

# Baby steps

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TODDLERS ARE THE NEW WORLD TRAVELERS AS PARENTS SPEND MORE AND MORE OF THEIR INCOME ON THEIR OFFSPRING. TODAY, PARENTS BRING THEIR CHILDREN WITH THEM EVERYWHERE WANTING TO KEEP UP THEIR "PRE-BABIES" LIFESTYLE OF TRAVELING AND SOCIALIZING. FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY THIS MEANS A WHOLE NEW BUSINESS. SO HOW FAR HAVE SOME HOTELS AND RESORTS GONE TO PLEASE THIS NEW GOLDEN TARGET GROUP?



The Mark, NYC

A HOTEL THAT HAS UNDERSTOOD THE NEED to cater to their younger guests is Marbella Club Hotel. They recently opened their new kids club, the Marbella Club Kids Club - a grand investment and a partnership with Minimec, Spain's most famous producer of high-end products for children; everything from furniture, linen, toys and perfume and what they have created together is simply out of this world.

The Marbella Club Kids Club offers everything from cooking classes, where the children pick their own veggies from their own organic garden, to music classes, Flamenco dance classes, gardening classes, perfume making classes and much more. Mr Guy Leleu who runs the Marbella Club Kids Club says that he is overwhelmed by the success of the new club, but believes that one of the many reasons is that they offer so many different activities both indoors and out and therefore have made it possible to please most children from 4 - 14 years. But if you have a toddler, don't despair. They are still welcome as long as they are in the company of an adult. During the summer the club even arranges open-air movie nights with popcorn and soft drinks under the stars. Their latest addition is the Junior Master Chef program, where the children will learn to cook a series of fun recipes and at the end of the course they will be awarded by the club's Michelin starred Head Chef with a certificate. When asking Guy Leleu what makes the new children's club so unique he says, "I believe one of the many reasons is the fact that it is located in the original villa of Prince Alfonso Hohenlohe, the famous founder of Marbella Club. Alfonso built this house with love and it became the heart of Marbella Club and still is 60 years later!"

The Soneva resorts, in the Maldives and Thailand, are another great example of resorts that takes the children seriously! Soneva's children's club are called The Dens and are sophisticated and ecological, built hand in hand with nature. Soneva partnered with the most famous architect firm from Bangkok, Habitat to help with the design of their latest kids club at Soneva Fushi in Maldives that is under construction. The size of this club is the size of a small hotel! There will be a Library and Cinema room, a dress up and make up room where children can dress up as they like and a music room with all sorts of instruments to practice on... with sound proof walls of course!



Soneva Resorts, Maldives & Thailand

When asking Eva Malmström, the founder of Soneva, what she would like the younger guests to remember from their stays at the Soneva resorts she says: "There are so many things for the children to do, but activities they can learn something from is important to me, knowledge they can take with them when they leave. I like children to discover being close to nature, learning about animals and plants and to learn empathy. They can learn how to grow things organically, how to make compost as well as make things with their hands such as paper cards and bags, and above all to socialize with other children without staring down into a mobile phone all the time. Children are so exposed to being online and connected that even for them a small detox, even if just for a few hours, will be good for them!" What parent would not love this?

The Mark hotel in NYC went as far as to have their very own customized strollers made by stroller producer McLaren for their younger guests. The Mark stroller is stylish and sleek with the iconic Art Deco touch of the The Mark with black and white stripes. Any stylish mom or dad would be proud to go for a walk down Madison Avenue or in Central Park with one of these strollers! Head Concierge at The Mark, Isabella Hogan, says that the strollers are extremely popular among the guests of the hotel and even their custom made bikes by Republic Bike are perfect for families staying at the hotel with older children. The bikes come with sleek helmets and baskets - perfect for the ultimate family picnic in Central Park. The hotel will gladly arrange this; complete with of a picnic basket created by none other than chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten himself!

Le Bristol in Paris also knows how to cater to perfection to please their younger guests. Hippolyte, the cuddly gardening rabbit who is the hotel's mascot, has designed a special welcome package for children to ensure that they never forget their stay here. They have created a treasure hunt where children, with help from the staff, have to find gardening tools hidden throughout the hotel. One of the many things Le Bristol is famous for is their spectacular private garden, a rare luxury in Paris. Once all tools have been found, the hunt continues in the garden where the prize is hidden somewhere. The rooftop pool is another popular gem for the children. It has view over Paris that will impress even the youngest of guests! The beautiful children's club Les Amis d'Hippolyte is next door to the spa where a team of professional caretakers will make sure to fully entertain your little one while you are able to enjoy your own pampering without feeling guilty. Another lovely touch for the children staying at Le Bristol is the in-house cat Fa-raon who welcomes children when they check into the hotel and who is always available for them to play with. That must be one happy cat!

Traveling with your children in the future seems both easier and more fun and we all know that a happy child equals happy parents. VIP's and VIK's (Very Important Parents and Very Important Kids) here we come! ◦

