

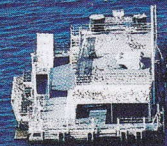
BUDGET

Family holidays.

AWAY

WE

GO



BUCKET-LIST HOLIDAYS FOR EVERYONE

The world is your oyster: Planning a trip with the kids may involve a lot of work but the pay-offs – incredible experiences, wonderful memories and seeing your littlies eyes grow wider in wonder with each adventure – makes it all worth it. Read on to discover Debbie Elkind's recommended spots to hit, close to home and abroad.

Family holidays are the stuff childhood memories are made of and, with a little planning, they're awesome for adults, too. What makes your family holiday bliss will depend on your clan's likes and dislikes, and what's needed to keep everyone happy. For some, it's unstructured time swimming and making sandcastles at the beach. For others, an all-inclusive cruise or resort, which has childcare and takes care of the cleaning and cooking, makes for a dreamy vacation.

Draw up a list of your family's happy place essentials – be it activities for little kids, free Wi-Fi or personal space for teens – and make sure where you stay ticks the big boxes.

That old travel adage about packing half as much stuff and double the money is rarely wrong. So start with a budget and work backwards when planning. Be sure to factor in expenses such as petrol, taxis and tips, and add 10 per cent for contingencies.

Other things that help: make use of review sites for the most up-to-date information; pick the right weather season for your desired location; make sure you have any visas and immunisations you need if heading overseas; and book direct flights when possible.

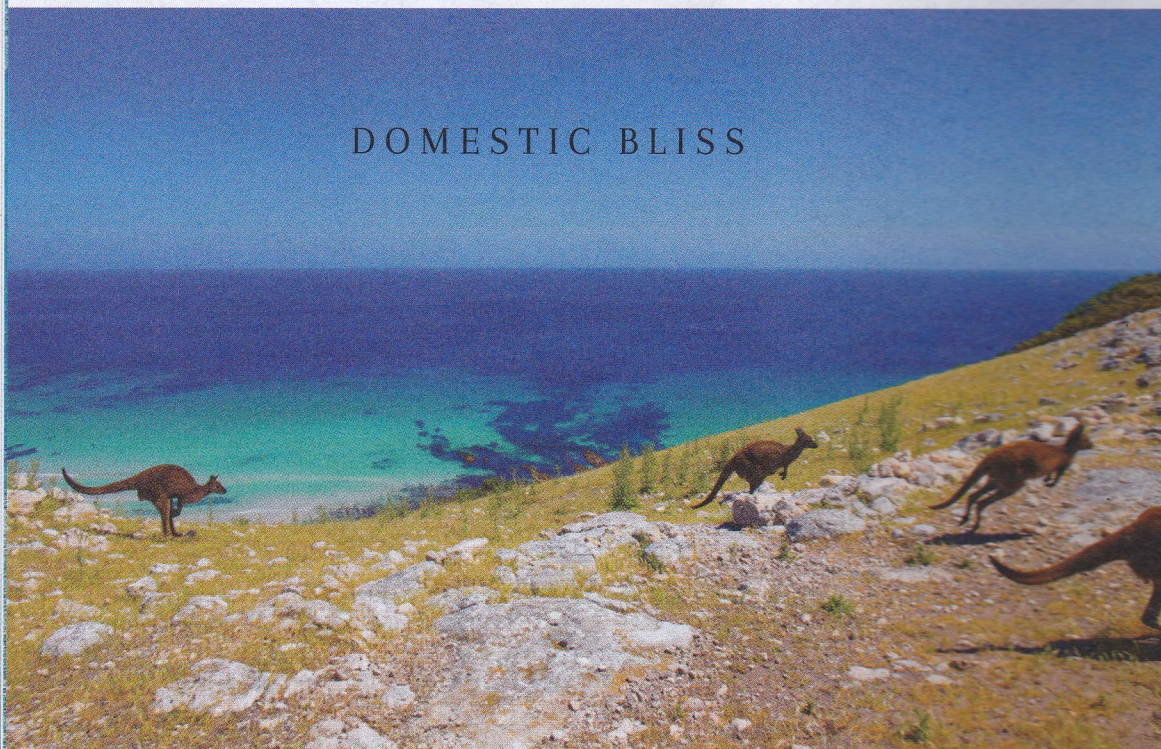
The following are some fabulous options, from the tried and true – like Fiji and the Gold Coast – to those you may not have considered, such as Sri Lanka. Then get ready to pack a sunny smile and leave your cares behind.



BUDGET

Family holidays

DOMESTIC BLISS



KANGAROO ISLAND, SA

The Galapagos of Australia, Kangaroo Island is a wildlife paradise just a short flight from Adelaide or ferry ride from Cape Jervis, which is also renowned for its exceptional produce and wineries. Learn how the early settlers lived, book a farm-stay or go quad biking. There's a huge range of accommodation on the island, from hotels and resorts to caravan parks and campsites. Visit Tourism Kangaroo Island's website for more details (tourkangarooisland.com.au).

GOLD COAST, QLD The glitzy Gold Coast has it all – beaches, rainforest, zillions of

playgrounds and parks. It's also the theme park capital of Australia, home to Sea World, Dreamworld, WhiteWater World, Warner Bros. Movie World and Wet'n'Wild – that's just for starters. Get the kids out of the theme parks and into nature-based adventures such as the David Fleay Wildlife Park, glowworm spotting in Springbrook National Park, or braving the adrenaline-pumping Tamborine Rainforest Skywalk or Thunderbird Park. Visit the Destination Gold Coast website (destinationgoldcoast.com), which offers lots of great tips, including advice from locals and some current deals on

accommodation, dining and entertainment.

CABLE BEACH, BROOME, WA

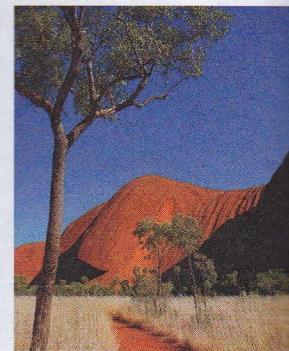
For a guaranteed holiday highlight, take the family camel riding along Cable Beach's famous stretch of white sands, red-ochre cliffs and turquoise waters. Or go four-wheel driving or fishing, or learn about the local pearling history. Research your trip with Tourism Western Australia's website (westernaustralia.com). There are plenty of hotels, apartments and resorts in the area for all budgets. For a little luxury, try Cable Beach Club (cablebeachclub.com) or Cocos Beach Bungalows (cocosbeachbungalows.com).

ULURU, NT It's one of those bucket-list experiences all Australians should have at some point in their lives, and what better way is there to teach the kids about our indigenous history and culture? You'll most likely base yourself in Alice Springs, where you should visit the Alice Springs Desert Park

(alicespringsdesertpark.com.au). The versatile Ayers Rock Resort (ayersrockresort.com.au) offers a variety of accommodation options just 20km from Uluru to suit all budgets, from the lavish Sails in the Desert to the Ayers Rock Campground.

DAYLESFORD AND THE MACEDON RANGES, VIC

What's wonderful about this charming region is that there's plenty to make all ages happy. Get lost in the Maze House (mazehouse.com.au), ride a restored vintage train from Daylesford Station (dscr.com.au), stroll through lavender fields at Lavandula Farm (lavandula.com.au), or enjoy the many lakes, campsites and walking trails in the area. For more details, see Visit Victoria (visitvictoria.com) and Daylesford Delights (daylesforddelights.com). Grown-ups should try to sneak away for pampering or a meal at one of the many excellent local spas and restaurants, including the renowned Lake House (lakehouse.com.au).

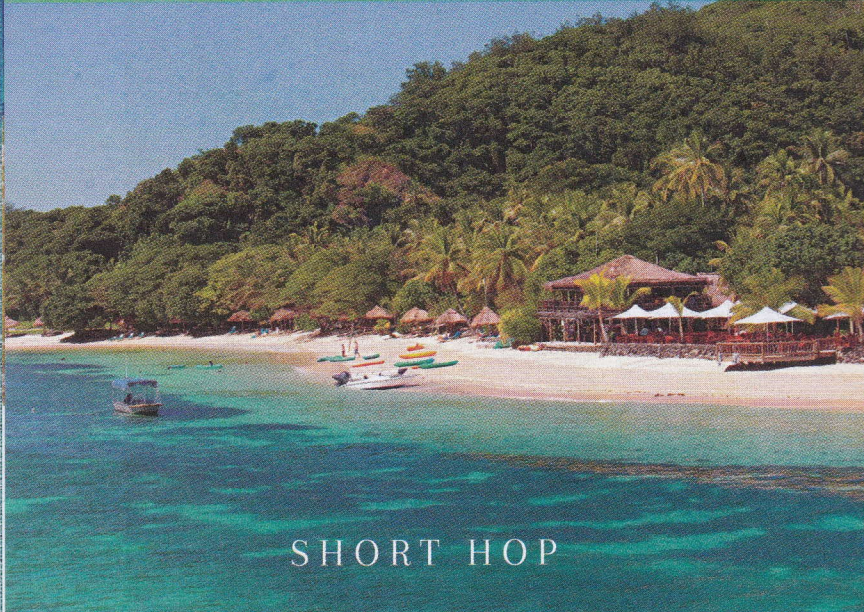


An aerial photograph of a river flowing through a deep, rocky canyon. The river is a vibrant turquoise color, and a small red raft is visible in the middle of the frame, moving downstream. The canyon walls are steep and covered with dense green forest, with some yellow-leaved trees scattered throughout. The overall scene is one of natural beauty and adventure.

