

Love *Your* Life



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BOOKMARKS: ESCAPE WITH OUR MUST-READ PICKS, P. 82

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VACAY À DEUX

The best thing you can do for your kids? Take a (little) break from them!

BY ERIN ZAMMETT RUDDY

Let's just come right out and say it: One of the biggest perks of vacationing without your kids is that the stuff that seems torturous when you're on the road with them can be positively enjoyable when it's just the two of you. Driving in a car à deux? Relaxing! Waiting in a long security line without any whiners? OK, still kind of tedious, but not nearly as bad! I would have been satisfied just flying solo across the country with an *Us Weekly* and a plastic cup of wine. The fact that I got to deplane in California and explore the vineyards of Sonoma with my beloved-but-kind-of-neglected husband? Well, that was just the char-donnay-flavored cherry on top.

Nick and I had both been working long hours, and our children—Alex, 5, and Nora, 3—are, well, children, so we definitely needed a break. I surprised Nick with a wine-country getaway for his birthday. His mom came to watch our kids and was more excited about spending four days with them than we were about spending four days without them. Since she basically lets them eat doughnuts before and after every meal, the kids

ROAD RULES

Betcha even Brad and Angie need to be reminded how to reconnect!

1 Get all your kid-related chatter out of the way en route to the airport. Then call or Skype home only once a day, max. You left them in good hands!

2 Have sex as soon as you check in. It's the easiest way to reconnect and feel like a team again. And it will put you both in an instant good mood!

3 Unless you're not sleeping (see #2), don't spend too much time in bed, no matter how soft the pillowtop. Get up and out, explore, laugh.



GOTTA GET AWAY

What are your kids-free vacation essentials? We asked Facebook fans for a (virtual) peek inside their suitcases.

1. A swimsuit to show off your mom curves (‘cause he thinks they’re sexy even if you’re not so sure).



2. Birth control (enough said).



3. A camera phone to Instagram your pals back home and make them jealous!

4. A sleeping mask to maximize those blissful hours when you are actually snoozing.



5. That’s it—after all, you promised to bring home souvenirs for the kids!

were also thrilled when we told them the plan. It was a win-win-win.

We were only gone for three nights, but three nights in a hotel is like three weeks in parent time. The featherbeds, the room service, the lack of Nick Jr. blaring on the TV. And perhaps the greatest of all: waking up when we wanted to wake up and having only ourselves to feed and bathe and dress. We literally got giddy at how easy everything was. Look at me, I’m peeing all by myself! Hey, check me out, I’m sipping my coffee while it’s still hot!

We spent our first day at Simi Winery (my fave). We watched as trucks dumped grapes into giant fermentation tanks, took silly photos of each other in the epic barrel room, and went on a tour to learn the history of the winery and the region and about the process of making wine.

On the other two days we popped into more vineyards, lunched on northern California cuisine like the pork butt at the Fremont Diner, and strolled through art galleries playing the “if we were rich, which piece of art would we want to take home?” game.

During all this, Nick and I talked about our future (boy,

we’d gotten away just for us without any obligation on the other end. And this wasn’t just for us, it was for the kids, too. We’ve always made our marriage a priority—if Nick and I don’t work, none of it works—and we see no need to apologize for it.

This trip took that notion to the next level, plus it was

WE LOVE OUR KIDS LIKE CRAZY, BUT WE LOVED EACH OTHER FIRST.

does a third kid sound good when you’re on your second glass of wine and someone else is watching numbers one and two), we laughed a lot, we reconnected. It was so soul-nourishing to be reminded of how much fun we have together.

We love our kids like crazy, but we loved each other first and we never want to forget that. It had been six years since

cheaper than couples counseling and a lot more fun. And because my grape-fueled enthusiasm led me to sign up for more than one Wine of the Month clubs, it’s a gift that will keep on giving.

Erin and her husband, Nick, relax in wine country.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: