

## 5 educational spring break ideas for families

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TravelingMom.com

If you can't head off to a warm beach destination for spring break, it's OK. Actually, it's terrific! Why? Because there are plenty of other destinations to consider. If you'd like your kids to go back to school smarter than they were before the vacation, consider some of our favorite educational spring break ideas. Tans fade. Brains are forever.

Here are some of my favorite trip ideas and why I think they rock.

### **1. A Revolutionary idea: Tour Boston or Philadelphia**

Taking the kids to one of the two cities that figured prominently in the Revolutionary War is one of the best educational spring break trips you can take. It's particularly wonderful to go during a school

year when one or more of your kids is studying the Colonial War of Aggression (as the British called it).

In Boston, you'll want to walk the Freedom Trail ([travelingmom.com/family-vacation-destinations/east-coast-destinations/boston-freedom-trail/](http://travelingmom.com/family-vacation-destinations/east-coast-destinations/boston-freedom-trail/)). Stops along the way include Paul Revere's House and the Old North Church. It's really fun for kids to see where the memorable "one if by land, two if by sea" lanterns were hung.

Philadelphia is famous for the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, of course. You might also want to visit Declaration House — it's where Thomas Jefferson hung out and wrote the Declaration of Independence.

Besides all that history stuff, these cities are fun places to

explore with kids. They can be budget-friendly, too; check out our free things to do guides in Boston ([travelingmom.com/fun-things-to-do-with-kids/free-massachusetts/20-free-things-to-do-in-boston/](http://travelingmom.com/fun-things-to-do-with-kids/free-massachusetts/20-free-things-to-do-in-boston/)) and Philly ([travelingmom.com/family-vacation-destinations/northeast-destinations/fun-free-things-to-do-in-philadelphia/](http://travelingmom.com/family-vacation-destinations/northeast-destinations/fun-free-things-to-do-in-philadelphia/)).

### **2. Explore america's greatest treasures — our national parks**

In my opinion, our federally funded national parks system is the best in the world. I've visited many — Zion, Grand Canyon and Yosemite, for example — and I'd happily spend the rest of my days touring the rest. They're magnificent and extremely well-maintained.

If you're an outdoorsy family, feel free to camp, hike and rough it all you like. We're not that family, but we still enjoyed

our park experiences because the parks have entertaining and informative visitor centers, friendly park rangers and awesome scenery.

When visiting a U.S. National Park, be sure to participate in the Junior Ranger program ([nps.gov/kids/jrRangers.cfm](http://nps.gov/kids/jrRangers.cfm)). It's an educational program designed for kids to help them learn about the park geology and animal and plant life. Participating children receive a Junior Ranger badge and certificate. They'll have fun showing it off when they return to school after spring break.

### **3. Head south (or north) of the border**

If your kids are studying Spanish in school, consider a trip to one of our Spanish-speaking neighbors, like Mexico or Costa Rica ([travelingmom.com/destinations-international/things-to-do-with-kids-in-manuel-antonio/](http://travelingmom.com/destinations-international/things-to-do-with-kids-in-manuel-antonio/)).

Alternatively, if your child is taking French lessons, a visit to Quebec ([travelingmom.com/destinations-international/hiking-with-kids-quebec/](http://travelingmom.com/destinations-international/hiking-with-kids-quebec/)) is a wonderful way for them to practice their language skills in a fun environment.

I'm a firm believer in learning polite language skills for travel, a lesson I imparted to my kids. Knowing how to say "please," "thank you," "excuse me" and "where is the bathroom?" in different countries is something a well-behaved traveler does.

Trust me. When your little one orders her first pommes frites in a Quebec cafe and is rewarded with an ear-to-ear smile from the server, she'll understand the power and joy of knowing how to communicate in another language.

### **4. Blind them with science**

Kids love science. I was reminded of this during when solar eclipse fever gripped the nation last summer. It was a great way to feed kids' education in a way that was totally cool. Think about it. We talked about the solar system and orbits, the delicate construction of human eyes and how reflective viewers work. And we could do all of this while wearing glasses that were equal parts cool and dorky.

