

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



VELAS RESORTS

WHEN PARENTS ARE SINGLED OUT

BY LAURIE WILSON | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Sounds crazy, but if you travel without a significant other—as a solo traveler or single parent—chances are you’ll be paying for that adult companion who isn’t along for the journey.

Tours, cruises, and some all-inclusive resorts typically tack on a significant supplement fee if you don’t have a plus-one—a surcharge that can be as much as 100 percent of the rate. And, this applies to single parents, as well as one parent traveling with the kids without the other parent, or even a doting aunt who travels with a young niece.

Why? Most hotel rooms and cruise ship staterooms are built under the assumption that at least two adults will occupy them, so the supplement is tacked on to compensate for losses incurred. And, many tour operators base their prices on double occupancy, too.

There are signs, though, that things are changing. “Over the past year or so, more tour operators have begun to waive the single supplement fee—not just for families, but also for solo travelers,” says Amanda Norcross, senior editor at TripAdvisor’s family travel site Family Vacation Critic (www.familyvacationcritic.com). “The trend has been somewhat slow to catch on, but we absolutely think it will continue.” Still, she says, supplements are the norm throughout the travel industry.

Here are some cool solo parent getaway ideas that don’t include a single supplement.

Velas Resorts

This all-inclusive resort chain with several properties

throughout Mexico now waives the single supplement fee for single parents year-round (it used to do so only until mid-December). Amenities and services include things like a dedicated baby concierge, mini mariachi classes, Spanish lessons and a Teen Lounge. Rates vary depending on the resort; book the single parent promotion at the Velas Vallarta in Puerto Vallarta, for example, and the cost is \$167 for the adult and \$72 for a child/\$95 per teen, per night. Rates apply for up to two children staying in the same suite as the parent, and there is a three-night minimum. www.velasresorts.com

Intrepid Travel

Specializing in small group adventure escapes in 120 countries, this travel company is bent on accommodating the growing number of solo travelers, including families, says Michael Edwards, managing director for Europe and North America.

“It’s hard to ignore the growing trend in single-parent travel, especially in direct relation to the large growth in solo-parent households in North America,” says Edwards.

Last year, Intrepid unveiled six small-group tours designed exclusively for solo parents and their children to travel with other single parent families. These Solo Parent Family Vacations were created by Intrepid’s family product manager, a single mother, who had noted a significant increase in single parent bookings on the company’s Family Holidays program (including tours in Thailand and other far-flung spots). “Since launching the single-parent range of adventures, we’ve seen a fair split in

bookings from single moms and dads,” says Edwards.

The company does not charge a single supplement for any of these journeys, and kids 17 and younger get a 10 percent discount. Rates for the popular eight-day Egypt Family Holiday for Solo Parents, for example, begin at \$1,345 per adult and \$1,211 per child (not including air). www.intrepidtravel.com

Discover Corps

If a single parent is traveling with a child on a tour with Discover and they are sharing a room together, they are not required to pay a single supplement fee and, on average, a child’s price is 14 percent less than an adult.

Trips range from \$1,995 per person for volunteer-heavy vacations to \$4,995 for more educational and luxury vacays like an African safari and include most in-country activities and meals and services (air not included). The popular Sea Turtle Initiative in Costa Rica costs \$3,295 for adults and \$2,895 for children (16 years of age and younger) for three nights in coastal lodging near a local conservancy and four nights at a three-star hotel.

Founder Andrew Motiwalla says family travel bookings for parents with kids ages 8 to 14 years old are especially popular. “As a single parent, I appreciate waiving the single room supplement not only for the cost savings, but because it recognizes my reality,” says Motiwalla. www.discovercorps.com

Laurie Wilson can be reached at laurieheather@yahoo.com.

Velas Resorts offers painting classes for children.

HERE

GRAPE STOMP KICKS OFF WINEMAKING SEASON

Roll up your pants and get ready to stomp some grapes at the fourth annual White Mountains Crush Festival in Lincoln, N.H. (Oct. 25-27) The roster of events—including educational workshops, wine tastings, and an “I Love Lucy”-style grape stomping—takes place at the Seven Birches Winery located at the RiverWalk Resort at Loon Mountain. A la carte and combo ticket prices are available, as well as three lodging packages with choice of adding on the grape stomp, wine dinner, picnic, and more. Included with the stomp ticket is a “Crushed-It” Seven Birches T-shirt. Kids under the age of 10 stomp for free. Hotel packages from \$143 per person per night; \$45 for each additional attendee. 603-745-7550, sevenbirches.com/white-mountains-crush-festival.

FINE ARTS SHOW RETURNS TO CYCLORAMA

Calling all art aficionados! The 23rd annual Boston International Fine Art Show is returning to the historic 1884 Cyclorama building at the Boston Center for the Arts. (Oct. 24-27) Within the stunning domed structure, select galleries will offer historic, modern, and contemporary fine art for sale, as well as jewelry, silver, oriental rugs, and antiques. New this year: a special section of the show, “EMERGE,” will be dedicated to individual emerging and mid-career artists from New England. Additional special programs include panel discussion with interior designers; presentation on valuing art



by Peter Hastings Falk; book launch by Eve M. Kahn; and more. Enjoy VIP treatment at the Thursday evening Gala Preview, the kickoff event featuring fine cuisine and wine, live jazz by the Lihi Haruvi Quartet, and first choice of works on view. Gala tickets \$75-\$250; weekend show and sale \$15. 617-363-0405, www.fineartboston.com.

FESTIVAL CELEBRATES MAINE CUISINE

So much yummy food. So little time. Food lovers will want to make a bee-line to Maine for this year’s Harvest on the Harbor, a four-day festival celebrating Portland’s culinary culture. (Oct. 17-20) The opening night Chef + Farmer Harvest Dinner, spotlighting nine restaurants, features stationary and passed hors d’oeuvres, seated three-course meal, dessert spread, and live music as a benefit for an organization working to end childhood hunger. Other weekend events include lobster chef luncheon, craft spirits tasting, Bloody Mary brunch

(with roast pig tacos!), Oysterfest with shellfish from dozens of growers, and a market finale where you can shop, sip, and snack the best of Maine’s food and drink offerings. Tickets \$25-\$165. harvestontheharbor.com.

THERE

FALL DEAL AIDS HURRICANE VICTIMS Tourism is the backbone of the Bahamas, and Breezes Resort & Spa is offering steeply discounted deals that help provide aid to those impacted by



Hurricane Dorian on Abaco and Grand Bahama islands. In addition to housing evacuees, the resort has been working with community churches and charities to aid those who have lost their homes. Located on the powder white sands of legendary Cable Beach in Nassau, an area of minimal storm impact, Breezes’ “Fall Sale” offers visitors up to 53 percent room discounts, with rates as low as \$140 per night. The deal includes all meals, drinks, land/water sports (including rock wall climbing, tennis, beach volleyball, kayaking, and windsurfing), daily activities, and nightly entertainment. Additionally, guests can enjoy three freshwater pools, indulge in massages and treatments at the à la carte Blue Mahoe Spa, or lounge in private beachside cabanas with waiter service. Travelers must be 14 years or older. Book until Oct. 31 for select travel dates through Dec. 18. 877-273-3937, www.breezes.com/fall-sale-2019.html

FIVE-STAR AERIE DEBUTS IN CHINA

Those heading to China for work or play can stay in style at the Rosewood Guangzhou, the ultra-luxury brand’s second urban outpost in mainland China. Situated in the heart of the city’s cosmopolitan Tianhe District, within the 108-story CTF Hotel Center, the five-star hotel features 251 residentially designed guestrooms and suites including four duplex suites. Additional services and amenities include 355 fully ser-

vised residencies for long-term stays; seven distinct dining concepts; China’s highest sky bar (on 107th floor); state-of-the-art fitness facility with elegant indoor pool; and Sense, a Rosewood Spa offering modern techniques and traditional Chinese remedies. Rates from \$364/night includes breakfast for two. +86-20-8852-8888, www.rosewoodhotels.com/en/guangzhou.

EVERYWHERE

FLOATING PLATFORM KEEPS COOLERS HIGH AND DRY

SmithH2O, designers of inflatable products such as the popular floating SmithFly Shoal Tent, are debuting a new item, the SmithFly Cooler Caddy. The rigid inflatable body provides a sturdy platform for any cooler, and four cupholders ensure you’re never without a beverage while out on the water. Weighing in at less than 10 pounds, the Cooler Caddy is easy to stow with your gear when packing for any kind of boating excursions. Fits a 35-quart cooler. Includes a one-year manufacturer’s warranty and 30-day satisfaction guarantee. \$299. www.smithh2o.com/product-page/cooler-caddy.

KARI BODNARCHUK

