

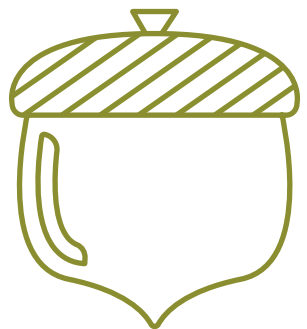
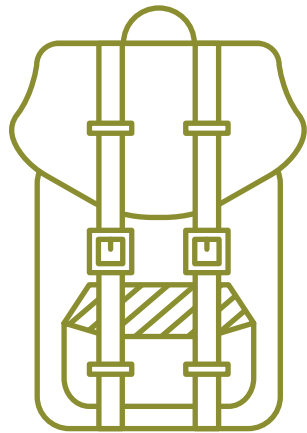
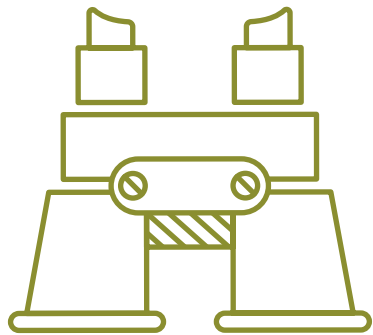
# TRAILS MIX

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE NO. 1





# Hello!



Welcome to **Trails Mix**, an extra helping of *Family Trails* goodness. Each quarter, our *#FamilyTrails* community will receive a digital edition of the **Trails Mix** bundle packed with ideas and inspiration designed to spark more family adventuring and learning together. We'll also feature highlights from the best of *Family Trails* – the stories shared by families around the world.

From recipes to activities to expert interviews, we hope you'll find that **Trails Mix** encourages your family to get out and get going – wherever the trail may lead you.

Have an idea for an upcoming edition of **Trails Mix**?

Email us at [community@familytrails.com](mailto:community@familytrails.com). To connect with thousands of other families learning through adventure, join the **#FamilyTrails** conversation on Instagram by following us **@FamilyTrails**.

*We'd love to hear from you!*







Toyota Family Trails is an adventure brought to life thanks to a partnership between the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) and Toyota. Since 1989, NCFL has helped more than two million families make educational progress. We believe that all parents can help their children succeed in school and in life. The family unit is the one constant across the educational spectrum, but family engagement in education doesn't happen on its own. NCFL pioneered Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®, bridging the gap that often exists between school, home, and community.

At Family Trails, we believe your family is the best teacher your child will ever have. Together, we hope to inspire parents and kids to let their imaginations lead them on a daily exploration and adventure through the world around them and the classroom of life.



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There's nothing like a bowl of comforting homemade chicken noodle soup to fill up little hungry bellies on a cold day—especially when the noodles are handmade by @mothering4myhome.			
BE AN EXPLORER			
#FAMILYTRAILS			





# Stories from the Trail



KAITLIN SAUL

*“We are a tight-knit family,  
raising our children with a love  
of the great outdoors.”*

VINTON, VA

SAUL FAMILY  
**FEATURED  
FAMILIES**  
CASSON FAMILY

**FAMILY STORIES** ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF FAMILY TRAILS.  
CHECK OUT THESE TWO AMAZING STORIES CONTRIBUTED BY THE  
FAMILY TRAILS COMMUNITY — AND GET TO KNOW THE REST OF OUR  
CONTRIBUTORS BY CLICKING THEIR FAMILY PHOTO. INTERESTED IN  
SUBMITTING YOUR OWN FAMILY ADVENTURE STORY? [CLICK HERE.](#)



AUGUST CASSON

*“The rest of the day was awesome,  
flying down bunny hills and  
taking the toe rope to the top.”*

WILLIAMSVILLE, IL



## BACKYARD Discovery

told by  
KAITLIN SAUL





# Backyard Discovery



We live down a dirt road surrounded by family, so we tend to let our children play outside without much of a watchful eye. They know the boundaries of our yard, and that they are supposed to ask to walk up to their Pawpaw's. Of course, sometimes they go past these boundaries without permission – that's just what curious children do. They get something in their minds, make up a wild adventure and just roll with it.

