

6 ACTIVE WEEKENDS WITH KIDS

Keep the children entertained (while perhaps discovering a new talent), learning Italian cuisine, bushcraft skills or surfing in the Atlantic

27 KIDS COOKING IN VENICE

Surely well ahead in a ranking of most child-pleasing global cuisines, Italian food wins early fans with its pizza and pasta dishes, but junior masterchefs can broaden their range with a class at Cooking Vacations Venice (£175pp, min two people, accompanied children under 10 are half price; cooking-vacations.com). Menus vary by season, but always feature fresh produce bought from the Rialto Market by friendly local cook Sara. Her lessons are fun but subtly educational, schooling small groups on how to create dishes from scratch – from handmade ravioli stuffed with fresh spinach and ricotta, to Venetian-style tiramisù.

● **ARRIVE** Fly direct to Venice's closest airport, Marco Polo, from UK cities including Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Leeds, London, Manchester and Newcastle (from £69; monarch.com).

● **STAY** Ivy-covered Hotel Flora in Sestiere di San Marco is very welcoming to families, providing pushchairs and complimentary kids' meal (from £155 for a room with one double and two singles; hotelflora.it). ▼



Rialto Market in Venice, Italy



Sorrisniva Igloo Hotel

28 SNOWY NORWAY

From husky sledding across the pristine snowscapes of north Norway to an igloo sleepover, Discover the World's four-night Alta Winter Adventure will have children feeling like they've woken up in the pages of Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*. And there's a strong chance that the aurora borealis itself will make an appearance – the town of Alta, where you'll be based, is famed for its consistently good sightings. A particular hot spot is the Sorrisniva Igloo Hotel, its location 12 miles out of town ensuring the darkest of dark skies. And, if the lights don't show up, the novelty of sleeping in a house constructed entirely from ice should offset any disappointment. Husky sledding safaris are extra (from £104 per adult, £52 per child), but well worth stumping for.

● **STAY** (Dec–Apr; from £940 per adult, and £685 per child, including flights; discover-the-world.co.uk).

29 BEGINNERS' BARCELONA

Those who fondly remember cava and jamón-focused weekends in the city pre-parenthood, rejoice: Barcelona is also a very welcoming place for families. All ages will enjoy the high-octane play on offer at Bosc Urbà, an adventure park arranged by age-specific zones: from complex climbing frames with nets and suspension bridges, to zip wires and bungee jumping for teenage adrenaline junkies (from £8; barcelonaboscurba.com). Afterwards, pick up supplies – cava and jamón non-negotiable – at Mercat de Santa Caterina (mercatsantacaterina.com) for a sunset picnic at handsomely landscaped Parc de la Ciutadella.

● **ARRIVE** BA, easyJet, Monarch, Ryanair and Vueling fly to Barcelona's El Prat airport from various UK airports (from £67; vueling.com).

● **STAY** Splendom Suites offers 2-bed apartments with kitchens (from £90; splendomsuitesbarcelona.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARY BLAKE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COLIN DUTTON/4CORNERS; GUY EDWARDS/2020VISION/NATUREPL.COM; JORN LOSVAR/SORRISNIVA; RAYMEARS.COM



Family Bushcraft course at the Woodlore School of Wilderness Bushcraft in East Sussex

31 BUSHCRAFT IN SUSSEX

Wannabe survivalists should look no further than this two-night course in the woodlands of East Sussex. Founded in 1983 by Ray Mears, Woodlore School of Wilderness Bushcraft has instructors that teach outdoor skills and help visitors reconnect with the natural environment. The two-night Family Bushcraft course (£225 per person, over-eights only; raymears.com) sees parents and children camp together while learning how to build a shelter, track animals such as deer, and recognise useful plants and trees. Evenings are spent swapping stories around a roaring campfire, or creeping among oaks and elms trying to spot some of the abundant nocturnal wildlife, including badgers and owls.

● **ARRIVE** Woodlore is on the A265, less than half a mile from Etchingham station – trains run from London Charing Cross (from £26.10; southeasternrailway.co.uk).



A New Forest pony – they have existed in the area for some 500,000 years

30 HORSE-RIDING IN THE NEW FOREST

Small cowboys and girls needn't endure a 10-hour transatlantic flight to enjoy an American ranch-style experience – riding school Burley-Villa offers something remarkably similar in the untamed wilds of Hampshire. Children aged between four and 12 can take part in its Cowboy Adventures for Kids (£49 for two hours; burleyvilla.co.uk), first tacking up their own pony before being taught basic Western riding techniques. The morning ends with lassoing lessons, a game of horseshoe throwing and a cook-out lunch of burgers and sausages. Families with older children wishing to spend longer in the saddle can book an overnight break, staying in simple rooms at the peaceful on-site B&B, Bashley House. Guests head out daily for two-hour group rides amid the lush arboreal scenery of the New Forest, where horses roam freely (£190pp for a two-night B&B stay, including rides).

● **ARRIVE** Burley-Villa is south of the A31, in the New Forest. Trains from London Waterloo go to New Milton, two miles away (from £20; southwesttrains.co.uk).



Croyme Beach, Devon

32 LEARN TO SURF IN DEVON

Croyme Beach is a proper British bit of seaside: one of the finest beaches in Devon. It's also the county's surf capital, its reputation for good waves making it an ideal place for youngsters to try their hand at boarding. Surf South West offers expert instruction (Mar–Nov only; Saturday course includes a full day of lessons plus lunch, £94pp; surfsouthwest.com). Warm up afterwards with a pub lunch at The Thatch (thethatchcroyme.com), where there are board games behind the bar.

● **ARRIVE** Croyme is 45 mins from the M5 motorway via the A361. The nearest train station is 10 miles away in Barnstaple (from £37 from London; gwr.com).
● **STAY** Many of the 120 rooms at resort-style Saunton Sands have sea views, and there's an indoor pool (from £300 for a two-room suite; sauntonsands.co.uk). Ⓛ