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Our Outrageously Successful Intergenerational Trip To Crested Butte

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Our outrageously successful intergenerational trip to Crested Butte

BY SANDY BORNSTEIN

When my husband and I raised four children, we never imagined our current scenario—an expat son living in Asia with his family and our other three sons traveling extensively for business. In any given week, at least one son is traveling and oftentimes more than one is on the road.

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With so many schedules to juggle, opportunities to bring the whole family together are limited. While my ultimate goal is to have everyone under the same roof at least once a year, I feel fortunate when three out of our four sons gather with their respective families.

One of the main ingredients for our successful intergenerational trip was the mixture of flexible time and scheduled events.

After our expat grandson was born, I struggled. My initial concept of family unity didn't jive with reality. Over time, I accepted the fact that the consistent grandparent visits of my children's youth would not be part of my expat grandchildren's memories. To compensate for this deficit, we connected on a regular basis using FaceTime. Instead of being frustrated with a situation that wasn't going to change, I adapted. I found ways to connect with our grandson despite the distance that separated us.

While FaceTime and Skype can bring families together by using modern technology, these methods will never replace actual visits. Within months of our grandson's birth, we started planning intergenerational trips in the United States and abroad. These trips united my husband and me with our son and his family, but these wonderful adventures did not connect our son's family with the rest of our family.

During past visits to the US, our time together as a family was limited to a meal or two or possibly a family photo shoot. The time at these events passed far too quickly. Within no time, our grandson flew back to India without much interaction with his American based family.

My dissatisfaction with this situation resulted in the planning of a family trip that coincided with the time our expat son and his family would be in the United States. Luckily, two of his younger brothers were available. His third brother didn't want to commit since he was uncertain if his family would be able to travel with a two-year-old and a newborn infant.

To maximize the quality of our interaction time, we rented a mountain home



The family photo was taken at Anderson Park in Wheat Ridge, Colorado by Beth Wedlake of Wedlake Photographic.

My great idea was on the verge of igniting before it materialized. Finding a mutually convenient destination became a source of family tension. After flying halfway around the world, it wasn't practical to subject our two-year-old grandson to a long road trip. Without having any prior experience traveling with young children, our childless sons couldn't foresee any issues with subjecting a toddler to sitting for an extremely long period

of time. Fortunately the desire to get together outweighed the selection of a destination. We agreed to travel to Crested Butte, a four and a half hour drive, instead of the original



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idea to drive eight hours.

To maximize the quality of our interaction time, we rented a mountain home. Our Indian daughter-in-law wanted to experience something different than the towns she had previously visited in Summit County, Colorado. Finding a rental property with enough space for everyone was more difficult than I originally anticipated. Our time in Crested Butte coincided with the popular wildflower season. Larger homes with four king or queen beds, four bedrooms, four bathrooms, and two family rooms were in short supply since we were booking within three months of arrival.

Fortunately, a rental home meeting all of our criteria appeared on the [HomeAway website](#) and our refundable deposit was immediately sent. The three-story floor plan and pertinent details were forwarded to everyone for their final okay. I breathed a huge sigh of relief when our sons and their significant others agreed to go ahead. My only fear was that the house description and pictures didn't match up with the actual property. I held my breath as family members toured the slighted dated property after arrival.

With so many dietary preferences, it wasn't practical to coordinate the food items that everyone would be packing in their respective cars. Having an oversize kitchen with a built-in Sub-Zero side-by-side refrigerator offered plenty of cold storage space for family members with diverse diets. Each family member prepared his or her own breakfasts and lunches for a day of hiking or biking.

By far my best memory is the day we hiked together as a family

Daily activity preferences and differing abilities to cope with the high altitude resulted in three cars heading in multiple directions. Everyone was free to choose his or her preferred destination and the amount of time away from the rented home. We coordinated with our expat son and his family since they were passengers in our car on the way to and from Crested Butte.

In



in addition to the proximity to Denver, we selected Crested Butte for its family friendly trails and hospitable environment. We were able to select easier terrain that offered engaging points of interest for a toddler—pine cones, rocks, sticks, crawling bugs, butterflies, birds, wildflowers, waterfalls, fish, and lakes with towering mountains in the distance.

Hiking with a young child presents its own set of concerns. To protect him from the high altitude sunshine, he wore a wide brimmed hat and was covered with sunscreen. Closed shoes replaced his everyday sandals. His parents' backpack was loaded with plenty of water, snacks, an extra outfit, a coat, rain gear, and sanitary wipes. Like most young kids, our grandson loved picking up just about everything, especially pine cones, that he saw on the path. He smiled throughout our wilderness adventures and was most content walking at his own pace rather than being carried. His displeasure only became apparent when wipes were used to remove the remaining traces of the treasures he held during our treks.

One of the main ingredients for our successful intergenerational trip was the mixture of

flexible time and scheduled events. Everyone chose their daily activities and determined their start and end times. We occasionally regrouped in the afternoon for a brief trip to a nearby coffee shop or shared homemade snacks in the family room. The logistics of a mega sized home provided ample space for everyone during their respective downtime. As a family, we dined at some of Crested Butte's notable restaurants. One evening, we had the rare opportunity to celebrate our grandson's upcoming birthday by singing "Happy Birthday" and eating a cake prepared by one of his aunts.

By far my best memory is the day we hiked together as a family. While our grandson's pace was incredibly slow, everyone appreciated his fascination with nature and his perpetual smile. Our photos of this Crested Butte retreat inspire me to plan our next family vacation. A double dose of patience will be required as I attempt to coordinate a more complex scenario. Our next intergenerational trip will address the needs of five grandchildren.

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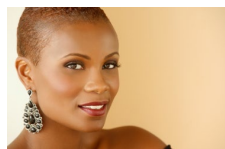
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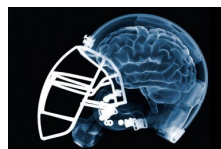
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