



The Basin Harbor Club circa 1940 and today (below).



Blasts From the Past

Slow down this summer at these five historic resorts where ice-cream socials, paddleboats, kite-flying, and other simple pleasures of childhood are the rage.

BY CHERYL LOCK

Sure, family vacations are fun and memorable. But they're not always relaxing. If you want a place to kick back with the kids, check out these old-timey resorts. Being in business for 80 years or more has helped them figure out what families need: entertaining (but not overstimulating) activities, a leisurely pace to the day, a program to take the kids off your hands so you can get a break, and babysitting if you ask. You won't find waterslides or high-tech kids' camps here. But you know what? You won't miss them either.

[VERGENNES, VERMONT]

Basin Harbor Club

■ Best for kids 6 months and up

Come here for peace and quiet. There's only one small road leading in and out of the 125-year-old resort, so you're much more likely to hear chirping birds than honking cars. Then take advantage of the drop-off camp to entertain your little noisemakers during the day. It's broken into five age groups from 6 months to 17 years. The camp frees you up to take a Pilates class or a behind-the-scenes garden tour, or just chill out in a chair by the pool. When your whole crew meets up again, head on over to the penny-candy store or stop by the free ice-cream social on the front lawn. (Summer rates start at \$374 per night for two adults and two kids under age 6, including breakfast, dinner, and kids' camp, when you mention promo code PARENTS; basinharbor.com.)

COURTESY OF A. P. BEACH; INSET: COURTESY OF THE BASIN HARBOR CLUB.

[BRAINERD, MINNESOTA]

Madden's on Gull Lake

■ Best for kids 4 and up

This family-owned resort treats your crew to many of the same activities it offered when it opened in the 1920s: nightly bonfires, croquet tournaments, horseback riding, golf, and canoeing. Adventure Cove, the daylong drop-off camp for kids 4 to 12 that runs from July to mid-August, is also refreshingly low-tech. Hula-hoop contests, birdhouse-making, fishing, and lawn bowling are part of the lineup. You and your toddler can keep busy at the wading pool, the jungle gym, or one of the property's three lakeside beaches. If you want a night to yourself for a grown-up dinner or spa treatment, Madden's has babysitters available for \$11 per hour. (Summer package rates start at \$144 per adult per night, \$49 per night for each kid 4 to 12, including breakfast and dinner, golf, the Adventure Cove program, and most resort activities. Kids 3 and under are free; maddens.com.)



[MACKINAC ISLAND, MICHIGAN]

Grand Hotel

■ Best for kids 4 and up

Leave your car behind and take a ferry ride over to this majestic 124-year-old resort overlooking Lake Huron. Horse-drawn carriages, bikes, and your good old two feet are the only ways to get from your room to the dozens of activities available during the day. Kite-flying, bocce ball, afternoon tea, and tours of a nearby butterfly house are designed to let families unwind from their normal manic schedule. "You'd be surprised at how many kids are content to just sit on the 660-foot-long front porch and watch boats go by," says Ken Hayward, executive vice president. A summer children's program—with duck bowling, rock collecting, and horseback riding—is free for kids 5 and up. (Nightly summer rates start at \$179 per adult based on double occupancy, including breakfast and dinner. Kids 12 and under stay and eat free; grandhotel.com.)

[HOT SPRINGS, VIRGINIA]

The Homestead

■ Best for kids 3 and up

Nestled in the Allegheny Mountains of Western Virginia among 3,000 acres of natural springs, the Homestead welcomed its first guests a decade before the American Revolution. Twenty-two presidents have stayed here, and the lounge features portraits of all of them. But your kids might be more interested in the classic family films the resort shows every night, the canoeing and kayaking, hayrides, swimming pools, bowling alley, and 100 miles of hiking and biking trails. A drop-off program keeps 3- to 12-year-olds happy with cooking classes, storytimes, and craft projects. Use your alone time to soak in the natural mineral springs. (Nightly summer rates, which include all the activities, start at \$335 per couple, \$60 extra for each child 6 and over; thehomestead.com.)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE GRAND HOTEL, MACKINAC ISLAND, MICHIGAN; COURTESY OF THE HOMESTEAD; COURTESY OF MADDEN'S ON GULL LAKE.

[SKYTOP, PENNSYLVANIA]

Skytop Lodge

■ Best for kids 3 and up

The most unique activity at this all-inclusive Pocono Mountain resort is a G-rated version of *Dirty Dancing*, a Saturday-night must-do. Families gather in the dining room for a dancing game that's similar to musical chairs. The winner of the dance (often a kid) leads the Grand March, a bunny hop-like parade of several hundred guests that meanders through the dining room, into the lobby, and onto the porch. "A lot of parents give piggyback rides to young kids so they can see everything that's going on," says Robert Baldassari, director of sales and marketing. Other time-honored traditions: kids' etiquette classes, junior golf, bubble-blowing contests, tractor-drawn hayrides, and educational walks with naturalists. Need some alone time one morning or afternoon? Sign up 3- to 12-year-olds for The Camp-in-the-Clouds summer program, where they'll enjoy face-painting, soccer, scavenger hunts, and tennis lessons. (Nightly summer rates start at \$530 per couple and \$45 per kid for the Family Fun package including a standard room, all meals, greens fees and a round of golf, tennis, lawn bowling, boat and bike rentals, and Camp-in-the-Cloud activities; skytop.com.) □



ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

2011 PARENTS COVER PHOTO CONTEST

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Contest entry is not required to enter the sweepstakes. Subject to Official Rules and entry at parents.com/cover. The 2011 Parents Cover Photo Contest and \$10,000 Grand Prize Sweepstakes entry period began at 12:00:01 A.M., CDT, on April 3, 2011, and ends at 9 P.M., CDT, on June 25, 2011. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, 18 years or older. One contest entry per person, per eligible child. One sweepstakes entry per person, regardless of method of entry. Void where prohibited. Sponsor: Meredith Corporation.

KID OF THE YEAR PHOTO CONTEST

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. The Kid of the Year Photo Contest is subject to Official Rules and entry at parents.com/cute-kid. Contest began at 1 A.M., ET, January 16, 2011, and ends at 10 P.M., ET, on January 14, 2012. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, 18 years or older, who are the parent or legal guardian of a child age three (3) months to eight (8) years at the time of entry. One entry per household, per eligible child, per week. One weekly prize per child. Void where prohibited. Sponsor: Meredith Corporation.

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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Subject to Official Rules and entry at parents.com/car. The Parents.com 2011 \$20,000 Best Cars Sweepstakes begins at 12:01 A.M., ET, on June 1, 2011, and ends at 11:59 P.M., ET, on August 31, 2011. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, 21 years or older. One entry per person with a valid e-mail address per day. Void where prohibited. Sponsor: Meredith Corporation.

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