The other day I was inside cleaning and thinking how peaceful and quiet it finally was. The kids were outside, while their daddy was in the garage. Around dusk, the kids came running inside, out of breath, telling me some story about a new path they made in the woods that took them to the pond. I stopped them there, reminded how dangerous that is, and explained that they cannot leave the yard without a grown-up. I guess they listened, even though my oldest only responded with, "So can we please show you our path tomorrow?"

Tomorrow came and I kept my word to follow them down their new path. From the start, I could tell it was made by children; the path went under fallen trees that you had to army crawl through, and down steep ditches they slid down on their butts. I just kept following though, thinking how potentially dangerous this could have been for them. One wrong step and they could break a bone or tumble down the hillside. I kept those thoughts to myself, however. We kept on truckin' through the woods until we made it to the frozen pond. It was amazing to listen to our oldest as she explained different landmarks she remembered to keep track of the path.



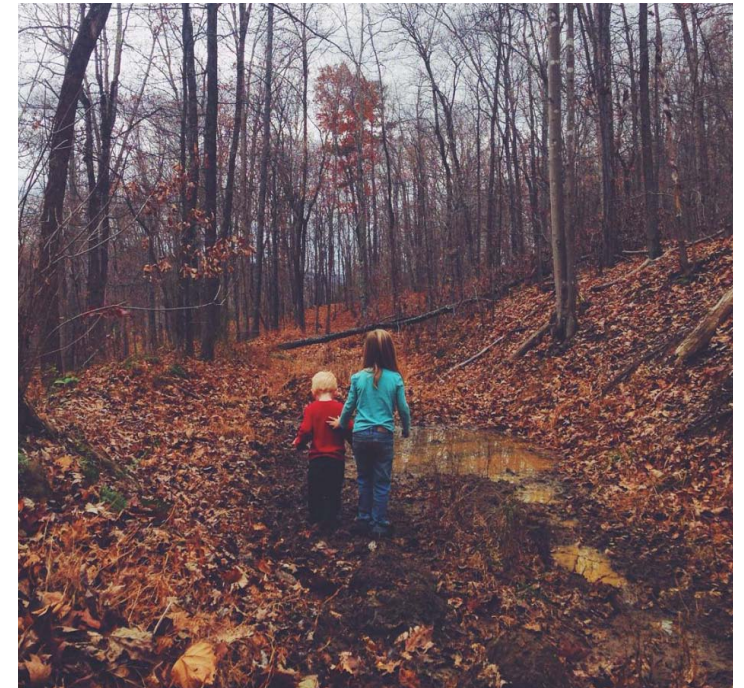




*“They will need to go through hurdles.  
They will get hung up and run into  
obstacles without anyone there to  
tell them the ‘right’ way.”*



# Backyard Discovery



Watching them lead the way down the path, pride gleaming in their eyes, I couldn't make them feel bad for disobeying me. It made me think of their lives and how I will eventually have to let them choose their own paths. They will need to go through hurdles. They will get hung up and run into obstacles without anyone there to tell them the “right” way.

As their mother, it's tough watching them grow and make their own decisions. It's also a part of life letting them accept more responsibility, even if they sometimes disobey what I've said to gain it. The nitty-gritty of it all is that parents only want what is best for their children. Loosening the reins on their lives is a first start, and trusting them to make the right decision for themselves – not for us – is the second.

## LEARNING EXTENSION

- Using objects from around your home, turn your backyard or local park into an obstacle course! Challenge friends or family to safely run the obstacle course in as little time as possible.
- Which obstacle did you enjoy the most? Share a picture, story, or description of your favorite obstacle using [#FamilyTrails](#).
- Stop by the **Wonder Coliseum at Camp Wonderopolis™** for more family-fun! Explore Wonders about games and adventures, as well as find ideas for more activities to have fun together outside.







# *Ski* SNOWSTAR

*told by*  
**AUGUST CASSON**



## *Ski Snowstar*



This past weekend, I took my four-year-old son skiing for the first time. Being an avid skier myself, I thought it would be fun to see if this new experience would be something he also enjoyed. The week before we went, I made a point to talk to him about skiing and what it is about. We discussed how to slow down and go fast (using the “pizza and french fry” technique). I also had him stand in the living room and demonstrate these two techniques using his shoes as skis. He thought this was fun and really grasped the idea of slowing down and going fast.

