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Best Family Vacations



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8 Unexpected Family Vacations to Try in the Mid-Atlantic



BY SHAYNE RODRIGUEZ THOMPSON

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For many families, domestic travel is simply easier and more affordable than leaving the country. But once you've done all the American mainstays like [Disney](#), [New York City](#), [Washington D.C.](#), [San Diego](#), and the major [national parks](#), what's left? Lots! There are so many lesser-known, but still amazingly beautiful, educational and flat-out fun destinations to visit in the United States.

Here, we'll focus on some awesome unexpected family vacation destinations in the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware



1. Albany, New York

There are seriously cool things in Albany. As the state capitol of New York, Albany is a mid-size city that at times feels more like a small town. You can museum hop to learn about everything from history to art, tour and dine at family-friendly breweries, spend a day at Huck Finn's Playland amusement park, and tour the World War II USS Slater DE-766. Feel the need to escape into nature? Head to Washington Park for the Tulip Fest in the spring or to catch a live theater performance during the warmer months.

Alternatively, you can head out for a hike in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, which is known to be one of the most endangered regions in the entire Northeast.

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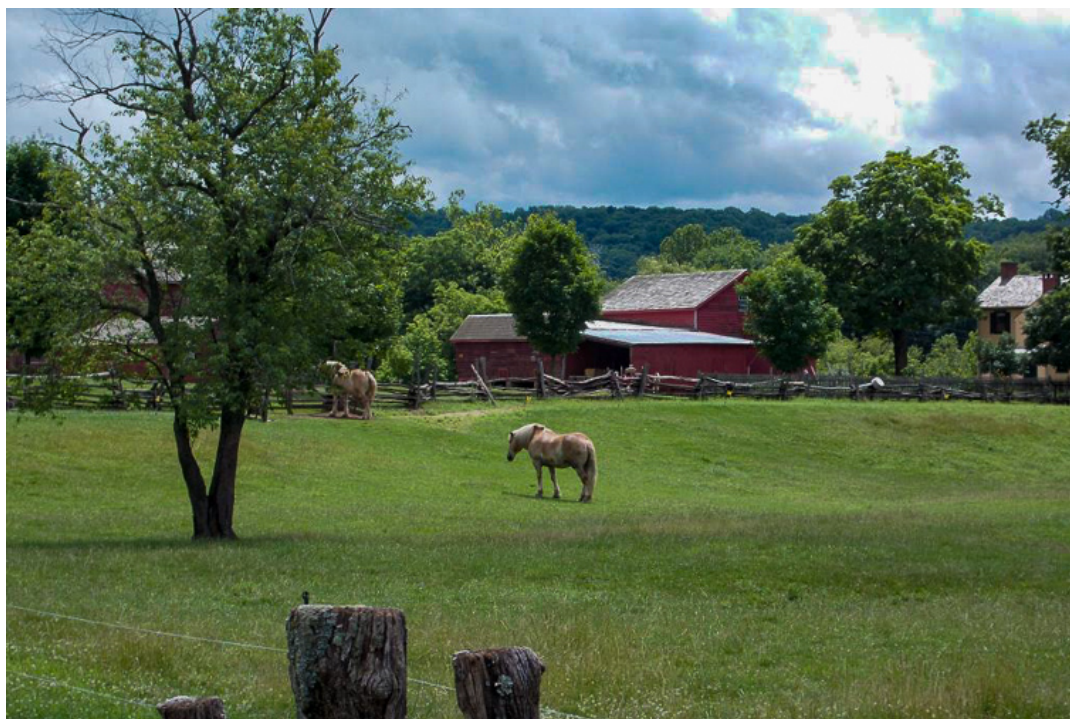
Recommended Hotel: [Renaissance Albany Hotel](#)



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2. Lambertville, New Jersey

The small town of Lambertville, New Jersey, lies along the state’s border with neighboring New Hope in Pennsylvania, and even has a bridge that allows visitors and locals alike to walk between the two states. Lambertville is full of antique shops, unique boutiques and fantastic restaurants for parents to enjoy between activities and excursions the kids will enjoy. Places like the Howell Living History Farm, the Golden Nugget Antique Market and the Holcombe-Jimison Farmstead Museum are fun and enriching for the whole family. Plus, [Philadelphia](#) is under an hour away if you feel like venturing into a big city.

Recommended Hotel: Lambertville Station Restaurant & Inn



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3. Cape May, New Jersey

[Cape May](#) is the Jersey Shore like you've never seen it. Its beach is much calmer and more serene than those farther north, and there's a vast array of activities and sights to explore. You can climb the Cape May Lighthouse and go on a dolphin and whale watching cruise one day, shop and dine at adorable and high-end boutiques and restaurants in the town's historic center another, and spend the day at the free-admission Cape May County Zoo, which is home to more than 500 animals and features a playground and picnic tables. Even the lodging options in Cape May are varied, with everything from campgrounds to [luxury hotels](#).

