



a grand time

Activities that Skip a Generation

by Lynn Machon

One of the most treasured relationships in life is that enjoyed between a grandparent and grandchild. It's a priceless connection that benefits the entire family.

As most grandparents know, coordinating time with their kids' kids outside traditional holiday gatherings is key to staying engaged in their grandchildren's lives. The trick is finding activities that appeal to all participants – whether age 7, 17 or 70. Fortunately, with so many different opportunities to choose from, scheduling quality time with your grandchildren can be as easy as a walk in the park.

Sleepovers and Getaways

Because grandparents enjoy superhero status, even a simple sleepover constitutes a "vacation" in the eyes of a child. For that lucky kid, a weekend stay at his grandparent's house means an adventure of climbing trees, playing board games, taking a walk with grandpa and scooping up seconds of grandma's amazing cooking.

Families ready for a longer getaway might consider the increasingly-popular intergenerational vacation. International

travel groups such as Exploritas (formerly Elderhostel) offer packages of cruises and train rides designed specifically for grandparents and grandkids.

Zoos, Museums and Art Walks

For those who like cultural exploration, exhibits at Roseville's Maidu Museum, the Folsom History Museum and the two county museums are great ways to celebrate the area's rich history. Another local grandparent favorite is the Sacramento Railroad Museum where kids can hop aboard a real steam locomotive.

To get artsy with your grandchild, attend El Dorado Hills' annual Art Affaire or the Third Saturday art walks in either Placerville or Roseville. Also, stop by Roseville's Blue-Line Gallery for a special children's exhibit of artists aged 5-13, or the annual high school art show.

To experience creature comforts, visit the Folsom Zoo and picnic with the peacocks or ride a miniature train. There's also Rocklin's STAR ECO Station, a wildlife rescue center with rare and exotic birds, reptiles, wildcats and ocean life – a good way to help older kids and teens to learn about ecology and

environmentalism.

Up for a wild day trip? Consider the two hour drive to Safari West in Santa Rosa where you can take an authentic safari jeep tour and see more than 600 giraffes, zebras, rhinos and other animals.

Fairs and Festivals

You can spend a fun, albeit exhausting, day bonding together at the California State Fair, the county fair or the Folsom Pro Rodeo. Or support one of the region's important Fourth of July or Veterans Day parades.

Fascinated with food? Check out the Stockton Asparagus Festival, Courtland Pear Fair or Gilroy Garlic Festival. Closer to home, Camino's Apple Hill provides berry picking over the summer, apples pies and crafts in the fall, and Christmas tree cutting during winter months.

Show Stopping Musicals and Plays

Depending upon attention spans and interests, live performances can be an excellent excuse for grandparent "date nights."

Locally, Folsom's Sutter Street Theatre, Roseville's Magic Circle Theater, the El Dorado Musical Theater and Rancho Cordova's Tommy T's provide year-round entertainment options. As a special treat, you can escort your granddaughter to the Sacramento Ballet's Sweet Sunday *Nutcracker* performance in December, or enjoy similar family-focused programs at regional arts groups such as the Music Circus and B Street Theater.

Long Distance Relationships

While for many families, miles of separation often prevent togetherness, there are still ways to schedule priceless quality time between visits. Many grandparents establish a tradition of Sunday night phone calls to connect with grandkids. Also, Internet capabilities allow family Web sites for sharing updates, photos and favorite school art projects. Additionally, installing Webcams, and instant messaging each other can shorten the distance even more.

When it comes to planning activities with your grandchildren, the possibilities are endless. Just be assured the memories you create will last a lifetime. •

For more ideas to span the generations, visit stylemg.com.