

Travel tips, trips and deals



Family-friendly travel to Costa Rica (Anne Chalfant, MCT)

By Phil Marty, Special to Tribune Newspapers
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Travel as a health regimen

Polar vortices have much of the country thinking winter will never end, which makes it a good distraction to start planning next summer's vacation. Friendly Planet Travel has put together a list of nine family getaways for this summer that explore destinations as diverse as Japan, Costa Rica or the Greek Isles. The getaways are discounted at the moment and also promise additional discounts for kids who will be 11 or younger at the time of travel. The nine-day Costa Rica Pura Vida, for instance, is regularly priced from \$1,899 per adult double occupancy but is marked down to \$1,599 for a June 25 departure from Miami when booked by Feb. 11. That includes round-trip air, eight nights' lodging, some meals and services of a guide in Tortuguero National Park. Air add-on from other cities includes \$170 from Boston, \$225 from Chicago, \$150 from New York, \$300 from Philadelphia and \$145 from Washington. Discounts for kids are available by calling 800-555-5765. Info: tinyurl.com/lm8qj93

Big dose of 'Downton'

Admit it. You can't get enough of "**Downton Abbey**" and those British aristocrats. So, naturally, money is no object, and you'd be more than happy to spend \$4,500 per person to visit some of the Crawleys' haunts in merry old England. If so, the Downton Abbey Themed Vacation from Zicasso is just your cup of tea. You'll visit the real Downton Abbey, the magnificent Highclere Castle, and stroll through the village of Bampton, where filming takes place. You'll also tour southern England with your own private chauffeur, an expert on **World War I** and the British aristocracy. During a private tour of London you'll learn about the Edwardian era and World War I while visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum and Imperial War Museum. You'll also explore the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge. For an additional fee you can experience such things as a private afternoon tea at Highclere, served by a full staff. Info: tinyurl.com/lkxet3l

Across the U.S. by bike

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There are bike trips and then there are *bike trips*. Trek Travel has come up with one of the latter with its new Cross Country USA: Portland to Portland. Deep pockets, lots of spare time and tons of stamina are the prerequisites for this trip, which departs the West Coast on Aug. 24 and rolls into Portland, Maine, a mere 45 days later. In between you'll pedal 3,600 miles in 39 riding days, with more than 130,000 feet of climbing. The shortest day will be 37 miles. The longest? 125. Matter of fact, there will be 15 days with mileage exceeding 100 miles. If the riding doesn't take your breath away, the price might: \$16,999 per person double occupancy. For that you get 44 nights' lodging, most meals, route support, experienced guides, use of a Trek Domane 5.9 carbon road bike with Shimano Di2 electronic shifting, various tours, luggage transfers and more. Info: 866-464-8735, tinyurl.com/lz6jt69



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