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The best bespoke yacht trips for children and parents

These companies are creating extraordinary adventures for kids, including treasure hunts, missions and mythical creatures



Eyos Expeditions has led 1,500 expeditions across all five oceans and seven continents

MATT HARDY/MOSAIC STUDIOS

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For those families with dreamy budgets, who can travel wherever they fancy on their own or with a chartered superyacht, the British travel company Pelorus (pelorusyachting.com) has a simple answer to the perennial question of “what should we do with the children this summer?” They ask the children what sorts of experiences and activities they would like to do. Then they start planning magic-filled expeditions that might spark their passions.

Last year, for instance, Cecilia, aged seven, said, “I want to swim with mermaids and rescue turtles.” Turtles were no problem: the planners created an itinerary for the 45-metre sailing yacht Celestia from which she could watch green turtles and manta rays while snorkelling in Komodo. And mermaids? “We hired a freediver to dress up,” Geordie Mackay-Lewis, the co-founder and chief executive of the company, says. “The kids spent the afternoon in a glass-bottom kayak and snorkelling with her.”

Treasure hunts costing anything from £12,000 to six figures are a stock in trade, in settings from Antigua to Costa Rica, with a novel-worthy narrative and actors in pirate costume. “We can bury chests on a remote beach or underwater,” Mackay-Lewis says. “When kids can’t dive because they’re too young, we use remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to go down and unlock the chest, grab a scroll and bring it back up to the surface.” This means parents are off the hook to sip cocktails on the aft deck of the yacht, which works well for everyone.

“Teenagers usually respond well to a guide,” says Rob McCallum, the co-founder of Eyos (eyos-expeditions.com), which has led 1,500 expeditions across all five oceans and seven continents. “The guide is showing them cool things they might not want to be seen to be learning in front of Mum and Dad. But a guide is independent.” Eyos’s guides are extravagantly overqualified. “They’ll have their own specialist discipline but will be able to speak with authority on history, geography and climate as well as having all sorts of field skills,” says McCallum, who has led submersible missions to all of the world’s 10,000-metre-plus trenches, the Titanic (seven times) and has broken expedition records in the Ross Sea and North West Passage. If tropical climes are a client’s scene, he recommends hopping through the Solomon Islands to Papua New Guinea, where children might learn how coconuts are harvested, play with locals — “kids are a passport to another culture” — snorkel reefs or go bamboo rafting down a freshwater river.

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In Antarctica, meanwhile, McCallum suggests a wildlife-focused itinerary, starting at Punta Arenas in Chile and then flying two hours to King George Island to meet an expedition yacht to go on to the great white south. To prepare younger children for expeditions off the mothership on Zodiac tenders, they might sketch different species of penguin, so when they do see them on the journey they can identify them — and perhaps teach their parents a few things.

Attaching experts to a trip can deepen the experience further. For Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Eyos has used a professor of anthropology and a marine biologist, while for the Antarctic McCallum would recommend a penguin researcher and a PhD-level cetacean specialist. Pelorus's experts have included astronauts for stargazing cruises with space-mad children, BBC photographers for wildlife expeditions and Michelin-starred chefs for foraging adventures. Prices for their time run from £700 to more than £7,000 a day.

Whether it's through experts or imaginative approaches, the idea is to take an extraordinary experience and make it transformative. "Even for kids that are privileged, not many have seen 'a whale being a whale'," McCallum says. "To spend quality time with one while it's feeding as a family pod ..." Well, you might say it's priceless but that's not quite true.



A sailing trip with Pelorus

Certain yachts lend themselves to family trips more than others. Legend, which costs about €1.5 million for ten days with Eyos, is popular in the Antarctic. At 77.4 metres it can accommodate an extended family of 22 and keep everyone busy between the Swedish spa, cinema, 200-metre-rated submarine and every conceivable water toy and bit of ice-diving equipment. The 126-metre Octopus (\$3 million for ten days), originally built for the Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, has dual helipads, a cinema, glass-bottomed observation lounge, spa, pool and an internal marina with decompression chamber from which to easily deploy its expedition kit.

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Next year the ultimate family toy will be launched: the 194.9m REV Ocean, whose back half is a cutting-edge research vessel and front half a serious superyacht. During charters through the brokerage house Burgess ([burgessyachts.com](https://www.burgessyachts.com)), the in-house science team can custom-design projects for families using the

expedition specialist Joro Experiences (joroexperiences.com). As well as a 6,000-metre ROV and a submarine that can go down to 2,300m, there will be a broadcast-quality media room where teens could create a documentary and, quite possibly, hologram tech in the two-deck auditorium, so David Attenborough could be beamed in for an afternoon lecture. Price on application — make that call near a fainting couch.

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