

# Travelling children of today is the future of tourism

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The family market is economically substantial and predicted to grow in the future, and the tourism industry has to capitalise on this market by promoting experiences that make planning a family holiday that much more convenient.



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Children have long had a say in where their families go on holiday and what activities they want to get involved in once they get there.

There are new family tourism markets emerging, with traditional family markets also becoming more adventurous and wanting to diversify experiences to cater to varying family interests.

Before children come along, couples are able to travel out of season when it is cheaper and quieter. However, once they have children, holiday choices change and their look for family-friendly products and experiences.

Take the case of a British family that was coming to South Africa for a family visit recently. The young children had been learning all about Nelson Mandela in their history classes, so having heard about the Capture Site near Howick in KwaZulu-Natal, that was top of their local "must visit" list.

The decision having been made, their host family duly made the necessary arrangements for the trip, along with an overnight stay at a nearby hotel.

## **Destination travel: Children and their influence**

The entire trip was influenced by the children's destination choice and the local spin-off was that the Capture Site got a total of six more visitors (and sales in the gift shop), the local hotel got bookings-and, of course, publicity when the children's mother posted pictures of the hotel on social media singing praises of the destination.

According to research, parents are certainly not in full control of where the family goes on holiday. In America, it is said that 40% of teens influence where the family holidays will take place.

It is much the same in Europe and Australia where decisions are taken as a family as a whole with parents granting their children a voice that is equal to their own.

Other research reveals that 75% of parents show their children holiday brochures and ask what they think, with children offering ideas and suggestions. Of course, the nature of their involvement depends on their age.

South Africa has countless attractions that appeal to parents and their children alike, so although children have a say, their parents are just as keen on the destinations that they like.

The multi award-winning uShaka Marine World in Durban, for example, is one just attraction, appealing to every member of the family, with the Drakensberg, Hluhluwe and St Lucia gaining popularity among families that have traditionally associated a holiday in KwaZulu-Natal with Durban only.

Every province has attractions that offer memorable fun, family holidays.

Parents like bargains and good value for money too and thousands of South African families cruise with their children in local waters every year. MSC, whose home port is

Durban for the South African cruise season, offers free cruising – other than the mandatory port charges – for children under 18, sharing with two adults.

## **Tourism impact: Introducing children to hospitality**

Some hotels too often offer special deals, like catering for two children under 18 who can eat breakfast and stay free when sharing a family room with two adults. And some hotels offer babysitting and child care services, pandering to the young guest's every need while giving their parents a break at the same time.

The good thing about introducing children to hospitality and holidays is that they get used to going away and that bodes well for the tourism industry of the future. They will eventually become paying, adult tourists, and if they have had an enjoyable experience at a holiday destination, hotel or B&B in their childhood, it will have earned their loyalty and they are likely to return one day with their own families.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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