

## Plan The Ultimate Family Vacation — Together!

Planning the ultimate family vacation is quite a challenge. This is especially true when you're trying to fit in the best attractions and give your kids the vacation of a lifetime while staying within a budget.

How can you accomplish all that and still keep your kids happy?

The solution is simple, yet brilliant: Let your kids be a part of planning that vacation! This way, they'll be the making many of the choices, thus eliminating the usual complaints and groans about your chosen attractions. Plus, your job will be that much easier. As an added bonus, your kids will learn invaluable lessons about budgeting and making choices.

Several weeks before your planned vacation, hold a family meeting. Then, let your kids know what your destination is before enlisting their help in planning the itinerary. Make sure they know what your exact budget is and fill them in on all the best attractions in the area.

Tell them they are going to have to make some very hard choices. They need to decide exactly what they want to do with the vacation budget.

Do they want to try out the famously fantastic Thai restaurant near the hotel and then spend a day at the beach? Or, would they rather pick up a budget meal and take in the huge amusement park in the area? Do they want to go horseback riding and skip the ATVing? Or, would they rather give both activities a miss and spend the money on water-skiing? Let them know that each option is going to make a dent in the budget, so they need to choose wisely!

To make it even more tangible for your kids, withdraw cash for the entire amount you plan to spend on your vacation and place it on the table. Then, when a choice is made, physically subtract the amount it would cost you from the stash of cash. This will allow your kids to actually see how much each attraction will *cost* them and force them to make better choices.

When your meeting is through, you will have your itinerary planned and your kids will have gained an invaluable life lesson in budgeting and decision-making.

If you've ever taken your kids on vacation and had to listen to them complain about your choice of activities and about not having enough money to do everything, try something different this year! Bring the kids into the budgeting process, letting them know how much you have to spend and what the costs of various attractions will be. You might even withdraw the money needed and make actual piles of cash for each day. They'll quickly understand that choices have to be made, but making them part of the process will improve their attitudes and lead to more summer fun!

Take the complaining out of this year's vacation by making your kids part of the planning process!