

ANALOG LIFE

# Why Awe Should Be on Your Summer Vacation Checklist

BY  
Sandi Schwartz

POSTED ON  
July 17, 2017 (July 17, 2017)

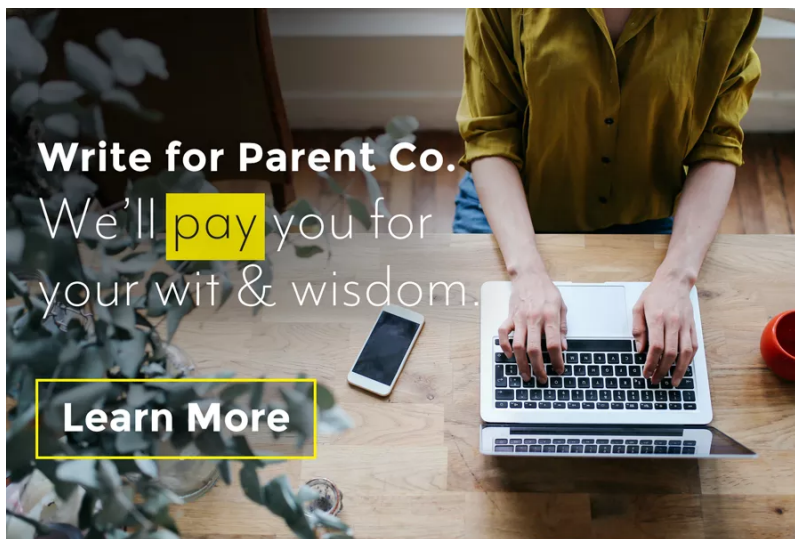


f 147 p 1 ✉

Why do you go on family vacations? Bringing the kids along isn't exactly relaxing. Sometimes I feel like it's actually more stressful to make all the plans, pack all the bags, and drag the whole family to a destination so we can all live on top of each other in a small hotel room for a week. Why on earth would we want to put ourselves through this trouble anyway?

Taking a family trip is really about giving our children new experiences so they can learn and grow as individuals. By forcing our kids out of familiar territory, we help them make new discoveries, meet new types of people, observe other cultures, and appreciate the expansive world around them. The most powerful way that our children can be transformed by a trip is if they feel a sense of awe during this time.

What exactly is awe, anyway? Awe is that overwhelming feeling filled with wonder, joy, and sometimes even fear. These instances can be so exhilarating that we get goosebumps on our arms, feel tingling up and down our spine, tears flood our eyes, and our jaw drops. Our kids may feel awe when they see something gorgeous in nature like a rainbow, witness an incredible science experiment or magic trick, or be in a place where they realize the vastness of the world like on a boat ride in the ocean.



Awe is not just about having a brief thrill. Experiencing awe is scientifically proven to give us a whole host of benefits, such as stimulating curiosity, reducing stress and anxiety, improving our interpersonal relationships, changing our perception of time, making us feel grateful, and boosting our physical health.

A family vacation, whether it is an hour away from our home or halfway across the world, can involve awe-inspiring moments for our kids. By planning creative trips with awe in mind, we can help make these powerful moments part of our family vacations that our children will never forget. The world is literally your oyster when it comes to incorporating awe into your travel plans. From museums to music and theater performances to nature landmarks, you can give your children so many opportunities to get chills up and down their spines (in a good way).

My family recently traveled to the Pacific Northwest for a week-long vacation. It's truly astonishing how many awe-filled moments we remember. The plane ride itself is ripe with potential for our kids to wonder. Encouraging them to look out the window and talking to them about what it looks and feels like to be flying high up in the sky amongst the clouds is one such opportunity. It's such a special moment when a child realizes how massive the world around her is and that there is much more beyond her house, neighborhood, and school. I often get so overwhelmed with deep thoughts while gazing out an airplane window that my eyes become tear-filled. That is awe in action.

We began our trip in Portland, Oregon. We first visited the International Rose Test Garden and enjoyed the colorful flowers and incredible fragrances of them all. Just seeing so many roses in one place gave us a sense of awe, and smelling the different flowers was also pretty amazing. Spending time outside offers endless ways for us to get inspired and to remember how precious our natural environment is. You have endless options for adding a nature stop on all family vacations, no matter where you are traveling to.

Interestingly enough, nature is not the only thing that can inspire awe. Manmade structures can also have the same impact on us. We visited the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum in Oregon, and were all quite impressed with what we saw there. That museum is the home of the largest airplane ever to be built and successfully fly. We learned so much about the Hughes Flying Boat H-4 Spruce Goose from a captivating movie, and then were able to walk through the old plane to feel in person how grandiose it actually was. We all were amazed by how something so heavy and massive could take off and fly through the air.

Next on the list was the Oregon Zoo. I have been to my fair share of zoos, but this time we were fortunate to see something quite remarkable. There was an orangutan who completely got our attention. We stood there staring at him for at least a half an hour, watching his every move. We could not believe how much he looked and behaved like a human. He was playful, actually acting like a comedian for the audience observing him. He was using a blanket to swing on the branches in his pen and looking right at us as though he was trying to talk to us.

I spoke to my children about evolution, and this hands-on educational moment definitely triggered awe in them when they realized how closely related we were to the orangutan at the zoo. Watching animals and other people closely, in an almost mindful way, can be quite awe-inspiring at times and open our eyes to new behaviors and cultures.

We then made our way north to Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, which really blew us away (not literally, thank goodness). We watched two powerful films about the volcanic eruption in 1980. We learned about the instantaneous devastation in the area, but also heard how nature miraculously revived itself over time. My kids were very excited to be that close to a real volcano, something they definitely do not see every day. We all felt a sense of awe about how powerful nature can be, and how delicate life is when faced with that type of major event.

During our next stop in Seattle, we spent some time at the [Chihuly Garden and Glass](#) museum. Art is another path to awe. When we work on art projects or observe art, we get lost in the moment and are almost transported in our minds to someplace else. The exquisite displays of larger-than-life glass creations definitely made us all get that indescribable feeling, making us think, “How did the artist possibly create that?” Viewing art can inspire curiosity and creativity in our children, and I highly recommend that you include some art experiences on your upcoming vacation agenda.

Finally, when we were in Vancouver, Canada, we stopped in at the BC Sports Hall of Fame museum. It was here in we all learned about another way to feel awe: from people’s unbelievable stories of courage and strength. There was an exhibit about Rick Hansen, a man who become paralyzed after getting in a truck accident at the age of 15 and then went on to win 19 international wheelchair marathons, including three world championships. We also learned about another Canadian, Terry Fox, who lost a leg to bone cancer but then ended up riding his wheelchair on a “Man In Motion Tour,” logging more than 40,000 kilometers through 34 countries on four continents. Talk about awe-inspiring!

As you can see from our recent vacation, you can [find awe in some surprising places](#). Next time you are planning out your family trip, consider scheduling in some experiences that will give your children the opportunity to say “Wow!”

 147

 1





TAGGED IN

- arts
- building character
- nature and outdoors
- sports and athletics
- travel

## More Recommendations for You



**Conducting These 3 “Mom Audits” Made Me a Better Parent**



**How to Get Your Kids to Listen**



**Breadwinning Mothers Carry the Mental Load at Home**

NEWSLETTER

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Interesting stories for parents from all over the internet.


Submit



Sandi Schwartz



0 Comments   Parent.co

 Sandi Schwartz ▾




 Recommend    Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 Subscribe    Add Disqus to your siteAdd DisqusAdd    Privacy