We drove three hours north to Andalusia, Illinois where there is a small ski resort called Ski Snowstar. I thought this place would be a great starting point for Sebastian due to the fact that it is not as busy as the other ski resorts in the Midwest. It’s smaller and has a tubing area in case skiing went horribly wrong. Not to mention, it is a very family-oriented ski resort. We arrived and I could tell how excited Sebastian was. His voice was high and he was ready to try it out.

I first took him to the bunny hills with a small magic carpet designated for kids. The first few times down the hill he was in between my legs and I steered him the right direction. He thought this was fun, but wanted to try for himself. The next couple of times down I let him go down on his own. He fell a few times due to lack of balance, but he quickly got the hang of it using the techniques we had previously discussed at home. Kristie and myself were so proud and he was extremely proud of himself.

The rest of the day was awesome, flying down bunny hills and taking the toe rope to the top. In the end, we skied for around four hours and Sebastian was not ready to go home. On the way home we talked about the times we went fast and the times we crashed.

The next few days, Sebastian was talking about skiing with other family members and cousins. He was very into it and wants to do it again. I guess some equipment is in our future to get him involved in something he enjoys.





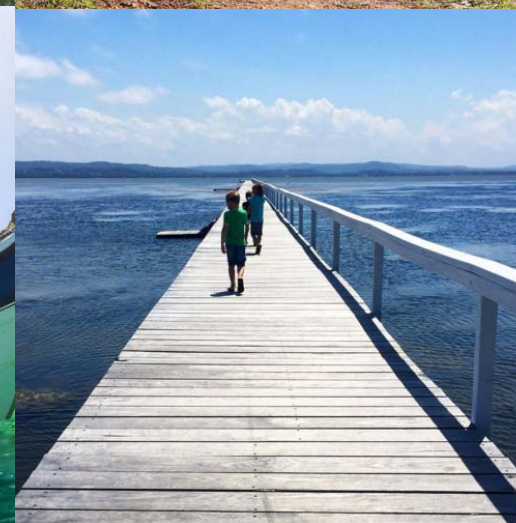
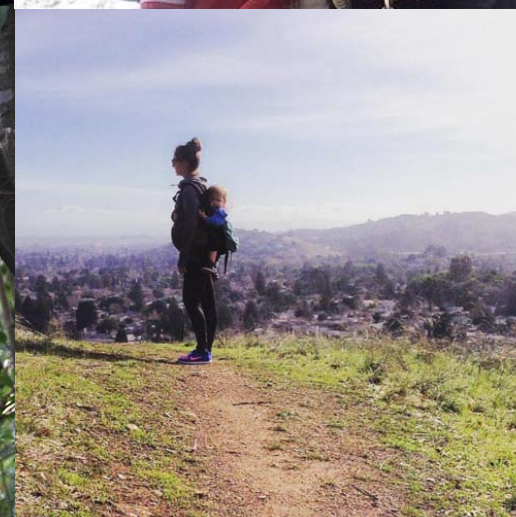


# Ski Snowstar



## LEARNING EXTENSION

- If you can't get out to a nearby slope, are you out of luck? Nope! All you need is a hill and some homemade skis. Gather your family and have fun making your own homemade skis!
- What do you want to remember about your home skiing adventure? Share photos and favorite memories using *#FamilyTrails!*
- Gather your family and jump over to **Wonderopolis®** to learn more about *Wonder #1695: How Much Snow Do You Need To Ski?*

