

The Family Vacation

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By BECKY ANDREWS, *Wilson Living Magazine*

I'd like to meet the person who coined the term, 'family vacation' just once. First, I'd ask, "Have you ever taken a vacation with your family? How old were the children that went on this trip? Were they potty trained? Were they teenagers? Could they talk?" And before that person could answer any of those questions, I'd go for the jugular, "Did you take your mother-in-law? I didn't think so."

Besides Spanx and the Wonderbra, there are few things more overrated than the family vacation. When did it become a good idea to leave the space and comfort of our home, go to a strange city with higher crime rates and pay \$300 a night to stay in a space smaller than your bedroom with your entire family? I'll tell you when.

When we all started working more, eating-in less and signing up our children for everything from basketball camp to chess lessons. Since we can't seem to unwind in our homes, we take a 'vacation' (insert sarcasm).

I try every year to plan the perfect trip. I envy those families who talk about how their vacations were everything they dreamed of and more. And when I get the Christmas card that features their whole family wearing mouse ears, grinning from ear to ear, it gives me one more reason to believe that Walt Disney created a ridiculous little rodent mascot to mock me. It makes me hate the happiest place on earth.

But I had it all figured out this year. We were going to take a family trip and have fun, even if it killed me. The agenda included baseball games, museums, an amusement park, and lots of eating and for me, shopping at a few local thrift shops. We even shelled out a little extra for a suite that turned out to be a standard room with a mini fridge.

The flight over was packed so my husband and the oldest had to sit alone, while me and the youngest sat together. I honestly felt bad for the guy sitting next to us. I could tell he was nervous and it didn't help that my child kept asking, "If we crash, whose fault is it? If we explode, what good are those oxygen masks? Did the pilot look old to you? I hope he can see." That must have been the reason he ordered a double whiskey neat from the drink cart ... at 7am.

After 4 nights and way too much money spent, it was time to come home. The kids had a ball. They were on the jumbo tron at the baseball game, ate so much Garrett's popcorn that I'm sure their stock went up while we were there, and rode the hotel elevator until they felt sick. I ignored the, 'I told you so' look my husband was giving me on the flight home. It made me think that the person who coined the term, 'family vacation' probably meant YOU taking a vacation with someone else's family.

But then we got back home. Our kids couldn't wait to tell everyone about the trip. It was really cute. Maybe it was worth the stress, money and indigestion. A family vacation is a test. If you can make it through without leaving someone behind, you pass.

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