Recommended Hotel: [Congress Hall](#)



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4. Easton, Pennsylvania

For families with young children, Easton might be best known as the home of the [Crayola Experience](#). When it's not overly crowded, Crayola is definitely a fun attraction with lots of cute and educational activities for children. But Easton, located in the [Lehigh Valley](#), offers so much more than [crayons](#). Easton's historic downtown is flat-out charming, full of antique and vintage shops and cozy restaurants. You can explore the Easton Public Market for locally made treats and other goods, stroll the Karl Stirner Arts Trail along Bushkill Creek, and learn something new at the Nurture Nature Center. On weekends from June through November, there's even a free historic trolley tour. Boat enthusiasts might also enjoy taking a canal boat tour along the Lehigh Canal in Hugh Moore Park, which includes admission to the National Canal Museum.

Recommended Hotel: [Grand Eastonian Hotel & Suites](#)



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5. Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware

Delaware may be a tiny state and one that you don't hear about all that often. But as America's first state, it's rich in history and surprisingly resplendent with natural attractions. Cape Henlopen State Park encompasses ocean beaches, hiking and biking trails, a seaside nature center, and the Fort Miles Museum. There's so much to do, a single day trip wouldn't be long enough. However, the park features a campground with [tent](#) sites and cabins, so you can actually spend your entire family vacation onsite. But thanks to Delaware's petite size, you can also venture out to popular spots like [Rehoboth Beach](#), Fenwick Island and the capital city of Dover, all in under an hour.

Recommended Hotel: [Avenue Inn & Spa](#)



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6. Annapolis, Maryland

Unless you're a U.S. Navy or sailing aficionado, [Annapolis](#) may not be a destination that's crossed your mind often, but it's a wonderful place to visit with children. Most of course, will get a kick out of just seeing the hundreds of sailboats typically docked on the city's shores, but Maryland's capital city is brimming with pretty incredible sights for visitors to enjoy. The Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Memorial is the only U.S. memorial that recognizes the name and place of arrival of a slave from Africa, and it's an absolute must-see for history buffs. From there, you can head straight into downtown to browse some of Annapolis's quirky shops and restaurants (be sure to try the seafood) and walk up to see the stunning 18th century brick houses and the imposing domed Maryland State House, where you can actually take a guided tour. x

Recommended Hotel: [The Graduate Annapolis](#)



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7. Frederick, Maryland

Frederick, Maryland, is a self-proclaimed “hip” town that offers a blend of natural attractions such as hiking and biking trails along the Appalachian Trail, beautiful scenic byways perfect for an autumn drive, and a 78-foot waterfall in Cunningham Falls State Park. Venture downtown and you’ll find a slew of restaurants, Maryland’s largest brewery (Flying Dog Brewery) and a fun public art trail that children are sure to enjoy; be sure to find the dinosaur mural! There are even a number of interesting and unique museums

Museum, and Rose Hill Manor Park & Museum, which has its own children’s museum. From Frederick, you can easily head into [Washington, D.C.](#)—it’s only about an hour away.

Recommended Hotel: [Hampton Inn Frederick](#)



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8. Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Located along the Potomac River, Harper’s Ferry is the site of Harper’s Ferry National Historical Park, where visitors will find a Civil War Museum; John ^xBrown’s Fort, which

Outdoorsy types can hike parts of the Appalachian Trail; take in incredible views of both Maryland and Virginia at “The Point,” where the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers meet; and climb up to see the unique formations at Jefferson Rock. While Harper’s Ferry is certainly a haven for nature lovers, train enthusiasts can enjoy sights like the Historic Harpers Ferry Station, others can check out the offbeat John Brown Wax Museum, and history buffs can visit the small, but historically significant White Hall Tavern.

Recommended Hotel: [Clarion Inn Harpers Ferry](#)



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Shayne is a freelance writer and editor who has been passionately covering all things travel, food, wellness and parenting for over a decade. Experiencing the world and its diversity of cultures through travel is one of her favorite things to do, especially alongside her adventure-loving kids and husband. More of her work can be found on [SmarterTravel.com](#), [CruiseCritic.com](#), [MamasLatinas.com](#), [VivaFifty.com](#), [CafeMom.com](#) and her personal blog, [fitmamilife.com](#). Shayne’s work has also appeared on Huffpost, ABC News and BabyCenter.com.

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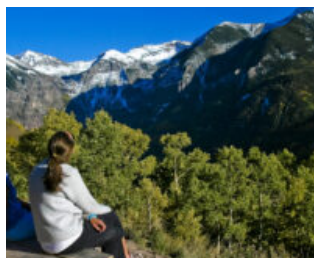
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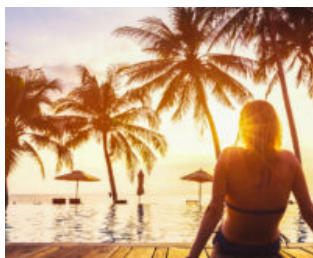
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