulent accommodations come with access to the Caldera Springs Lake House, Quarry Pool and Fitness Center. If you opt to reside here during your stay, you can don swimwear and explore the pool's intriguing "caves" and waterfall with your tot.

dining out

Kid-friendly menus for tykes under age 5 are available at all of the resort's restaurants. Burgers and sandwiches can be found at McDivott's at The Woodlands. Dine on Pacific Northwest cuisine at Meadows at the Lodge, where indoor and outdoor seating offer prime views of Meadows Golf Course and surrounding mountains. Reserve seats for the Sunday buffet, when your tot can dine with the resort's mascot, Spike the porcupine.

Downstairs, the casual Merchant Trader serves deli sandwiches and salads. In the evenings, the patio near the fire pits is the place to gather to watch the sunset.

Featuring fine dining on regional fare, the Grill at Crosswater offers picturesque views, and nearby, at Caldera Springs, Zeppo Bistro serves pizza and panini by the lake.

After a day of adventure, a delicious meal and a night bright with stars, families bid goodnight to the Oregon moon and nestle into their rooms. Moms and dads tuck little ones into bed with a goodnight kiss and plenty of fodder for sweet dreams. ●

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Los Angeles-based travel writer **Bekah Wright** hopes one day to kayak the Deschutes with her 2-month-old twin niece and nephew.