SHORT HOP

QUEENSTOWN AND WANAKA, NEW ZEALAND

Jump across the Tasman for a ski/snowboarding adventure. It's easy to find cheap fares to New Zealand these days; try Jetstar (jetstar.com.au) or search Skyscanner (skyscanner.com.au) or Webjet (webjet.com.au). The major ski fields are located near Wanaka (Treble Cone), and Queenstown (The Remarkables and Coronet Peak), or in-between (Cardrona). All have kids' clubs where children can learn to ski or snowboard, as well as fully licensed early childcare centres where you can drop off the under-fives. Take a squiz at Ski New Zealand (skinewzealand.co.nz).



SHORT HOP

NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA

A short flight from Australia (just three hours from Sydney; eight from Perth), New Caledonia combines seductive French culture with the idyllic scenery of the South Pacific and there are lots of family-friendly resorts. Search New Caledonia Travel Connection (newcaledoniatravel.com.au) or New Caledonia Voyages (ncvoyages.com.au) for family packages and check out New Caledonia Tourism (newcaledonia.travel/au).

FIJI It's a popular family destination for a reason – safe, easy, affordable, with friendly nannies on hand and all-inclusive resorts that make budgeting a no-brainer. There are countless resorts, from basic budget places with *bure* style accommodation to lavish five-star hotels. Some good options include Mantaray Island Resort (mantarayisland.com), Castaway Island, Fiji (castawayfiji.com), Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort (outrigger.com) and the Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort (fjiresort.com). The major resorts usually have excellent kids' clubs where you can leave the littlies to enjoy games and activities while you indulge in a beach massage.

JET SET



SRI LANKA Sri Lanka is well and truly open to tourism again and fast becoming an international hot spot. No wonder, with its beautiful beaches, astonishing wildlife, ancient temples, spa resorts and tea plantations. There are many family-friendly, affordable resorts. Some of the fancier ones with kids' clubs include the Anantara Kalutara Resort (kalutara.anantara.com), Centara Ceysands Resort & Spa (centarahotelsresorts.com) and the Shangri La Hambantota Resort & Spa (shangri-la.com/hambantota). Visit Sri Lanka Tourism (srilanka.travel) and try Experience Travel Group (experiencetravelgroup.com) or Exotic Lanka Holidays (exoticlankaholidays.com.au) for packages and tours.

CANADA While the US is a popular holiday destination for Australians, Canada can be better value and is an outdoor wonderland of spectacular scenery, wildlife and ski holidays, as well as vibrant French-accented city life. Go white-water rafting, have a rail adventure through the Canadian Rockies, or take a polar bear tour. Fresh Tracks Canada (freshtrackscanada.com) can help you plan and book. Air Canada has daily direct flights to Vancouver from Brisbane and Sydney, while Qantas flies direct to Vancouver from Sydney in summer and winter. You can also find flights to the eastern provinces by way of Auckland and Los Angeles through various airlines.

PACKAGE DEALS

Hoot Holidays

(hootholidays.com.au) Find hotel and resort package deals across Asia, the South Pacific and North America, plus destination guides.

Traveller's Choice

(travellerschoice.com.au) Get help planning your holiday from professional travel agents.

Discover Australia

(discoveraustralia.com.au) Packages and discounts on flights, accommodation and cruises across Australia.

Last Minute (lastminute.com.au); Wotif (wotif.com.au)

are the sites to visit if you've left it a little late and need to find a hotel, package deal or cheap fares fast.

BUDGET

Family holidays



JET SET

JAPAN

Japan is incredibly easy to travel in – it's clean, efficient and friendly, and the Shinkansen bullet trains will whisk you across the country in the time it takes to say *arigato*. There are mind-blowing big cities, ancient temples, hot spring mountain towns and islands that are home to rainforests, volcanos and feline populations that outnumber the humans. Japan also has many theme parks, including Tokyo Disneyland, Sanrio Puroland (meet Hello Kitty!), Legoland and Nikko Edomura, a history theme park that re-creates 17th-century Edo-era Japan. Try Inside Japan Tours (insidejapantours.com) for planning advice and group tours. If you intend to travel around by train, be sure to buy your Japan Rail Pass (jrailpass.com) before you leave Australia.