

BY BETH D'ADDONO

get away get together

Families are known for the caring and support they provide, but they also bind us together and instill a sense of self. No wonder more and more families are taking their love on the road and planning multigenerational reunions that both honor their past and celebrate their future.

“Reunions speak to our need to stay connected, to keep traditions going and feel the strength of our family ties,” says Edith Wagner, editor of Milwaukee-based *Reunions Magazine*. “Traveling together can accomplish all of those things.”

Deciding where all this family connecting is going to happen can be a challenge. Here is a look at **10 OPTIONS,** each one offering a slice of family activities uniquely its own. Figuring out which flavor fits your family is the fun part.



Sutton Family
Reunion 2005

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Reunion 2005

Sutton Family
Reunion 2005

Dublin

DUBLIN, WITH ITS STRIKING ARCHITECTURE, lively pub culture and intimate urban streetscapes, is an ideal destination for young and old. It's bisected neatly by the River Liffey into the north- and southside, and most of the important sights are within an hour's walk of the city center.



If you're looking to trace your family's heritage, the Irish Genealogical Project (www.irishgenealogy.ie) embraces the entire island of Ireland, and provides assistance and leads. While you're stateside, contact Irish Identities, a genealogical research service that organizes roots tours (Irish Identities, Anne Rodda, 973-890-8824, annerodda@aol.com).

Don't miss exploring Temple Bar, originally Dublin's 18th-century port district. Located between the River Liffey and Dame Street, Temple Bar is a funky assemblage of pubs, shops, restaurants and street performers after dark. Irish pubs are family-friendly during mealtimes, but you might want to line up a niece or nephew to baby-sit the kids during your pub crawl later. Stop in for a pint at Foggy Dew (1 Fownes Street), The Auld Dubliner (17 Anglesea Street) and The Temple Bar (48 Temple Bar), one of the busiest pubs in the city. You're guaranteed some *craic*—pronounced “crack,” Irish for “big fun.”

Everybody from the kids to the grandparents will appreciate an evening of authentic Irish music and dance. Taylors Three Rock Traditional Pub is one lively venue that incorporates dinner, a session of traditional Irish music and an energetic dance performance every night of the week. The audience is invited to participate, which will make for some memorable photos if Uncle Fred decides to get up on stage.

Prices are €12–€36/US\$15–US\$45. Book in advance and ask about group rates (Grange Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16; 353-1-494-2999; www.taylorsthreerock.com).

INSIDER TIP Buy a Dublin Pass, and you'll go to the front of the line and get in free at more than 30 attractions. The popular Guinness Storehouse tour, Dublin Zoo and Dublin Writers Museum are covered. Prices range €14–€23/US\$17–US\$29 for a day pass, or €35–€71/US\$44–US\$89 for six days of city attractions. Purchase online (www.dublinpass.com) or at any of the tourist offices in town.

Where to Stay: Radisson SAS St. Helen's Hotel

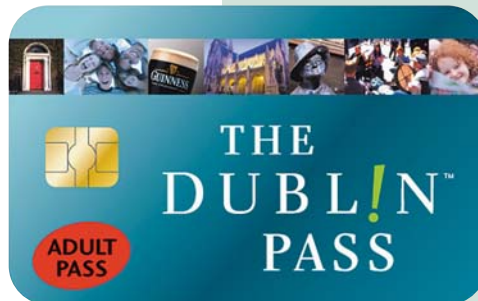
PLANNING THE GATHERING

If you've volunteered to organize the reunion, you'll need a serious checklist and plenty of help. Start by delegating. Planning will be a lot easier if you recruit a committee.

Next, decide on a firm date for the event and put a master invite list together. Now, the hard part: Figure out where you're going. Suggest two or three options to your committee, and get feedback. Research sites, area attractions and group discounts; get a feel for the destination. You can't please everyone, so make a choice and stick with it. Don't go overboard. When in doubt, keep it simple.

After you have picked a location, you will need to determine the event's budget and open a master bank account. Be clear and up front about how much it's going to cost and when the money is due. Put one person in charge of collecting funds.

Carlson can help plan your reunion with its online event planner. Whether you choose Your Event By RadissonSM, or plan it through Park Plaza, Country Inns & Suites By Carlson or Park Inn, each hotel can simplify celebrations. To keep family in the loop, Carlson will set up an event Web site and e-mail the link to everyone.



