

REAL SIMPLE travel

The ultimate vacation planning guide

43 foolproof destinations
How to get the best deals
Secrets from travel agents
Kid-friendly getaways

- + 18 hotels under \$200
- 19 packing tricks
- airport shortcuts
- wrinkle-free clothing

special
issue





Choose Your Own Adventure

Planning a vacation should not involve both (a) a map and (b) a dart. This problem-solving guide will give you plenty of destination ideas for your next trip. Consider it roam service.

THE WORLD MAY BE YOUR OYSTER, but cracking open the shell can be tough. Whittling down a globeful of options to one destination is no easy task. Throw in limited vacation time and the occasional unrealistic expectation (a tour of Italy with Grandma and the kids in less than a week!) and you may opt to stay home.

To help, *Real Simple* created a getaway guide, organized by specific travel dilemmas. You'll discover exotic cities in time zones that don't induce jet lag, places in Europe off the beaten path, and kid-friendly vacations where you won't hear "It's a Small World" even once. So read on to find your pearl.

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problem
solution

You need an island getaway, but the idea of a long flight takes the wind out of your sails.

Go to an island in the United States—which can often be found within driving distance.



◀ Block Island, Rhode Island

Why: Block Island, which sits between mainland Rhode Island and the tip of New York's Long Island, is less developed than Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket but has the same New England charm.

What to do: Head to Mansion Beach for good waves and few tourists, and visit the island's enormous cliffs, Mohegan Bluffs.

Where to stay: The National Hotel (doubles starting at \$199 in late June, www.blockislandhotels.com) is famous, but most families rent houses in the interior of the island (try Sullivan Real Estate, www.blockislandhouses.com).

Bald Head Island, North Carolina

Why: Cars are not allowed on the island—just golf carts. What's more relaxing than that?

What to do: Visit Eb & Flo's, famous for its pots of steamed seafood. Or stay in and e-mail a grocery list to the Maritime Market; it delivers.

Where to stay: A private house. An average two-bedroom rental runs \$2,800 a week in high season, Memorial Day through Labor Day. Renting through Bald Head Island Limited (www.baldheadisland.com) gets you free access to the Bald Head Island Club, which caters to golfers, and to the beachside Shoals Club.

Catalina Island, California

Why: Catalina has some of the best snorkeling in the United States, and its famous colored tiles (created by local artists in the 1920s and 30s) decorate everything from fountains to trash cans.

What to do: Shop and eat in Avalon, the island's only city. Hike the many trails or ride horseback. And stop by the airport, a bona fide tourist destination, high on a mesa in the middle of the island.