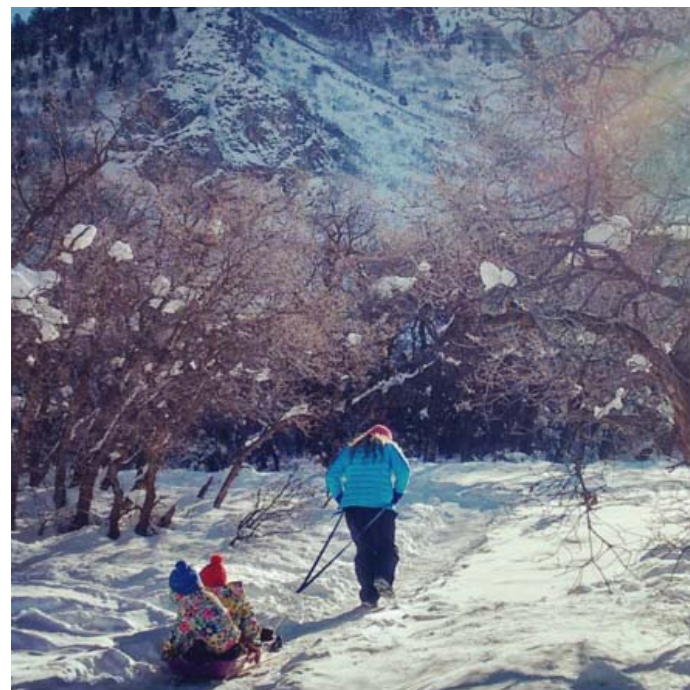




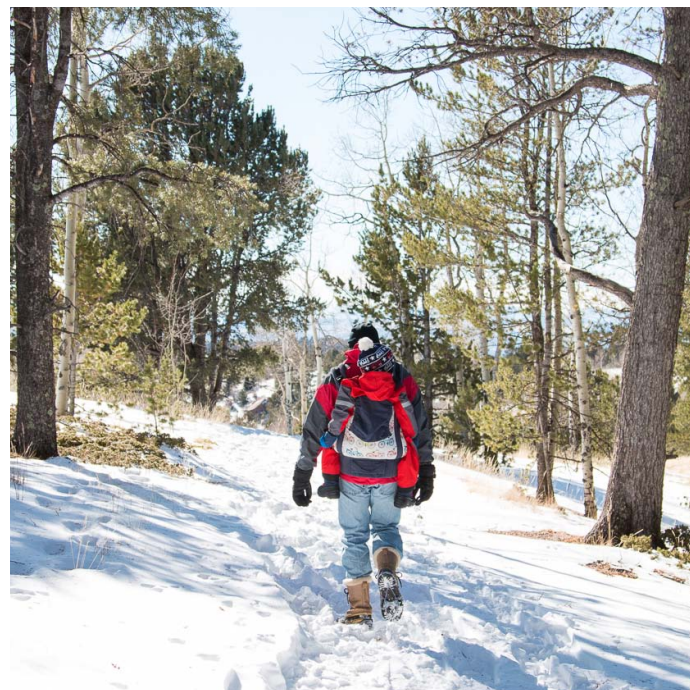


# Stories from the Trail

CLICK A PHOTO TO READ MORE EXCITING STORIES OF FAMILY ADVENTURES!



PACKHAM FAMILY: MOUNT OGDEN



EMSLIE FAMILY: MUELLER STATE PARK



CALORY FAMILY: SILVER LAKE STATE PARK



MENDOZA FAMILY: BIG BASIN HIKE



CASSON FAMILY: SKI SNOWSTAR



HASKINS FAMILY: GRANDFATHER MTN.



DAVID FAMILY: A DAY IN CHIBERIA



HEQUIBAL FAMILY: MEMORY BUILDING



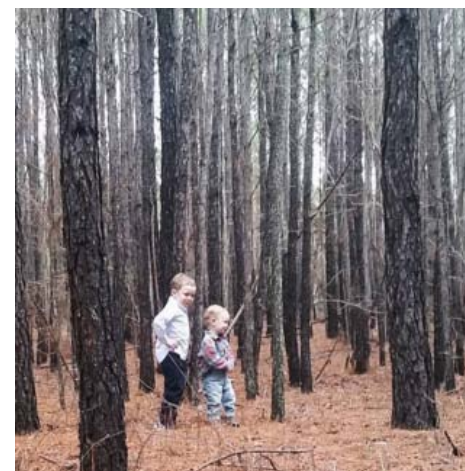
THE DAYS ARE *but* THE YEARS ARE  
**LONG SHORT.**  
ENJOY YOUR CHILDREN.  
THEY GROW UP  
**SO FAST.**







