



V.I.K. (VERY IMPORTANT KIDS)

Grown-ups aren't the only ones getting spoiled these days with luxury hotels going above and beyond to cater to pint-sized travellers, from a teddy bear turndown service to exceptional kids' clubs and programmes, finds **Laurel Munshower**





The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua



Pool time

ITZY BITZY RITZY

TRAVELLING FAMILIES need to keep their brood entertained and the Ritz Kids programme at Ritz-Carlton hotels around the world certainly delivers on that front. The offerings vary from hotel to hotel but one thing that remains a constant is the ability to create a menu of engaging experiences for kids aged four to 12. Ritz Kids isn't just another supervised hotel-based activity area but a menu of thoughtful and immersive activities dedicated to educating children about the world around them. And keeping in mind the brand's partnership with Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Future's Society, trips to sea destinations like the new Ritz-Carlton, Aruba are



The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun



HIKE TO AN ANCIENT LAVA FLOW WHILE LEARNING HOW THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS WERE FORMED

filled with fascinating kid-friendly experiences like searching for and learning to identify types of local iguanas, and exploring the island's lush mangroves in Nature Scouts. In Hawaii, at The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua, kids and parents alike can take part in Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment programme through an array of activities. Follow a naturalist to coral gardens to snorkel and snap photos with an underwater camera, or find "The Fires of Pele" during a hike to an ancient lava flow while learning how the Hawaiian islands were formed from volcanoes erupting from the sea.

Travelling with a baby or toddler? Along with superb Mayan beaches, The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun offers Itzy Bitzy Baby Amenities. Lending a helping hand to accommodate parents travelling with infants, items like baby bath amenities, a baby soaking tub, crib, changing table, miniature hangers for infant-sized clothes and high chair are available to ensure baby's every need is met so the whole family can make the most of their time in paradise. Older kids will be thrilled to play a part in sea turtle conservation from May to November each year by helping new hatchlings make their way to the sea with the aid of the hotel's Turtle Guardian programme.

www.ritzcarlton.com



Cancun fun



Learn about marine life



Find iguanas at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba



KidsOnly activities



One&Only Le Saint Géran

BESPOKE CUISINE

CHICKEN NUGGETS, mini-pizzas and french fries are ubiquitous items on children’s menus around the world but the One&Only Le Saint Géran in Mauritius treats children like little gourmands. Partnering with acclaimed child food guru Annabel Karmel, parents might feel a twinge of envy when they see their little ones tucking into a delectable range of healthy dishes such as oriental bento with shrimp dim sum,

South of the Border chicken fajitas or Dodo’s lychee and berries frozen yogurt. Further health-conscious programmes help kids to develop an interest in exercise and nutrition while on holiday, but this doesn’t mean that silly activities are forgotten. The shipwreck-themed KidsOnly Club offers a fun-filled world of games, crafts and a dedicated kids’ swimming pool.

From US\$635 per night; Tel: +230 401 1688
www.lesaintgeran.oneandonlyresorts.com

WELCOME TO NEVERLAND

JUNIOR JET-SETTERS are sure to be thrilled when they discover that the Land of Smiles has a hotel designed especially for them – the Land of Iniala Kid’s Club and Hotel at Iniala Beach House in Phuket, Thailand. Children’s designer Christopher Jones may be all grown up but he certainly knows what kids want in their stay, from adventure-themed bedrooms and fancy dress costume shops to tree house bedrooms that can be exclusively booked by families. Upon arrival, children are given a backpack stuffed with a storybook, t-shirt and games, while the kids’ club and hotel includes a cave, island-themed play area, and a theatre and camp to spark the imagination. Child minders are on hand to keep careful watch and help kids choose healthy meals from the dedicated dining area.

From US\$1,395 per night; Tel: +66 76 451 456
www.iniala.com



Land of Iniala Kid’s Club and Hotel



Alila Villas Soori Bali

A BALI JOURNEY

THE INDONESIAN island of Bali may be small but it’s certainly not short on heritage, culture and exploring opportunities, and Alila Villas Soori Bali has pulled out all the stops to ensure children and families can immerse themselves in island life with Journeys for the Little Ones. Creative tykes will enjoy building and flying traditional Balinese kites, organised treasure hunts or getting their hands dirty (literally) to mould traditional terracotta items. They can



THE KIDS’ CLUB AND HOTEL INCLUDES A CAVE, ISLAND-THEMED PLAY AREA AND THEATRE

even don a chef’s hat to create sweet treats with Alila’s pastry chef. For children fascinated by creatures great and small, Alila can arrange a trip to a village stable to feed horses or watch exotic butterflies in a tropical garden. More of Bali’s rich culture can be experienced with visits to rice paddy fields, Balinese dance lessons or by learning to play local instruments such as the bamboo xylophone, or *rindik*.

From US\$655 per night; Tel: +62 361 894 6388
www.alilahotels.com/soori

Monkey around with Alila’s Journeys for the Little Ones



FAMILY FRIENDLY



Fregate Island Private



Indian Ocean beaches

CASTAWAY KIDS

ADULTS WON'T NEED much convincing to visit the idyllic Fregate Island Private in the Seychelles, but kids will be begging to go once they catch wind of Castaway Club House, a special kids' club on the island located in a hut surrounded by verdant, tropical forests. Catering for ages three to 12, there's a tonne of exciting planned activities for junior island explorers, such as treasure hunts on the beach and educational hikes through the jungle guided by a conservation manager. The island is home to some 2,200 giant Aldabra tortoises and lucky kids might even get the chance to meet James, the island's 150-year-old resident tortoise.

