



# Vacation Exploration

## Summer 2014

Summer is a time for reflection and renewal.

Give your children new experiences that cannot be provided by our schools. We parents know that we cannot rely on school for all of our children's learning. Take this special time to give them exciting exposure to new places, new friends, and special experiences. There are virtually unlimited local places to explore and skills to develop. You may want to start by asking your children what interests them. This rare and special time can be spent singing and writing music, developing a new skill, solving family issues together, or exploring ideas that might help solve an environmental problem or other challenge in our world. Why not you?

Opportunity, discovery and family strengthening can be the result of a terrific vacation experience. You are your child's first and best teacher and your children can teach you, also. Parents can model what it means to be a life-long learner. One of the most important lessons you can teach your children is to seek out knowledge and experience every day. School is important, but there are so many other opportunities for learning and growth. Make it a goal this summer to give them a "Vacation Exploration."



I read that the average number of family vacations a family takes together is only 10. When I heard this, at first I did not believe it. I think back on the winter and summer vacations we took with our children and, while the number for us was a bit higher, those vacations with our nuclear family from ages 5-15 were truly that rare. The budget and limited vacation time were factors for us, as with most all families. Responsible budgeting and planning for a vacation is a learning experience for kids. Your children will help save and do research, if they have a goal.

When our two children became teenagers, they always asked to bring a friend on our family trips. If we could afford it, we would invite a friend. Before we left, we discussed our goals on the trip and how we all participate, and our guests agreed to respect our vacation budget. Sharing the experience with other children was important to us, and when reciprocated, provided additional rich experiences for our kids.

We spent most summer vacations in Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, National Parks, and one to Washington D.C. and New York. We tried to have a goal with each trip and "fun" was always the number one goal. Although we did not do this each time, creating an "exploration vacation" includes setting a second goal such as learning a new skill like photography, art, skateboarding, snowboarding, boat-making, sailing, theater, tennis, hiking, camping and survival skills, fishing, and learning about energy generation, manufacturing, geology, cooking, biking, woodworking, etc. Theme-based exploration vacation ideas have no limit. Extra planning? Yes. Yet, it will result in memories shared forever and carry forward to future generations.

On the Stonington Public Schools website, we hope you share your Vacation Exploration so that other families can learn and maybe give them ideas. Tell us what your family hoped to learn, the destination, and did it result in new knowledge or skills. I will try to add all of them to our website. You can send the story of your Vacation Exploration to [vriley@stoningtonschools.org](mailto:vriley@stoningtonschools.org).

