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# THE BOSTON Parents' Paper

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## Commercializing Fatherhood

Are the Latest Resources  
for Dads Helpful or  
Simply Patronizing?

**The Skatepark  
in Boston's Future**

New York, Nantucket,  
New Hampshire  
**Great Summer  
Trips for Families**

# Nifty Weekend Getaways

## New York City, Nantucket and New Hampshire

**W**hen families travel, getting there can be the hardest part, from the packing to the hours en route when everyone is prone to crankiness. We've come up with three great summer destinations that are easy for Boston-area families to visit. They're just a short hop by train, highway or (in the case of Nantucket) ferry. You'll arrive relaxed and ready for adventure!

### Living It Up in New York City

Age 6 seemed a good time to introduce my daughter, Sadie, to the Big Apple: old enough to remember the visit in later years and young enough to find New York City truly magical.

We decided to use her two school vacations this year to visit, and we did both trips in radically different ways. One was a frugal family jaunt; the other, a blow-out mother-daughter weekend. Both had their different charms, but one thing is certain: Central Park, taxi cabs and two particular toy stores will always have a special place in my daughter's heart.

#### ■ On the Cheap

Nothing is cheaper than carpooling, and that's what we did with another family in their SUV for the drive to NYC, sharing expenses for gas and tolls and packing plenty of food in coolers. While they opted for a chi-chi boutique hotel, we had searched out Internet deals on [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com). Our pick, the **Hotel Pennsylvania**, is right

across from Penn Station. While it lacked some of the boutique extras, it made up for that in history. Merely sitting in the enormous lobby, as busy as Grand Central Station, is an experience. This 1,700-room hotel, the fourth largest in the city, was built in 1919 and at that time had an astounding 2,220 rooms! You may remember the Glenn Miller Band song, "Pennsylvania 6-5000", which we heard playing over the lobby speakers. This was the hotel's original phone number.

Our visit coincided with the Christo installation, "The Gates," in **Central Park**, so we hopped a cab there (taxis were one of the highlights of my daughter's visit: she hailed them like a veteran New Yorker, imperiously holding up her hand). Once in the park, we went for a stroll, making stops at playgrounds and a carousel. Both children in our two families could have happily spent every day there. But we had planned other stops for our visit: a sightseeing cruise on the Circle Line to get a view of the city from the water; a visit to Toys "R" Us; and a subway trip to see the new Jacques Torres shop called **Chocolate Haven**.

The **Toys "R" Us** flagship has an actual Ferris wheel inside the store. The 60-foot-high ride has cabs themed to toys and characters, so you might ride in a giant Matchbox fire truck or a Barbie purse. Lots of fun and a bargain at just \$4 (plus part of the ticket price goes to charity). A word of advice in a toy store: Set a spending cap beforehand so there won't be any arguing about buying something, which, of course, you'll have to do.



This famous view can be had aboard the Circle Line, a sightseeing boat. PHOTO BY KIM FOLEY MACKINNON

My family has a particular affinity for all things chocolate, be it books, movies or candy, so when we heard that **chocolatier and chef Jacques Torres** had opened a chocolate factory downtown, **Chocolate Haven**, (he has another in Brooklyn), we wanted to visit. We weren't disappointed. Not only could we watch chocolate treats being made through enormous plate-glass windows, the man himself was there! He even posed with the kids at the chocolate bar, where we sampled his signature hot chocolate. It was a delicious end to our trip.

#### ■ No Expense Spared

Our second visit was a bit different, to say the least! This time, just Sadie and I took the **LimoLiner**, a luxuriously outfitted

bus, with just 28 leather seats, wireless Internet, movies, and an attendant who served drinks and meals. The ride was \$76 each way. The bus travels from the Back Bay Hilton to the New York Hilton, both easy-to-get-to spots.

We stayed at the **Ritz-Carlton New York**, in Battery Park, right on New York Harbor; we had a view of the **Statue of Liberty** from our suite. I knew immediately I was setting a dangerous precedent when we checked into our room and the attendant went to get the "princess," as he called her, a child-sized bathrobe. The edible chocolate sculpture of the Statue of Liberty, the telescope to get a closer view of the Liberty Lady and a stuffed bear from **FAO Schwarz** on the bed may also have ruined Sadie for other hotels forever. I did draw the

line at her request for me to call the "Bath Butler," part of a menu of amenities in the suite's bathroom.

If you're planning a luxury stay at the Ritz, several packages may be of interest to families. One in particular, "Discover Downtown," starts at \$789 and includes a two-night stay and the Lower Manhattan Museum and Culture "All-Access Pass," which lets you visit the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the Skyscraper Museum, among many other spots. Plus, you'll get an autographed copy of *The Big Onion Guide to New York City*, breakfast for two each day, a gift bag, and the aforementioned chocolate Statue of Liberty.