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MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, IS ROOTS, ROCK 'N' ROLL AND barbecue all rolled into one dynamic destination. Visit Memphis and you're guaranteed to get barbecue sauce on your face, smoke in your eyes and a groove in your soul. Soak up only-in-Memphis culture by day, including a must-see trip to Graceland, a music tour of the famed Sun Studio and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music.

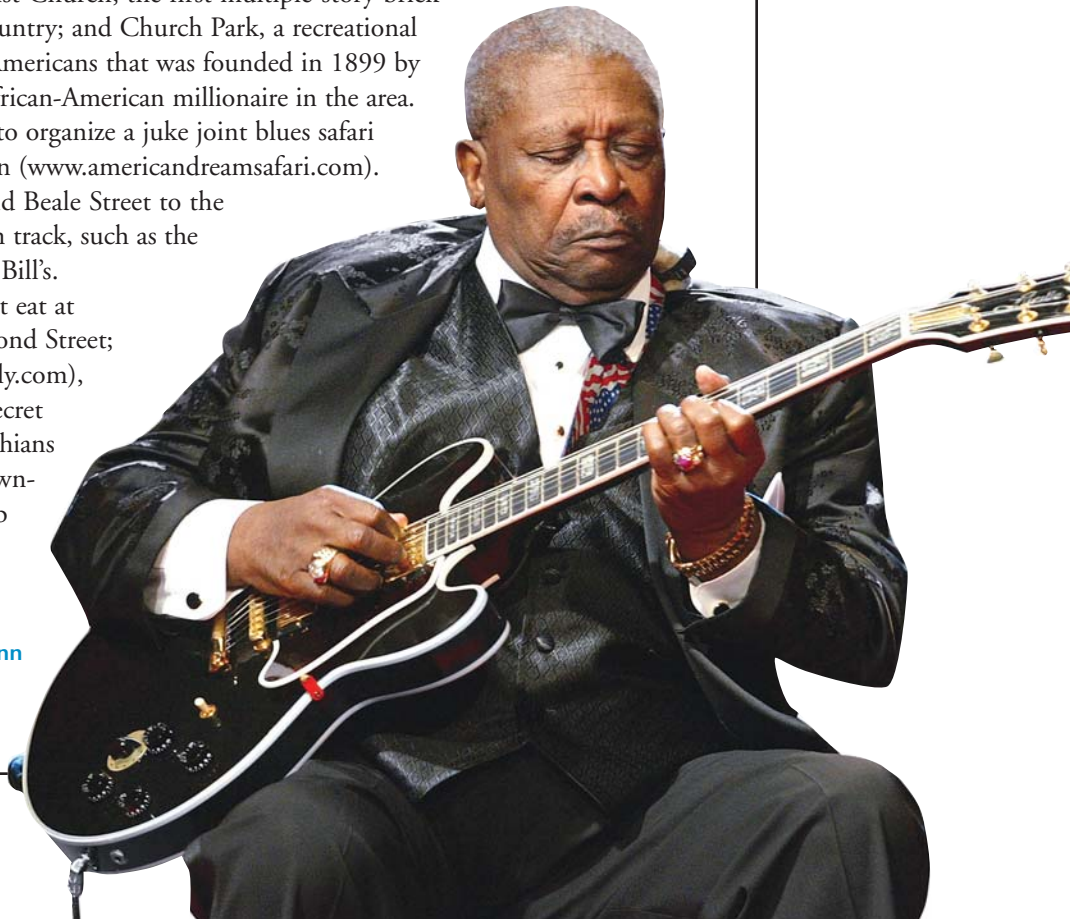
African-American history permeates the Memphis landscape. The National Civil Rights Museum is here, constructed on the site of the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The museum is the nation's first dedicated to documenting the complete history of the American civil rights movement. A visit to the Children's Museum of Memphis will give youngsters a chance to play and interact in exhibits such as Garage, where they can "drive" a minivan; Going Places, which features a hot-air balloon and a real airplane cockpit; and Kid's Market, where they'll shop for groceries, scan the items and learn about healthy food choices.