From US\$3,260 per night; Tel: +49 7221 900 9922
www.fregate.com



KIDS WILL BE BEGGING TO GO ONCE THEY CATCH WIND OF CASTAWAY CLUB HOUSE, A SPECIAL KIDS' CLUB ON THE ISLAND LOCATED IN A HUT

Per Aquum Niyama's beach studio



ISLAND EXPLORERS

DESIGNED BY the purveyor of luxury tours, Scott Dunn, Per Aquum Niyama has launched a new kids' island, home to the first kids' club in the Maldives to accept children under the age of three – a fact sure to elicit hoots of delight from the frazzled parents of toddlers. The aptly named Play island is fitted with two-bedroom family villas equipped with a nanny's room and two private pools, with a club split into four different age groups from 12 months to 12 years. With plenty of care-givers to watch over the little ones, activities revolve around learning about the Maldivian destination – a cornerstone of Scott Dunn's Explorers clubs – while theme days for the youngest, like Jungle Safari, Pirates & Princesses



Snorkel in calm lagoons

Meet James the tortoise



Per Aquum Niyama's beach pavilion



PLAY ISLAND IS FITTED WITH TWO-BEDROOM FAMILY VILLAS EQUIPPED WITH A NANNY'S ROOM

and Circus, are designed to keep imaginations firing on all cylinders. Older kids are encouraged to take on more active games like beach cricket, snorkelling or even testing their acting skills at the club's amphitheatre. In other words, there's no chance of hearing the dreaded "I'm bored".
From US\$915 per night; Tel: +960 6762 828
www.niyama.peraquum.com



Kids can live like Eloise at The Plaza

LIVE LIKE ELOISE

THE GRANDE dame of New York City, The Plaza is also the setting of the children's book series, *Eloise*, whose eponymous character resides in the hotel. Now real-life children can live out their *Eloise* fantasies with a number of *Eloise*-themed activities, from a pyjama party brunch to ballet and yoga classes. The most outrageous of all the *Eloise* fun may be the Betsey Johnson-designed Eloise Suite, a two-bedroom wonderland of candy-striped wall panels, zebra-print carpets and a bedroom with glittering pink décor. The Eloise Suite from US\$2,043 per night Tel: +1 646 599 8365; www.theplazany.com



The Eloise Suite in The Plaza



Trump SoHo

MINI MOGULS

IF YOUR CHILD is already running lemonade stands or dominating the local paper route, you may have a pint-sized Trump in the making, so next time you're in New York City, consider staying at Trump SoHo, home to Young Entrepreneurs, a programme ready to groom a new generation of business masterminds. Targeted to mini moguls aged between three to 17, kids who join the programme receive a personalised set of business cards and personalised robe, in-room milk and cookies and exclusive invitations to cooking classes and beauty days at The Spa at Trump. Travelling families will also appreciate complimentary amenities like strollers, baby carriers and gaming consoles. From US\$325 per night; Tel: +1 212 842 5500 www.trumphotelcollection.com

Photo: Trump Hotel Collection

JUNIOR ARTISTS

SET UP A FAMILY pied-à-terre in Spain at Hotel Arts Barcelona in one of Europe's most cultural cities. The Luxury Family Package includes a two- or three-bedroom duplex apartment with a telescope and panoramic views of the sea and town. With plenty of family activities nearby (try the CosmoCaixa museum for science or the Museu de la Xocolata for chocolate lovers) a four-seat MINI Cooper included in the package makes local exploration easy, while kids can embark on a treasure hunt through the hotel and gardens. From: US\$1,788 per night; Tel: +34 93 2211 1000 www.hotelartsbarcelona.com



Hotel Arts Barcelona



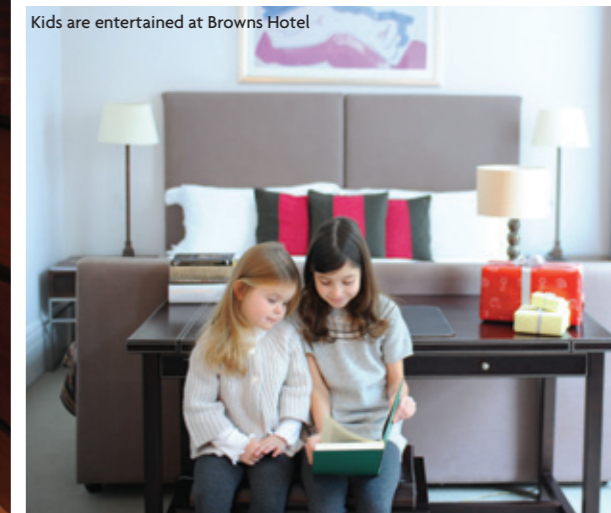
THE YOUNGEST RECEIVE A PLUSH BROWNS' BEAR WITH THE TEDDY TURNDOWN SERVICE, WHILE KIDS OF ALL AGES CAN CURL UP WITH *THE JUNGLE BOOK*



Browns Hotel

FIVE-STAR KIDS

KIDS BECOME verified VIPs as soon as they walk through the door of Browns Hotel in London with a Five Star Kids Programme granting them a Children's VIP card on arrival along with special treats for various age groups. The youngest receive a plush Browns' bear with the Teddy Turndown Service, while kids of all ages can curl up with their own copy of *The Jungle Book*, which was written in Browns. Teens can indulge in special spa treatments and receive top concierge tips on the hottest places to hang out in town. From US\$650 per night; Tel: +44 20 7493 6020 www.roccofortehotels.com



Kids are entertained at Browns Hotel