checkin

Top 10 List

Two family travel blogs, "Hip Travel Mama" and "Ciao Bambino," encourage families to travel together. With that goal, they have come up with their list of Top 10 Family Trips for 2013. Five are abroad; five are in North America. For more information, visit www.hiptravelmama.com or www.ciaobambino.com

1. Puglia, Italy
2. Marrakech, Morocco
3. Luxury Lodges of Australia
4. Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
5. Machu Picchu, Peru
6. Park City, Utah
7. Central California Road Trip
8. Victoria, British Columbia
9. Maui, Hawaii
10. Disney — Disneyland and Walt Disney World

Geo Quiz

Question: Which island is farther east, Jamaica or Trinidad?
— *Chicago Tribune*
(Answer below)

Gadget Guru

Tray chic

The Tidy Table Tray plus Flexi-Diner from Bambinos looks like a giant clipboard — except the clip is on the bottom instead of the top, and it holds food instead of papers. The Tidy Table is actually a high-chair tray, minus the high chair. The large pressure clip on its underside grabs firmly onto pretty much any table top. A removable insert fits over the tray, and lifts out for a quick washing without having to remove the whole tray. The insert has an extended lip that helps keep spills off baby's lap, and compartments in the insert hold a cup and elusive edibles like peas and snacks. The tray can also be used as a clean and protective surface for junior's art projects. This is a great aid to keep stashed in the car for dining out, so you won't be at the mercy of whatever passes for a high chair/child tray on the road. It also should make you feel better about sanitation — no need to add strangers' kids' germs to the mix.

— *Judi Dash*

Tidy Table Tray plus Flexi-Diner (149215) is $29.99 at www.babiesrus.com; 888-222-9787.

Web Buzz

Leisure airfare deals

This website finds savings so much deeper than those from Kayak and Travelocity that you'll think it's magic.
Name: GetGoing.com
What it does: Finds better rates for flights when the traveler is flexible about dates and destinations.
What's hot: Proven savings are key. I tested flights for two adults and one child from San Diego to "Beaches and Sun" for June 22. I got several destination options and narrowed them to two choices: San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Honolulu. For San Juan, GetGoing quoted me $1,356 for all three; the cheapest Kayak could offer was $1,820, and Travelocity was $1,870. For Honolulu, GetGoing found us flights for $2,294; Kayak was $2,528 and, in this case, Travelocity was cheapest at $1,861. Besides the price finds, I liked that GetGoing put my two beach trips side by side so I could compare them. It offers an assortment of destinations based on the theme you pick (global regions or History and Culture, Adventure and Outdoors, Beaches and Sun), and then you pick from its deal list.
What's not: Nothing yet to complain about. I'd like a hotel or vacation package component, but they're working on it. Hold tight.

— *Jen Leo, Los Angeles Times*

Geo Quiz Answer: Trinidad, north of Venezuela, at roughly 61 degrees west longitude. Jamaica, south of Cuba, is at about 77 degrees west longitude, about 1,050 miles west.

A Turkish-period building in the Musrara neighborhood, which was a scene of warfare after Israel's founding in 1948. MICHAEL MILNE

In Jerusalem, it's easy to get lost and find city's life

JERUSALEM from N1

Spiritually, Jerusalem provides sharp contrasts in worship, as it is among the holiest sites for three of the world's major religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Christian pilgrims clutching rosary beads traverse the Via Dolorosa, the route of Christ to his crucifixion, as it winds through the Arab souk. The Dome of the Rock, where Muslims believe Muhammad ascended into heaven, overlooks the Western Wall, the most sacred site in Judaism, where Jews offer their own prayers to God.

One evening, we left the Western Wall as an energetic group of Orthodox Jewish men danced in a circle as they sang out in prayer. We ambled along Habad Street in the Jewish Quarter, where our curiosity led us up a set of rickety metal steps attached to the side of a building; considering the setting, they appeared to be a stairway to heaven.

