**Reasons why you need to travel with your children today!**

**-Vinita Rk**

Being the youngest in my family with two siblings and a 20-year gap difference, I was undoubtedly the *princess* of the house. Moreover, my siblings live abroad, which essentially means from the time I reached middle school, my summer vacations with my family have not been to my maternal or paternal villages but to UAE and South East Asia, where they lived earlier.

As I grew older, these abroad vacations continued and as a family, we found our happiness traveling. It rarely happened that we spent more than three or four months without a road trip or traveling somewhere new. To travel, explore and find new places has become ‘my’ way of life and now that I have a family of my own; the itch to travel and explore continues.

While I have friends who would rather save money for the ‘future’, I am one of those impulsive people who unquestionably and unarguably spend all the savings to travel. As a mother to a nine year old daughter, I realize now that there are so many ‘life skills’ I learnt by simply traveling to new places.

In today’s times, simply putting one’s child in an international school will not cut it out! I want my daughter to grow, thrive and discover her own voice in this big world and that can happen only when she travels.

As a working woman, a mother and an avid traveler; I am listing down a few places and must have experiences for every family.

Places to Visit:

**Desert:** There is absolutely nothing that can prepare you to live in a desert. I am an avid researcher and I am that person, who carries a lot of books, cut outs and reviews for every place I travel but the pin drop silence in the night, the cold wind, the feeling of being absolutely alone in this big world is something every person has to experience. I took my then 2 year old daughter camping in the desert, that was her first time and the entire process of setting up a tent, lying down in sleeping bags, roasting marshmallows and canned soup in campfire was out of a movie and it was an absolutely must have, safe and humbling experience.

Best places to camp:

* Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
* Hajar Mountains, Oman
* Umm Al Quwain, Dubai, UAE
* Morocco

**National Parks:** I am a born and bred city girl and when I was younger, the idea of camping, sleeping in tents and being one with nature did not excite me. In fact, on my first trip camping on a riverside, I was bitten by mosquitoes, shared a toilet with river frogs and the overall lack of hygiene put me off for several years. Later, on a family trip abroad, we camped at the National Park and that ‘scouting, camping, lighting fire and even telling scary stories at night’ became a must have event for every family trip. I have camped in national parks across the world, with my 70 year old mother, 9 year old daughter and as a couple and this is a must have experience to bond and grow closer together as a family.

Best places to camp:

* Jim Corbett National Park, India: There are options to choose from staying in luxury hotels to camping at specified campsites, both are an amazing experience.
* Yellowstone National Park, USA: Rent an RV, take a big tent or sleep inside the RV and enjoy!
* Alps, Switzerland
* Nubra Valley, Ladakh, India

**Villages:** Being a city born, born to parents who had no family or ancestral homes in villages, honestly, my experience of villages has purely been by chance. My sister, an avid yoga instructor and mosaic artist, loves to travel to small villages across India to discover local art and artists. Initially, I hated the idea of staying in homes without A/Cs, no TV and Internet connection (I first visited villages in the early 2000s!) and eating food that was not pizzas and burgers, my staple meals. I enjoyed, however, pumping water from the water pipe, getting water from a well, sleeping in jute and cane beds, using hand fans and eating local food. When I took my daughter for the first time, I was pretty certain she was going to hate it but to my complete surprise, she loved it. She played with the local girls of the village, fed food to the peacocks who would come to the roof every day, ate local food and enjoyed herself, without being bound to the online world.

Best villages to see:

This is purely personal but since I have visited a lot of villages across South India, Maharashtra and Goa- we just drive and stop at a place which appeals to us and enjoy the ‘local’ life there.

Beyond India, the villages of Switzerland, Southern Italy, small Amish villages in the US are all amazing places to explore and stay.

I have traveled across South East Asia, UAE, US and Europe and despite the countless trips, I always feel I come back a little wiser and with definitely a lighter pocket!

As far as my daughter is concerned, I thoroughly recommend traveling with your children from a young age, it teaches them to adapt, communicate, explore and try out new things, eat new dishes and interact with people across all cultures, classes and communities. It makes you realize, the world is indeed a small and beautiful place and you come back home, feeling at home, in each new place, every single time.