The hotel has teamed up with **FAO Schwarz**, hence the bear on the bed, and we went to pay tribute to this revamped store, which reopened last November. Like the Ritz, the toy store is in a class all its own. Live toy soldiers greet you as you enter (there's a ceremony every morning); enormous stuffed jungle creatures beg for touching; and special options, such as designing and making your own Madame Alexander doll, make visiting a very unique experience. An ever-changing

### If You Go...



- **Chocolate Haven**, 350 Hudson at King Street; 212-414-2462; [www.mrchocolate.com](http://www.mrchocolate.com).
- **Circle Line Sightseeing**, Pier 83 at West 42nd St. and 12th Ave., 212-563-3200; [www.circleline42.com](http://www.circleline42.com).
- **FAO Schwarz**, 767 Fifth Ave. at 58th St.; 212-644-9400; [www.fao.com](http://www.fao.com).
- **Hotel Pennsylvania**, 401 Seventh Ave. at 33rd St.; 800-233-8585; [www.hotelpenn.com](http://www.hotelpenn.com).
- **LimoLiner**, 888-LIM-LINZ; [www.limoliner.com](http://www.limoliner.com).
- **The Palace Theatre**, 1564 Broadway at 47th St.; 212-730-8200.
- **Ritz-Carlton New York**, Battery Park; Two West St.; 212-344-0800; [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).
- **Toys "R" Us**, 1514 Broadway; 800-TOYSRUS; [www.toysrus.com/timesquare](http://www.toysrus.com/timesquare).

LED grid-light show on the ceiling; professional dancers performing on the giant floor piano (shoppers get a chance, too); an ice cream shop; and endless things to explore will make this at least a two-hour visit, if not more. It actually is just as much fun for adults as kids.

A Broadway show was the final experience I wanted Sadie to have on this trip. We ended up with matinee tickets to *All Shook Up*, a musical comedy built around **Elvis Presley's** songs. While not an obvious pick to take a kid, it turned out to be a perfect choice. Sadie knew lots of the songs, and the show was high-energy and good fun. She loved it, as did I and the packed house at the Palace Theatre.

Clearly, two visits to New York City were hardly enough to really explore. We're already planning our next visit. Good thing the Big Apple is just a four-hour ride away!

### Relaxing on the Isle of Nantucket

Nantucket is truly like nowhere else. Time seems to stand still on this island south of Cape Cod. Meandering around, peeking into shop windows, playing old-fashioned games, and greeting people you don't know with a "hello" is normal.

Far from Boston, in spirit at least, even a weekend away seems like long vacation.

My family went to the island for a weekend visit and stayed at the Harbor House Village, a distinguished address in Nantucket. The quaint hotel, which dates back 130 years, has all the modern touches while retaining the white wicker look that is *de rigueur* on the island. While my husband and daughter played checkers in the lobby one rainy afternoon, I went on-line in the business center. The hotel is ideally located for walks to **Children's Beach**, which also has a playground, to the town center and the Whaling Museum.

Just in time for its 75th anniversary, the **Whaling Museum** will reopen June 4, after an extensive two-year, \$12.8 million renovation. Besides wonderful updates and new



The sperm whale skeleton in the Whaling Museum hangs above visitors. PHOTO BY KIM FOLEY MACKINNON

interactive displays, the museum is the proud home of the skeleton of a 46-foot sperm whale that died on Nantucket's shores in 1998. The skeleton, smaller than you might think a whale might be, hangs from the ceiling, allowing a 3D look from below, where the floor is painted to look like the ocean. An original whaling boat, smaller than anyone would think sane or safe, sits below. Harpoons and other tools of the trade hang on walls nearby, recalling an era when Nantucket was considered the whaling hub of the universe.

After a pre-opening peek at the museum, it's clear that it will be a must-visit site. Part of it is still housed in a renovated 1847 candle factory, which has the only spermaceti beam press in the world still in its original home. An exhibit space will rotate shows; the scrimshaw collection is stunning; and a children's

discovery room will host programs and story times.

*Continued on the next page*

### If You Go...



- **American Seasons**, 80 Centre St., Nantucket; 508-228-7111; [www.americanseasons.com](http://www.americanseasons.com)
- **Harbor House Village**, 99 South Beach St., Nantucket; 866-325-9300; [www.harborhousevillage.com](http://www.harborhousevillage.com). Families can opt for the "Whale of a Good Time" package at the Harbor House Village or Jared Coffin House. Prices vary, but tickets to the Whaling Museum are included in the rate. Call 800-ISLANDS, or visit [www.nantucketislandresorts.com](http://www.nantucketislandresorts.com).
- **Nantucket Whaling Museum**, 13 Broad St., Nantucket; 508-228-1894; [www.nha.org](http://www.nha.org)