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A Mom's Getaway

By Valerie McDermott

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Destination: Block Island

Accomplices: 6 High School Girlfriends (Yes, we've been friends for 5 years now ha ha)

The time is 6:15 am on a Sunday. I've been up since 4:30 am. Am I a little eager? Of course, it is my annual girlfriend getaway and I'm late to arrive. Why you say? Let's just say I have not completely embraced the "put mom on the top of the to do list" philosophy but I am getting there!

The other girls have already enjoyed 1 day on the beach and 1 night on the town (if you can call it a town). They have assured me that they did not have that much fun but I suspect they are lying.

The commuting time is approximately 3 hours but it is three hours of heavenly solitude. No children whining no husband questioning me on my packing abilities (Did you pack my underwear?) Nope, it's just me - and yes I did forget to pack my underwear but I don't care.

During the hour long ferry ride I see families heading over for vacations and I think "This would be a nice family destination but THANK GOD I don't have them with me." My cell phone rings I look at my caller ID. It's my husband, ALREADY!!! He just calls to wish my well and he says he misses me already. Strangely, I do not miss him as much as I do when he is away on his annual golf weekend (3 days, 2 night but I am not keeping track).

The boat docks and I have arrived. I walk to our cottage and find the girls awake and waiting for me to go to breakfast. We are staying at the Blue Dorry Inn, a very quaint inn that provides a wonderful homemade breakfast in their dining room. The girls spend the breakfast filling me in on what happened the day/night before. It consists of drinks on the beach, appetizers for dinner, and drinks and dancing to a not very good band. They would have gone to bed early but one of the girls threatened bodily injury to anyone going to bed early.

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After my de-briefing, we break down into groups. Four of the girls went for a long walk on the beach and 3 of us decide to take in the scenery with a bike ride to the breathtaking Mohegan Bluffs. We rented bikes for 1 hour (no need to kill ourselves) and road straight uphill to our destination. After oohing and aahing over the views we returned our bikes, donned our bathing suits and hit the beach.

The afternoon passed quickly at a beachside bar called Ballards. With cocktail service to our chairs and a band playing great music there is no need to move. We drink Caronas, read trashy magazines, talk about kids, husbands, having crushes, trying to have more children, trying not to have more children, our bodies, other women's bodies, the guy throwing the footballs' body. Most importantly we talk about how lucky we are that we have all remained friends over the years and can get together like this annually.

Valerie McDermott is a mother of 2 and co founder of

a website

devoted to mothers who wish to rediscover their past indulgences like travel, get-togethers, fitness and spa treatments. Look like a million -- feel like a million.

Florida Vacations - From Orlando To The Keys

By Jim Grayson

The kids have finally broken you down and you've agreed on that family vacation getaway to Florida. They're excited. They want to go to Orlando, and you're fairly certain that if you hear one more thing about Goofy or Micky your head is going to explode. What's a poor mom or dad to do? While it's true that Disney World is one of the premier family vacation getaways in Florida, it is by no means the only fun place to be.

The Orlando/Kissimmee area boasts a plentiful array of family vacation getaways. In fact, Kissimmee can be considered the laid-back, historic alternative to Orlando. Residents of Kissimmee have gone to great lengths to keep the hometown charm that the area is noted for. While there are some water parks and resorts, attractions such as Old Town, rodeos, horseback riding and a petting farm make it a wonderful family vacation getaway.

Other towns in the area which are ideal family vacation getaways include: Mount Dora, perfect for biking trips; Polk City, for the family of aircraft enthusiasts; and Sanford, home of the Central Florida Zoological Park.

Further south lies Palm Beach County. Yes, that's right; I did say Palm Beach. I know what you're thinking. `Palm Beach' and `family vacation getaways' don't go hand in hand. That's where you're wrong. You just have to know where to look. West Palm Beach is perfect for that family vacation getaway, thanks to destinations such as the Norton Museum of Art and the Lion Country Safari, where visitors can see lions, giraffes, and a host of other animals, running free.

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As you travel further north, you can give your kids the perfect opportunity to use their family vacation getaway to learn about the environment, by visiting the Loggerhead Park and The Marine Life Center in Juno. Here they can be taught about turtles and go on turtle walks.

We're not done yet. Welcome to the Florida Keys, the perfect destination for putting a little more excitement in your family vacation getaway. Certainly I wouldn't suggest you take your children diving, unless they're accustomed to that sort of thing, but you can definitely visit Islamorada. They'll love their family vacation getaway when they get to interact one-on-one with dolphins and sea lions. You'll also have the chance to feed the giant tarpon that gather around the docks. Now how many people can say they had a chance to do that on their family vacation getaway? So you see? Disney World isn't the only option for your family vacation getaway.

Jim Grayson makes a living in the field of research. If you have found this article useful, visit his specialist resource sites,

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