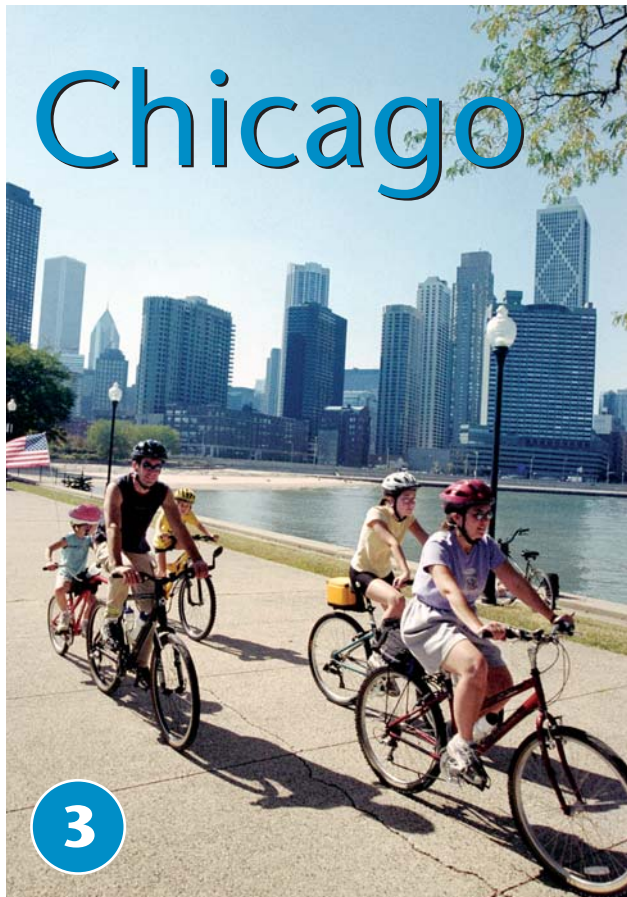
Memphis is home to the Burkle Estate/Slavehaven, a stop on the Underground Railroad. Other heritage sites include the home of W.C. Handy, who wrote "Memphis Blues" in 1909; Beale Street Baptist Church, the first multiple-story brick church for blacks in the country; and Church Park, a recreational area dedicated to African Americans that was founded in 1899 by Robert Church, the first African-American millionaire in the area.

Music lovers may want to organize a juke joint blues safari with tour guide Tad Pierson (www.americandreamsafaris.com). Pierson takes clients beyond Beale Street to the clubs that are off the beaten track, such as the Hard Luck Cafe and Wild Bill's.

INSIDER TIP You must eat at Rendezvous (52 South Second Street; 901-523-2746; www.hogsfly.com), famous for its dry rub of secret spices. This is where Memphians take out-of-towners for down-home food. The slabs of rib are huge, the pulled pork sandwiches divine and the crowd friendly.

Where to Stay: Radisson Inn
Memphis Airport, Radisson
Hotel Memphis





BREAKING THE ICE

You haven't seen your 15 cousins for a decade, and now you'll be together for 72 hours straight. Here are a few ideas for breaking the ice.

Dress up. You gotta get the shirts. Cheesy? Maybe. But outfitting everybody in brightly colored Johnson Family Reunion 2005 T-shirts promotes a united front and makes for a great photo op.

Book it. Collect photos, info, contact numbers and e-mails, and have everything bound inexpensively at a copy center—a great memento. Or put together a cookbook of family recipes. Ask for them in advance, bind them and *voilà!* A keepsake with everybody's favorite dishes.

Play family trivia. Collect stories, fun facts and obscure history, and give a prize to the person who knows the most—and the least. Or break out the baby pictures. Use them for a photo display (guess who's who!) or name tags.



CHICAGO IS A ROBUST CITY WITH A SERIOUS appetite for sports, culture and the blues. Visiting sports fans will have to plan ahead, as tickets for the most popular teams, the Cubs and the Bears, are pricey and tough to get. Die-hard Cubs fans can go to the Wrigley Field box office early in the morning on game day; a few tickets are sometimes released. For links to all the city's teams, click on choosechicago.com/sports.html.

The family won't want to miss a visit to Navy Pier, the city's lakefront playground. Navy Pier offers visitors a unique series of family-oriented attractions, from the thrilling ride on the Wave Swinger to the 3-D Time Escape ride. The Pier also boasts an IMAX Theater, a 150-foot-high Ferris wheel, a musical carousel, the Chicago Children's Museum and a variety of restaurants. For the ice skaters in the crowd, pay a visit to the newest attraction in town, Millennium Park. There's an ice-skating rink open from November to March, weather permitting, along with restaurants, outdoor gardens, fountains and public art.

Tie Chicago's diversity into your own family heritage with a walking tour of one of Chicago's ethnic neighborhoods (312-742-1190; www.chgcitytours.com)—from Pilsen/Little Village (Mexican) to historic Bronzeville (African-American) to Ukrainian Village and Little Italy. There are 26 tour options in all, with spots for up to 42 people. Prices are \$25–\$50, depending on whether lunch is included.