There are so many wonderful children's science museums in the U.S. Check out some of the best and plan a trip. You may spark a life-long passion or at least bring home some fun ideas for experiments.

### **5. How'd they build that?**

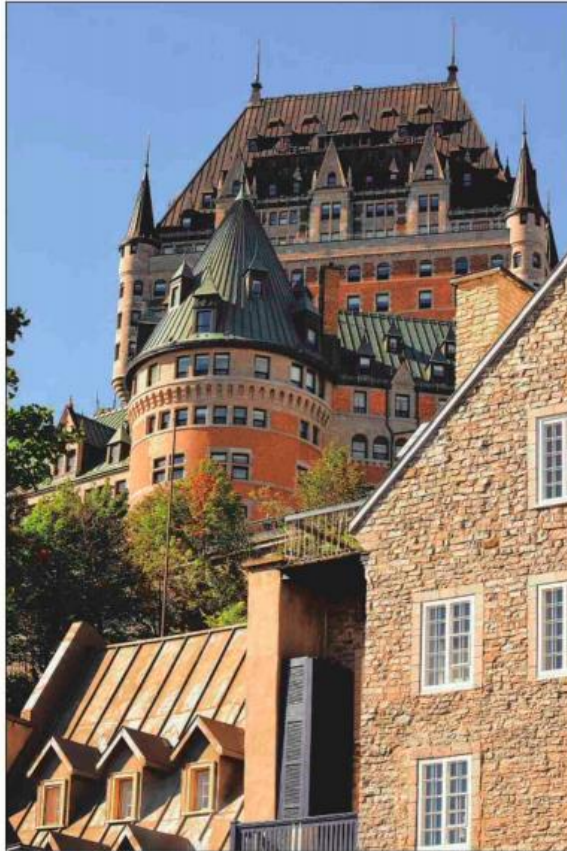
Just as wonderful as America's natural parks are our

country's engineered marvels. I'm thinking of iconic structures like the Hoover Dam, the Statue of Liberty or the Golden Gate Bridge. A visit to one of these destinations is one of my favorite educational spring break ideas.

If a tour is offered, take it. It's the best way to learn about how and why these things were built. Be sure to check dates, times and reservation policies well in advance.

There's an added bonus to taking a trip to see one of these landmarks. They make great backdrops for family photos. It's never too early to start thinking about your holiday cards.

- A version of this story first appeared online at [TravelingMom.com](http://TravelingMom.com), the leading family travel website.



COURTESY OF CATHY BENNETT KOPF/TRAVELINGMOM.COM

**If your child is taking French, Quebec offers a way for her to practice her language skills in a fun environment.**



COURTESY OF CATHY BENNETT KOPF/TRAVELINGMOM.COM

**If you visit New York City, make time to marvel at the Statue of Liberty.**

STORY ALSO FEATURED IN THESE OUTLETS:

**DAILY HERALD (ELGIN/SOUTH ELGIN) DAILY HERALD (PALATINE/INVERNESS)**

**DAILY HERALD (SCHAUMBURG) DAILY HERALD (MOUNT PROSPECT/PROSPECT HEIGHTS)**

**DAILY HERALD (LIBERTYVILLE/MUNDELEIN/VERNON HILLS) DAILY HERALD (ELK GROVE)**

**DAILY HERALD (ST. CHARLES/WAYNE) DAILY HERALD (NAPERVILLE)**

**DAILY HERALD (HOFFMAN ESTATES) DAILY HERALD (CARPENTERSVILLE/E. DUNDEE/GILBERTS)**

**DAILY HERALD (LAKE ZURICH/WAUCONDA) DAILY HERALD (ROUND LAKE/FOX LAKE/ANTIOCH)**

**DAILY HERALD (ROSELLE/BLOOMINGDALE/MEDINAH ) DAILY HERALD (GURNEE/GRAYSLAKE)**

**DAILY HERALD (ROLLING MEADOWS) DAILY HERALD (DES PLAINES/ROSEMONT)**

**DAILY HERALD (WARRENVILLE/WEST CHICAGO/WINFIELD) DAILY HERALD (HANOVER PARK/STREAMWOOD/DUPAGE)**

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