After our climb, we gingerly walked across the rooftops of adjoining buildings. Looking down into a courtyard, we spotted a mosque, its confines protected by barbed wire, while, just 50 feet away, Jewish children played in a similarly safeguarded schoolyard.

The dulcet tones of the *adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer, bounced off the limestone walls of the ancient buildings, just as it has for generations. As if in response, church bells started sounding their hourly chorus. The echoes of three religions rang in our ears as we made our way to the Muslim Quarter.

In the backs of their stalls, Muslim shopkeepers knelt on prayer rugs, facing Mecca, suspending all commerce for a few moments of worship. But nothing stops the aromas of grilled meats rotating on spits over charcoal flames. The cooking meat and neighboring pyramids of spices created a heady mix of scents, no doubt attracting the stray cats that popped up at every corner.

On the Al-Wad Road (*road* is used loosely — it's a pedestrian strip about 10 feet wide), we mingled with Christian worshippers walking the Via Dolorosa. Part of the route is still paved with stones from the Second Temple period, the time of Christ.

The narrow street was crowded with shoppers and young men pushing their way through with hand trucks laden with boxes of fresh mint, dates, and clothing. Adding to the bedlam, toddlers swirled like satellites around Orthodox Jewish mothers, who tried to keep them in a steady orbit; Times Square on New Year's Eve is less chaotic. Careful to avoid stepping on the women who set up shop on the sidewalk, laying root vegetables on plastic sheets, we exited the Old City via the Damascus Gate.

Leaving the pandemonium behind, we headed for the relative serenity of the Musrara neighborhood, a former No Man's Land separating East and West Jerusalem. In a city more than 3,000 years old, this 150-year-old area is a mere toddler, but one with a troubled past. It was one of the first neighborhoods built outside the city walls, making it a pioneer suburb. Originally, it was a district for wealthy Christians occupying upscale housing.

After 1948, the advent of Israeli statehood turned it into a deadly no-man's-land, a disputed border between Israel and Jordan. Its position made it vulnerable to Jordanian shelling, while the Israelis mined it to prevent intrusion; snipers were active on both sides. Despite the dangers, refugees and immigrants moved into the abandoned houses, even as they lacked electricity, water and schools.

Women selling produce set up shop on the sidewalk in the Muslim Quarter.

Philadelphia Eagles T-shirts with Hebrew lettering were offered for sale next to yarmulkes and the head-coverings worn by Muslim women.

Now, the neighborhood has been reclaimed by artists, who create messages of peace for the present and future. A free tour of the neighborhood is given on Saturdays.

Our guide, Matan, is part of an organization called Muslala, the name an alternate spelling for the neighborhood. They believe art is a powerful tool to bring together this once-conflicted neighborhood. Through community outreach programs, including the free tour and multicultural art displays, they hope to start a dialogue between neighbors of differing backgrounds.

In some places, the art forms bizarre juxtapositions. On one wall, the word "Love" is painted alongside signs pointing to the local bomb shelter. They each use the same font and colors. According to Matan, the unasked questions are, "Which one is more important? Which one leads to safety?" The bomb shelter serves a dual purpose, as it is now a community arts center.

After walking the streets of Musrara viewing the latest open-air art pieces, we climbed down a set of simple wooden steps known as Chiara's Staircase. Several years ago, Matan built these steps so his girlfriend, Chiara, who lived in the lower Old City, could scale the wall into the elevated neighborhood when they wanted to see each other. That romance has ended, but this tenuous bridge across the former No Man's Land lives on.

Below the steps, we crossed into Arab East Musrara for our final stop on the tour: Ikermawi Restaurant, reputedly the home of the best hummus in Jerusalem. On the crowded sidewalk, we sat side-by-side on benches — Muslim, Jew, and Christian — literally breaking bread together, dipping the pita into the shared bowls of creamy hummus.

If only Jerusalem were that simple.

Larissa and Michael Milne sold everything to travel around the world for a year. They write regularly about their journey for the Philadelphia Inquirer and on their blog at www.ChangesInLongitude.com