INSIDER TIP Chicago Transit Authority (312-836-7000; www.transitchicago.com) has direct train service from both airports to downtown and major attractions. Visitor passes are available for one to five days (\$5–\$18) and allow unlimited rides.

Where to Stay: Radisson Hotel & Suites Chicago; Radisson Hotel Northbrook; Radisson Hotel Schaumburg; Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, O'Hare South; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Chicago O'Hare Northwest; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Matteson; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Elk Grove Village at I-290; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Romeoville; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Schaumburg; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, St. Charles; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Elgin; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Gurnee; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Crystal Lake; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Manteno



Photos: (this page, clockwise from top left) courtesy City of Chicago/Chris McGuire; courtesy MLB; Ryan McVay/Getty Images; (opposite page, from top) Peter Gridley/Getty Images; Taylor S. Kennedy/Getty Images; courtesy Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau



Washington,

AMERICA'S HOMETOWN IS AN IDEAL DESTINATION FOR FAMILIES.

Between the monuments, the Smithsonian complex and the National Zoo, our nation's capital has all the bases covered. Just keep in mind that the distance between wherever you are and the Washington Monument is a lot farther than it looks. The Mall is almost two miles long.

Consider interspersing indoor activities with time spent outdoors, in places such as the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (202-633-4674, on the Mall, Independence Avenue at Seventh Street SW; hirshhorn.si.edu) or the 163-acre National Zoo (202-673-0127, 3000 block of Connecticut Avenue NW; nationalzoo.si.edu), a 20-minute car or Metro ride north of the Mall. The Smithsonian alone could keep everybody busy for a while. Museums that are especially family-friendly include the National Museum of the American Indian, with its 8,000 artifacts, and the National Air and Space Museum, home to the original Wright Brothers 1903 Flyer and a lunar rock sample that visitors can touch.

INSIDER TIP If there is a line at the Washington Monument (202-426-6841, 15th Street near Constitution Avenue, SW; www.nps.gov/wamo), try the Pavillion at the Old Post Office (202-289-4224; 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, between 11th and 12th streets NW; www.oldpostofficedc.com) for another view.

Where to Stay: Radisson Hotel Washington, D.C.; Radisson Hotel Reagan National Airport; Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria; Radisson Hotel Annapolis; Radisson Hotel at Cross Keys; Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Washington Dulles Airport; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, BWI Airport; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Manassas; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Annapolis; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Stafford; Park Inn International Rockville



Branson

NESTLED IN THE SCENIC OZARK MOUNTAINS,

Branson, Missouri, caters to families, with an emphasis on live music and good, clean fun.

Three theme parks await: Celebration City, with its eight-story-high wooden roller coaster; Silver Dollar City, an 1880s theme park with rides and a pioneer homestead; and White Water, a water adventure for the family.



Live music is everywhere, with some 49 venues from which to choose. Take in a show—most offer discount rates for groups of 15 or more, with themes such as country, gospel, opera (Dixie Stampede, Duttons Music Show) and heartland America (Celebrate America).

Young readers and fans of the '70s television series based on the *Little House on the Prairie* books will want to see the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home, which displays the author's *Little House* manuscripts. The museum's artifacts span more than a century of pioneering history.

INSIDER TIP Don't miss The Ralph Foster Museum, a.k.a. the Smithsonian of the Ozarks, home to the original "Beverly Hillbillies" truck—the '60s sitcom filmed several episodes nearby. The museum includes three floors of exhibits that tell the story of the Ozarks and its people (www.bransonchamber.com).

Where to Stay: Radisson Hotel Branson

Orlando

THEME PARKS COME IN EVERY FLAVOR IN

Florida's most-visited city, from Disney to Universal Studios to Sea World. A few of the newest attractions are Splash Island Water Park in Cypress Gardens and the Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show at Disney-MGM Studios. All parks offer special tours and perks for groups. For instance, book a Magical Gathering at Disney for eight or more, and a coordinator will help with all arrangements, including special VIP events (such as private character breakfasts), group dining and souvenirs.

Explore the theme parks by day and by night. Don't miss IllumiNations fireworks at Epcot, and the nightly New Year's Eve countdown and fireworks at Pleasure Island, home to eight themed nightclubs—including BET SoundStage Club for hip-hop and R&B, 8Trax for nonstop '70s and '80s tunes, and Pleasure Island Jazz Company for live jazz.

Orlando also has outdoor activities like 150 area golf courses, and baseball at Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex, home to Atlanta Braves spring training. Discount tickets to many attractions are available on www.orlandoinfo.com.

INSIDER TIP News flash: Not every restaurant in Orlando is defined by a theme park. For a change of pace, grown-ups can dine with the locals at Le Coq Au Vin (4800 S. Orange Avenue; 407-851-6980; www.lecoquavinrestaurant.com), where chef/owners Louis and Magdalena Perrotte serve delicious country French cuisine. Rated No. 1 by *Zagat Survey* for food in Central Florida, Le Coq Au Vin serves specialties such as the wine-braised chicken dish for which the restaurant is named, a terrific blue crab salad and, for dessert, a warm chocolate soufflé. The wine list is award-winning.

Where to Stay: Radisson Inn Lake Buena Vista; Radisson University Hotel Orlando; Radisson Resort Worldgate; Radisson Barcelo Hotel Orlando—International Drive; Radisson Resort Parkway; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Orlando—Lake Buena Vista—Walt Disney Resort; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Orlando—Maingate at Calypso; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Orlando Airport; Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Orange City; County Inn & Suites By Carlson, Orlando International Drive; Park Inn Orlando Airport West at Florida Mall; Park Inn Orlando/Winter Park



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COLLECTING MEMORIES

Keep those family reunion celebrations alive with a scrapbook. Fun, relaxing and a great way to create a collective memory, scrapbooking has become a hot hobby. Digital or online scrapbooking is available for free at sites like www.snapfish.com, www.shutterfly.com and www.ezprints.com. Here are a few tips to remember before you get started:

Keep items of interest. Hold on to ticket stubs, brochures, maps and other mementos of the reunion. These will aid in re-creating the event.

Organize your collection. Once you have everything together, sort it into days, activities or other logical categories.

Keep it simple. You don't have to spend a lot on paper, templates and scissors. An uncluttered scrapbook page is often more appealing.

Think about safety. One of the bonuses of scrapbooking is that it helps photos last longer. Look for paper that is acid-, lignin- and bleach-free. Also, use only acid-free, water-free, permanent inks.



Photos: (clockwise from top right) Photodisc Collection/Getty Images; Jeffrey Coolidge/Corbis; Stacey Haines

Flagstaff

FLAGSTAFF, "FLAG" TO THE locals, is more than just a gateway to the Grand Canyon. This lively college town stands on its own as a terrific choice for year-round outdoor fun.

Thanks to its 7,000-foot altitude, low humidity and high desert terrain,

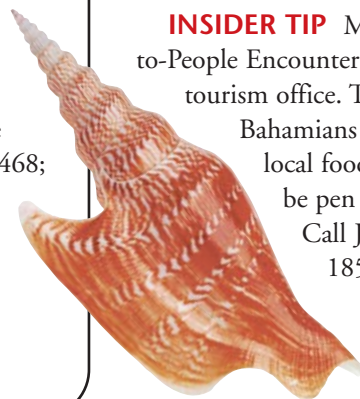


Flagstaff boasts mild weather conditions perfect for outdoor activity. Hike, bike or take a drive through The Coconino National Forest—one of the most diverse National Forests, with landscapes ranging from the Red Rocks of Sedona to Ponderosa Pine Forests to alpine tundra. Skiing and snow sports take place here in the winter.

Flagstaff is about 85 miles from the Grand Canyon, close enough for a day trip that can be tailored to meet the needs and abilities of all ages. Located in north-west Arizona and arguably the world's most awesome natural tourist attraction, the Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, 18 miles wide and, at its deepest point, more than a mile from rim to river. Options include a helicopter tour of the South Rim, a hike into the canyon and a drive around it, with photo stops.

INSIDER TIP While everybody in the family might not be up to a rigorous hike, everyone can enjoy the spectacular IMAX feature *Grand Canyon: The Hidden Secrets*, at the National Geographic Visitor Center (928-638-2468; www.explorethecanyon.com), on U.S. Highway 64, just two miles south of the National Park entrance. Tickets can be reserved in advance.

Where to Stay: Radisson Poco Diablo Resort; Radisson Woodlands Hotel Flagstaff



Nassau



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THE CAPITAL CITY OF THE BAHAMIAN

Islands, Nassau lies on New Providence Island and across the bridge from Paradise Island. Nassau reflects a hybrid culture that speaks to both its British Colonial and its West African roots, an island way of life that is unique to this part of the world.

