

Is the Kids Club the Ultimate Luxury Amenity for a Parent?

Sally Kohn April 21, 2015

I am sitting on a sun-kissed beach with a piña colada in my left hand and a novel in my right. The piña colada, thick and creamy with a fresh wedge of pineapple balanced on top, was delivered to me just moments ago on my lounge chair. I won't tell you how early it is, lest you think I'm a lush, but drinking at such an early hour is a luxury of vacation. But not more luxurious than what's in my other hand — a book. I'm reading, pages and pages at a time, losing myself in the characters and the story line, drunk on the rare joy of having quiet time to read.



Sometimes parents just need a little breather — even on vacation. (Photo: Thinkstock)

I turn to my partner, in the next beach chair over, also enraptured in her own piña colada and book. “God bless the kids club,” I say. We clink glasses, and our pineapples kiss.

We're on vacation for six days at the [Round Hill Hotel and Villas](#), a luxury boutique property near Montego Bay in Jamaica that boasts 36 oceanfront guest rooms, 27 private villas, a restaurant that includes farm-to-table local food, three bars, five tennis courts, a secluded beach, an infinity pool, a full-service spa and ... a kids club. Let me clarify. *Free* kids club! As an added bonus, the hotel offers trained, experienced nannies for \$10 an hour.

Before I was a parent, my definition of Caribbean paradise was limited to warm weather, decent drinks, and good food. Now it involves babysitting. And stronger drinks.

In her important book, [All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenting](#), and her accompanying [TED Talk](#), Jennifer Senior notes that “parenting” is a rather recent invention. For instance, once upon a time there was only one notable book about parenting — that one from Benjamin Spock that all parents of a certain generation and type had. Compare that with today's cornucopia of books on quite possibly every single aspect of parenting every single type of child.

The idea of a “family vacation” has also evolved. Once upon a time, parents either eschewed travel altogether or took off for lengthy vacations without their children. Next came the era of Disney and of family road trips, vacations that included so much together time that you needed a vacation from your vacation upon your return.

Today we have options. Today you can take all your family members on vacation and make your child temporarily disappear.



Wait. Where's my kid again? (Photo: Thinkstock)

Not only was the existence of a kids club not a factor in vacation planning before becoming a parent but, to be honest, I didn't even know whether the hotels I stayed at had them or not. It was a nonentity in my vacation reality, up there with early meal times and how to tag and collapse a stroller for checking at the gate. During our first real post-baby vacation, we took our year-old daughter to Tulum in Mexico.

She was just starting to walk, and suddenly we couldn't just lounge on the beach and read books. We were chasing after her constantly. When we weren't doing that, one of us was in the room while she was napping. I remember once we got her to sleep in the backpack carrier and walked a mile down the beach to sit and have margaritas, while she was nuzzled up and snoozing. That was something, but it wasn't vacation.

Suddenly, the kids club became a prime variable in our vacation picks.

The resort industry has seen a boom in kids clubs in the past decade. Designed to allow different age groups enjoy a vacation in different ways. Kids can be whisked off on a kidcentric adventure while parents have the luxury of lounging by the pool, comfortable in the knowledge that their children are both well-looked after and close at hand.

The Round Hill Pineapple Kids Club promised plenty of enrichment. Our daughter went on nature walks, did art projects, and took a ride on the hotel's glass-bottom boat, all while making friends with other kids staying at the resort.



Sometimes it's nice for kids to get a break from their parents to hang out with other kids their own age. (Photo: Thinkstock)

Luxury boutique hotels with kids clubs and other special kid-friendly programs are popping up all over the Caribbean. The website [Smith & Family](#), an offshoot of the great Mr. & Mrs. Smith site, is a great resource for finding hotels that boast family-friendly amenities but don't skimp on luxury and design. In Anguilla, the ultraluxe [Viceroy](#) also boasts a kids club program. Several other established high-end properties in the region, such as the [Ritz Carlton](#) in Grand Cayman, boast kids clubs as well.

Do we feel guilty dropping off our daughter at the kids club? Sometimes, even though she often begs us to go, especially if there's a fun craft activity or movie party scheduled. But mostly, I feel less guilty than walking along the beach tipsy with my sleeping child on my back. Good parenting, like everything else, is relative.



Even with a kids club, you can still make time for family time. (Photo: Thinkstock)

On our last day at Round Hill, my partner and I were feeling wistful. It was 84 degrees, the sun was glistening on the turquoise water that stretched out to the horizon, and we knew that in less than 12 hours we'd be back in New York City, where yet another dousing of snow was in the forecast. We thought we would all take one last dip in the ocean, savoring the final moments together, when our daughter asked, "Can I go to the kids club?" We savored our last hour, enjoying the peace and quiet and one more piña colada, which tasted almost as sweet as that last drop of rare time alone. Nowadays, as a parent, that is how I define luxury.

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