



Best family-friendly resorts

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These days your 6-year-old will almost instantly become a better skier or snowboarder than you, thanks to top family ski resorts that are dedicated to teaching kids how to tackle mountains — and have a blast along the way. Margot Guralnick, editor in chief of Travel + Leisure Family, shares with USATODAY.com's Maureen Pao five great, family-friendly ski destinations.



Snowboarding camp, anyone?
Smuggler's Notch Resort in Vermont is one of a growing number of resorts that cater to families with kids.

Smuggler's Notch, Vt. Families come here to take on 300 acres of terrain. Even 4- and 5-year-olds can sign on for the snowboarding camp, and the resort offers private lessons for 2-year-olds. The resort also offers weekly fireworks, winter science programs and kids' night outs. Pre-skiers ages 6 weeks to 3 years old can stay at a day-care center with a staff of 20. Teens can choose from two centers to hang out at — no parents allowed. *For more information:* www.smuggs.com.

Snowmass, Colo. Nine miles from downtown Aspen, Snowmass is the area's biggest and most varied family mountains. Beginners start off on the Family Zone's adventure trails and terrain park. Snowmass sponsors weekly races, campfire singalongs and barbecues; its teen program has additional evening activities. Extreme Camps are for advanced to expert skiers, ages 10 to 19. Group lessons start at age 3. *For more information:* www.aspensnowmass.com.

Northstar-at-Tahoe, Calif. This compact resort lets parents share time on the slopes with their kids with an interchangeable "parent predicament ticket." During weekday afternoons, kids up to age 4 and their parents ski free — and with the assistance of instructors. Children 6 to 12 can enroll in Starkids for ski and snowboard lessons. At the mid-mountain Polaris Park, families can rent snowbikes, snowscoots and Airboards, or they can go tubing, skiing and snowboarding after dark. *For more information:* www.skinorthstar.com.

Okemo, Vt. It's the small details that make this spot stand out: Parents have all-day access to dry clothes and bags in the base lodge's basket room; kids under 6 ski or ride for free; and for pre-skiers, the Jackson Gore Penguin Playground Day Care Center stays open well into the evening. Parents are advised to stay clear of The Zone, a kid's-only warm-up yurt. *For more information:* www.okemo.com.

Winter Park, Colo. Not well known outside the state, Winter Park, with an average snowfall of more than 359 inches a year, is a favorite destination for Denver families. The Children's Center lodge organizes ski and snowboard programs for kids ages 3 to 15, who can spend the day at the 25-acre learn-to-ski area. There's even a specialized kids' rental center and a dedicated kid-cuisine cafeteria that serves chicken fingers, mac 'n' cheese and hot dogs galore. *For more information:* www.skiwinterpark.com.