

parenting

EARLY YEARS

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that are really no biggie

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we've got solutions

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why you rock, how to take a day off, and over \$21,000 in giveaways!

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by Laura Sullivan

go away, girlfriends!

You're swaddled in a robe, lounging with your pals, fruity beverage in hand, watching the sun set over a pool. No, this isn't a dream, ended by the wallop of your kid throwing himself on you. It's your next vacation. Here's how you can make it reality:

set the date It'll never happen if you don't! Strategically pick a downtime with your partner, taking his schedule into account, and he'll be less likely to balk later. A long weekend is a good choice, so you won't worry about whether the homework's getting done or who's picking her up from preschool. But lower midweek rates may justify the trouble of working out those details. Whatever time frame you settle on, consider making the trip a

tradition, so it becomes an annual question of *where* you're going, not *if*.

sort out finances The earlier you plan, the more money you'll be able to save. Or target Mother's Day, your birthday, or Christmas: "My husband treats me to my getaways instead of buying me something material," says Cathy Hayes of Lakeland, FL, which makes her feel like everyone's on board. "And it tells the kids how important it is that Mommy have time away, so she can be a better mom!"

consider your companions

What if your pals want to dance until 2 A.M.—and your idea of heaven is eating dinner in the room while watching (in peace!) *Ugly Betty*?

"Get everyone to talk out her expectations beforehand to create a mood of compromise," says Casey Wohl, blogger at GirlsGetawayGuide.net. (It's easy to do in an e-mail chain.) Urban romps and quiet retreats lend themselves to small groups. Outdoor pursuits are fun with a crowd; it's easy to break into subgroups, then hook back up for dinner.

And think even numbers: Five probably won't fit in one room, so everyone's bottom line will climb as you divide up the cost of two rooms. Four works better in restaurants, too.

plan right Seek destinations that offer variety: beach horseback riding for active types,

win it!

Go to Parenting.com/giveawayaday any day in May to enter to win a trip for two to Dreams Resort & Spa in Mexico, plus airfare from Cheapflights.com (worth \$3,900). Info: page 96.





say, and a pool with a swim-up bar for laid-back ladies. Holly Miller, concierge at Willow Stream Spa in Scottsdale, AZ, suggests taking advantage of a concierge as the point person. Or use that e-mail chain again to divvy up jobs: "Ann, get cheap airfare"; "Dana, research restaurants"; "Jen, look into that show."

brace yourself "I dreaded having my husband give me a rundown of everything that went wrong," says Chris Bein, a mom of four in Babylon, NY, who

made a foray to The Lodge at Woodloch in the Poconos. Will clutter engulf the house? Probably. But, as Traci Mason in Lakeland, FL, says, "Not having to be on duty for 72 hours makes it well worth it!" Her only regret is not leaving paper plates and plastic cutlery. Bein made a timeline of everything that had to happen in her absence. "It made me feel more sane to know it was there," she says. And it worked. She came home to relative calm. The only thing she'd have done differently? "Make the trip longer!" she says.

diva destinations

cozy up **The Whiteface Lodge, Lake Placid, NY** The northeast corner of New York hides one of the best spas in the country, tucked into one of the most luxurious all-suite resorts. The sweet smell of applewood envelops you throughout the rustic yet posh lodge. Treatments like Sugar Body Polish and Lavender Sea Bath make for a restorative weekend. Just when things couldn't get better...there's the view of the Adirondacks—and the food. Check out Thewhitefacelodge.com for info on its summer girlfriend getaway packages, which include loads of discounts and perks for groups of four gals or more.

sip, sip **Wine Country, Paso Robles, CA** The California wine region is both gorgeous and relaxed. Up-and-coming Paso tends to be less pricey than Napa. At the historic Paso Robles Inn, the hot tub on your room's balcony will be filled with natural spring water. Go to Pasowine.com.

say "aah..." **Dreams Puerto Aventuras Resort & Spa, Mexico** The emerald sea is the backdrop at this all-inclusive resort where they think of absolutely everything: spas, drinks, meals to suit every taste, shows, water sports. You plan nothing and pay one flat rate, which makes this a no-brainer for a last-minute, fuss-free getaway that works for any number of people. The energetic among you can take a day jaunt to the mysterious Mayan ruins. Check out Dreamsresorts.com.

restore your focus **Feathered Pipe Yoga Retreat, Helena, MT** Feathered Pipe is one of the oldest yoga retreats in the country, and it couldn't be in a more magnificent, soul-soothing setting: the Rockies. The classes and mostly vegetarian food have garnered raves. Featheredpipe.com has all the details you'll need.

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