With crystal blue waters and endless sandy coastline, Nassau is all about getting out in the ocean. Explore a few of the many beaches, including Saunders Beach, shaded by a perimeter of rustling casuarina trees, and Montagu Beach, home to the 18th-century Fort Montague, built to guard Nassau Montagu Harbour. On Salt Cay, just a short boat ride from Nassau harbor, Blue Lagoon Island offers swim-with-the-dolphins programs (www.dolphin-swims.com) for B\$85 to B\$165; nonswimmers can observe the action from the dock for B\$20. (The U.S. dollar is equal to the Bahamian dollar.)

Nassau was a haven to some of the most notorious pirates on the Caribbean Sea. Adults and children will enjoy the Pirates of Nassau museum, an interactive museum devoted to the island's 30-year history of 17th- and 18th-century pirate wars.

Prized for its sheltered harbor, Nassau is the ideal jumping-off point for a chartered boat trip. Join a group charter, with prices in the B\$89 range for adults, B\$69 for children under 12, for a half-day trip, including a barbecue. Or take over the whole boat for a day of snorkeling, picnicking, beaching and fishing—prices depend on the charter company, but for example, *Riding High*, a sailboat that can accommodate 26 to 30 people, is B\$1,890 for a full day (www.barefootsailingcruises.com).

Shoppers will find duty-free bargains, along with distinctive island crafts, along the newly refurbished Historic Bay Street, Nassau's main street of shops, pubs, cafés and restaurants (www.nassauparadiseisland.com).

INSIDER TIP Meet the locals through The People-to-People Encounter Program, sponsored by the island's tourism office. The program matches travelers with Bahamians for an evening of cultural exchange, local food and shared experiences. Kids can be pen pals with their newfound friends. Call Janet Johnson Cuffie at 242-323-1853/4 for more information, or e-mail peopletopeople@bahamas.com.

Where to Stay: Radisson Cable Beach & Golf Resort

Canmore

LOCATED ONLY 15 MINUTES EAST OF BANFF, Canmore is a vibrant town situated in the foothills of Alberta's Rocky Mountains. With stunning views of the usually snowcapped mountains and easy access to outdoor adventure, this friendly destination is a welcome alternative to more crowded mountain resort areas.



The action begins at Banff National Park, where seasonal activities range from fly-fishing, mountain biking, rock climbing, hiking, ATV tours and horseback riding

HAPPY SAILS

FAMILIES LOOKING TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL—

together—may find their ideal destination on the open sea. Cruises are great for large groups—there's no driving, meals are included and ships offer activities suitable for every generation. The *Seven Seas Voyager* of Radisson Seven Seas Cruises has everything from shuffleboard and golf cages to a heated pool and spa. Supervised activities are also available for children ages 6 to 17. Many families opt for a

cruise instead of the traditional holiday get-together, and *Voyager* sets sail from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, November 21 for a seven-night Thanksgiving cruise to the Caribbean. With stops in Key West and Cozumel, the whole family can swim, dive, kayak or just spend time on the beach. For a holiday getaway in December, *Voyager* leaves Fort Lauderdale December 17 for a 10-night sailing with stops in the Bahamas and the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. Fares start at \$2,248 and \$4,496. For more information, visit Radisson Seven Seas Cruises' Web site at www.rssc.com.



in the spring, summer and fall to dog-sledding, cross-country/downhill skiing and sleigh rides in the winter months. Tour outfitters (such as www.canadianrockiesadvent.com and www.canmoreraftingcentre.com) can help plan a group activity. The less active members of the family might consider taking a comfortable gondola ride up the side of the mountain, which offers a clear and safe view of the grizzly bears, elk and bighorn sheep that make their home in the spectacular alpine forests.

For those interested in the offbeat, Canmore Caverns Ltd. leads underground trips into the heart of the Rockies, deep into the cave system under Grotto Mountain known as the Rat's Nest Cave. Claustrophobes need not apply.

You can always spend the day shopping, strolling and dining in the town of Banff, with its central main street, many cafés and bistros, and dozens of shops, boutiques and galleries, many of which specialize in native art.

INSIDER TIP Beef lovers will be in seventh heaven at Bumper's The Beef House on Banff Avenue (403-762-2622; www.dininginbanff.com/restaurants/bumpers.shtml), a casual eatery that welcomes families and specializes in Alberta prime rib. If you like your meat on the bone, ask for the Pile-O-Bones, a hefty dish of prime rib bones that are truly finger-licking good.

Where to Stay: Radisson Hotel & Conference Center Canmore

Beth D'Addono is a travel and food writer living in Belmont Hills, Pennsylvania. Her most recent family reunion was to celebrate her father's 75th birthday in Palm Springs, California.

