



**Our kids are now teenagers and it seem that their idea of a vacation differs from ours.
What can we do to ensure that our family has a great time?**

When your teenagers were tots, traveling was much simpler. A sandy beach with the occasional kid friendly activity was all the family needed to have a good time. Now, however, your young children have become young adults, and the family vacation has become a complex negotiation as generations clash over what to do. To pave the way for a relaxing and rejuvenating vacation, do some advance planning and allow your teen a say in the stay.

Include your teenagers at the start of the planning process. Discuss with your teens what they want from a vacation before choosing a destination. Generate a variety of options and present them to the kids. Over a family dinner, discuss each locale and let your excited adolescent guide the way to family fun.

Once the location has been decided, let the aspiring vacationers plan a day. Encourage your teens to research activity options and create a schedule of events including transportation and dining options. For this to work, however, parents must commit to the plan even if it means doing something outrageously adventurous or wasting away the morning with a late sleep. Typically teens will make good choices and allowing them to own a piece of the planning ensures minimal complaining and maximum enjoyment.

Turn about is fair play, and the parents should also participate in the plan-a-day process but add a twist. Choose an afternoon for you and your spouse to spend one-on-one quality alone time with each of your children. This can be as simple as a hike up a mountain or as exciting as a surf lesson. The goal is to choose something that you can enjoy together. Mixing it up promotes family bonding and creates great dinner conversation as each share stories from their day.

All of the advance planning, however, will not guarantee a peaceful getaway unless a family conversation regarding trip rules and expectations takes place before the departure date. Remind your traveling teens that all home rules apply—no smoking, no drinking, no cursing, and no hitting your sister. Emphasize the importance of time--what time teens need to return in the evening, what time tired teens need to wake in the morning, and what kind of time teens must spend with mom and dad. Set some basic ground rules and discuss concerns as they occur to ensure travel time is a blast and everyone gets along.

Vacations provide some of life's most memorable moments. While you may return to the same destination year after year, each visit will be different as your family matures and grows. Savor the time, leave life's worries behind, and take lots of pictures. Bon Voyage!