

Importance of making family memories

Mark Pavilons

"Family is not an important thing. It's everything."

Michael J. Fox

Spending time together as a family should be the top priority on our agendas.

But sadly, it often takes a back seat to other more pressing matters.

I read recently that most North Americans spend more time in their cars (presumably commuting and running errands) each day than they do with their kids.

As a father of three (two teens) I fully appreciate jus



how hectic family life can get. And I?also fully enjoy just how great it is to spend time away together.

While our clan didn't do anything extravagant this summer, we took several small day trips to enjoy some new experiences. My eldest, who's quite wise at only 17, has already created her own "bucket list."?Not sure why she has such a list as such a young age, but she is adamant she wants to squeeze as much out of life as she can.?Good for her.

We managed to cross off a few things from her list this summer, namely a circus show, a visit to Ripley's Aquarium, a trip to Sauble Beach, a concert at the Molson Ampitheatre and a stay at Great Wolf Lodge at Niagara Falls.

We've seen the hype and spoke to many families who've soaked in the activities at Canada's only Great Wolf Lodge. I?always thought it was a novel approach and wondered whether it lived up to the hype.

Being the skeptic and frugal dad, I was anticipating an odd adventure featuring howling wolves and talking moose. While it did, in fact, feature such things, I?must say I was pleasantly surprised at the adventure.

This place, a bit of a distance from the tourist strip in the Falls, is a self-contained family haven. While directed at kids of all ages, from toddlers to teens, it really brings families closer together. It's an all-inclusive resort that provides an abundance of activities under one roof.

It's biggest feature is the massive indoor water park that houses dozens of ponds, pools and slides of all shapes and sizes. There are a couple of slides that resemble a water-filled roller coaster. What a thrill! The outdoor pool and patio were prefect to soak up those fleeting rays of sunshine.

This is a place that parents love. You can literally let your kids run rampant without fear of them getting lost or getting in trouble. Staff at every corner, down every hallway, are courteous and helpful.

While we had a standard suite, there are some elaborate digs for those who really love the atmosphere of the great outdoors.

Families like value, especially when eating out. I'd recommend the meal plan and with it comes an impressive array of goodies. For a buffet, both the breakfast and dinner offered a nice selection of high quality food. It tasted like it was made in mom's kitchen with ample helpings of TLC. Nothing appeared to come out of package. In fact, there is one station that whips up a dish right before your eyes, to your liking.

The adults are not forgotten. Seating is abundant around the pool and water park, as well as beverages at the eateries. There are spas for big and little ones.

Again, you have no reservations about letting your kids wander around the water park to explore and enjoy.

What would a trip to Niagara Falls be without a walk through the Clifton Hill area?? This world famous "street of fun"?was weird and yet charming. It has been a few years since I last visited the Falls, and this area has ballooned into one carnival of craziness that's best visited at night. It's so kitschy that it's fun.

We packed a lot into our 24-hour adventure.

The bottom line is not necessarily the attractions, meals or hotel suite. It's the time spent together.

It's looking at the Falls at night, feeling the mist in the air. It's laughing until it hurts when the kids are having a ball, and recognizing your child's screams of delight among hundreds. It's about sharing a meal, which we don't do enough. It's about looking at smiling faces around the table.

Maybe my eldest is on to something.

Perhaps we should all have our own immediate "fun lists" of experiences to enjoy and share. They don't have to be elaborate or costly things at all.

For our recent anniversary, my wife gave me a year's worth of monthly activity "coupons" that include a movie night, dinner out, and cash for the casino. It's time to dig into this stash and make some plans. We enjoy the casino a lot, so we'd probably try and make plans for that first. However, one of my friends suggested that I should really look into [918kiss th](#) before going to the actual casino. He said that I might need some practice before I waste all of this money, so he suggested trying out some online casinos to make sure I know what I'm doing. That's not a bad idea. Although, I had a look and there are so many it's hard to choose. Luckily, I read an article similar to this one by [Wales 247](#) which helped me find the right online casino for me. Some of them are even multiplayer which is great if you want to involve your friends for family.

Parents need to reconnect and rekindle those embers. We're often so caught up with providing for our kids that we neglect ourselves and our relationships.

Our kids do grow up and our teens tend to shy away from family trips as their tastes and moods change. Believe it or not, a trip that makes everyone feel like a kid again can do wonders.

I?highly recommend it.