# Social Challenges



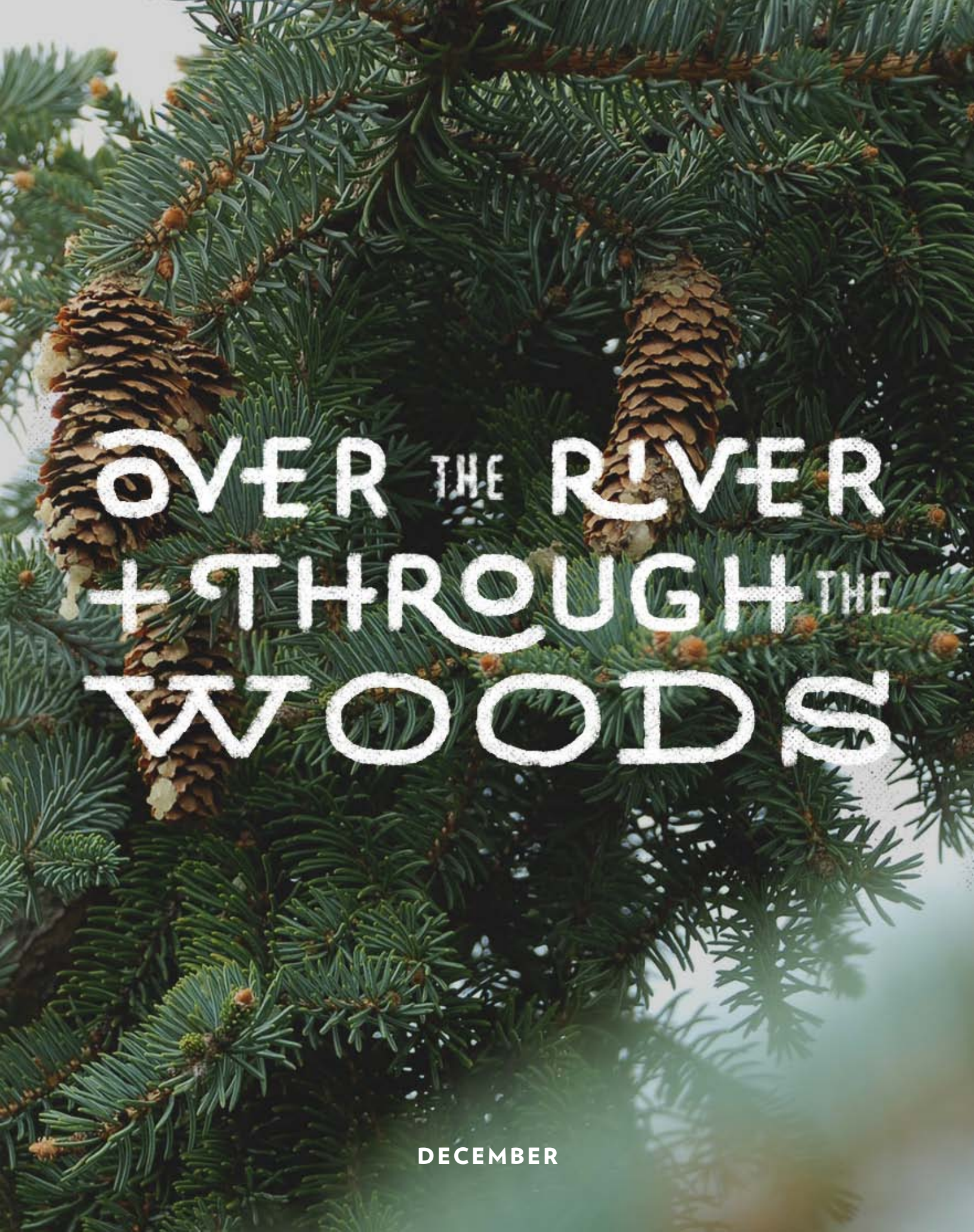
EACH MONTH WE'RE ISSUING A NEW INSPIRATION CHALLENGE TO THE FAMILY TRAILS COMMUNITY. THE MONTHLY CHALLENGE MAY COME IN THE FORM OF A VISUAL PROMPT, QUESTION, OR ACTIVITY, AND WILL ALWAYS BE DESIGNED TO SPARK FAMILY EXPLORATION, ADVENTURE, AND LEARNING.

WE'LL COLLECT THE BEST OF THE BEST TO SHARE VIA SOCIAL, THE FAMILY TRAILS WEBSITE, AND IN TRAILS MIX. TO PARTICIPATE, LOOK FOR THE MONTHLY CHALLENGE PROMPT [#FAMILYTRAILSTALES](#) ON INSTAGRAM. MAYBE YOU'LL SEE YOUR FAMILY ADVENTURES IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF TRAILS MIX!

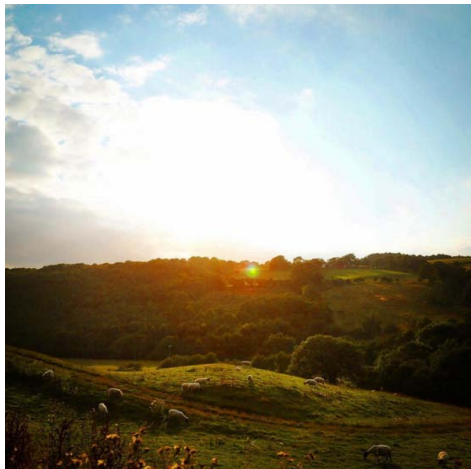
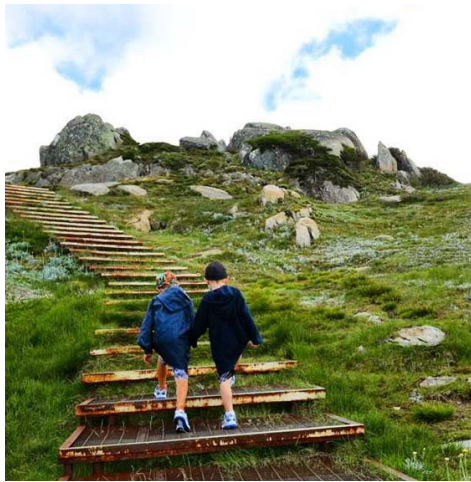
CHECK OUT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR LAST FEW MONTHS!







DECEMBER



## DECEMBER: OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

DECEMBER IS A MONTH OF HUSTLE & BUSTLE. IT'S TIME FOR RECHARGING, FOR CATCHING UP WITH FRIENDS OLD AND NEW, AND MOST OF ALL, SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH FAMILY. WE LET THE MAGIC OF THE SEASON INSPIRE THIS MONTH'S PROMPT. WITHOUT FURTHER ADD...HERE ARE THE STORIES YOU TOLD AS YOU MADE YOUR WAY OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS.









JANUARY



## Social Challenges



### JANUARY: ONE NEW THING

LET'S EMBRACE THE POTENTIAL OF 2016 WITH RENEWED ENERGY AND EXCITEMENT. THIS YEAR, LET'S LOOK BEYOND LOFTY RESOLUTIONS AND START SMALL. THIS MONTH, A LOT MAY HAPPEN, AND EVEN MORE MAY NOT, BUT WE'RE GOING TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO TRY ONE NEW THING WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO TOGETHER AS A FAMILY.









# STORY TELLING

FEBRUARY



## Social Challenges



### FEBRUARY: STORYTELLING

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE #FAMILYTRAILS POSTS ARE STORIES ABOUT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. FROM BABY'S FIRST ZIP LINE ADVENTURE TO THE DAILY STRUGGLES OF GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE WITH KIDS IN TOW, WE LOVE HEARING ABOUT THE REAL MOMENTS THAT HAPPEN IN YOUR LIFE. THE TANTRUMS, THE TRIUMPHS, THE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR KIDS THAT MAKE YOU LAUGH—AND SOMETIMES EVEN CRY. FAMILY TRAILS IS BUILT ON STORY, WHICH IS WHY STORYTELLING IS THE THEME OF OUR FEBRUARY CHALLENGE!









ADVENTURING MEANS BEING  
TOGETHER

*without any*  
X  
DISTRACTIONS







# Trails Recipe

## HOMEMADE CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP:

**Directions:** Place the chicken and vegetables in a large stockpot over medium heat. Pour in only enough cold water to cover (about 3 quarts); too much will make the broth taste weak. Toss in the thyme, bay leaves, and peppercorns, and allow it to slowly come to a boil. Lower the heat to medium-low and gently simmer for 1 to 1 ½ hours, partially covered, until the chicken is done. As it cooks, skim any impurities that rise to the surface; add a little more water if necessary to keep the chicken covered while simmering.

Carefully remove the chicken to a cutting board. When its cool enough to handle, discard the skin if you haven't already and bones; hand-shred the meat into a storage container.

Carefully strain the stock through a fine sieve into another pot to remove the vegetable solids. Use the stock immediately or if you plan on storing it, place the pot in a sink full of ice water and stir to cool down the stock. Cover and refrigerate for up to one week or freeze.

*[serves 4 – 6 people]*

*recipe by @mothering4myhome*

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 medium carrots, cut into round thin slices
- 2 celery ribs, halved lengthwise, and cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- 4 fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 quarts chicken stock, recipe follows
- 8 ounces dried egg noodles
- 1 ½ cups shredded cooked chicken
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 handful fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

## CHICKEN STOCK:

- 1 whole free-range chicken (about 3 ½ pounds), rinsed, giblets discarded (*discard the skin: optional*)
- 3 carrots, cut in large chunks
- 3 celery stalks or small celery root with stalks and leaves, cut in large chunks
- 2 large unpeeled onions, quartered
- 1 head of unpeeled garlic, halved
- 1 turnip, halved
- 1 parsnips, halved
- ¼ bunch fresh thyme
- 2 cloves











# Guest Trail Guides



## THIS MONTH'S GUIDES:

Brenda Bird • Hannah Carpenter • Vanessa Bell



AT **FAMILY TRAILS** WE BELIEVE ALL FAMILIES CAN LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER THROUGH EXPLORATION AND ADVENTURE. IN THIS SPIRIT, IN EACH EDITION OF **TRAILS MIX** YOU'LL FIND FEATURE PIECES SPOTLIGHTING A DIVERSE RANGE OF FAMILIES ADVENTURING AROUND THE COUNTRY IN THEIR OWN WAY.



*Slow*  
**DOWN**

*told by*  
**BRENDA BIRD**





# Slow Down



I couldn't tear my eyes away from the entrance of the elementary school as we slowly drove away. This was it. That moment we hear about from other veteran moms – the moment your baby is no longer a baby. The moment where he is the brave one telling you it is okay to let go. I squeezed his hand and watched as he sat down at his desk waiting anxiously to be one of the big kids. Why do they have to grow up so quickly? I blinked and my little baby grew up into a young little man.

It's true you know – the years are short. And while I wish we could stop time and keep our littles little forever, we can't. We live in a world where we just always need to be busy. Always on the go. I started out on Mondays with the best intentions to really sit down and play with my kids or really just watch them play. But then it would be Friday afternoon and I realized that week just flew and then the weeks turned to months and all those good intentions were really just that. I'd been dragging my kids to and from errands and just going going going.

I was just getting tired. Tired of my good intentions and tired of literally going all day without any substance. I just wanted to slow life down. After taking this class I had really prioritized and eliminated any excess stuff in my life. Now that I am not caught up in extras, I was just getting caught up in the daily stuff. I realize this is totally normal, but I felt like I was missing out on some special moments with them. I can't help but regret those times when I was ferociously cleaning instead of spending some more quality time with Ashton. I wish I could take those times back and really soak in those precious moments.



I am not suggesting anything grand or complicated. I just want to slow down. Not rush from one thing to the next, next activity, next chore, etc. Just slow down time a bit and notice the details of my surroundings. As a perpetual multi-tasker this is so hard for me to do – but baby steps, right? For one, instead of spending some mornings cleaning alone, I can have Adelle clean along side me as we chat about her babies. Or instead of rushing to school, I can turn the radio off and talk to Ollie about why the Hulk is his favorite. Or instead of giving Ashton the phone to play with while Ollie is in soccer practice I can have more thumb wrestling wars with him. Like I said, nothing spectacular, but all these moments will be meaningful. So I have 3 goals for our family. The first is to explore where we live. Our second is to slow down. Our Saturdays are not filled to the brim – instead we have a slow morning where



we have breakfast and do some chores as a family. After the kids' naps, we do a fun activity. We actually stopped doing fun stuff on Saturdays for a while because we were trying to teach our kids something. Once they learned, we added back something small but fun like teaching the kids how to play kickball in the yard. I promise you that that moment was absolutely precious for me. And I can guarantee that small moments that you slow down for will also be meaningful to you and your family. We can't stop time but we can slow it down just enough to appreciate it





BOOK REVIEW:

# *Nature Anatomy* BY JULIA ROTHMAN

told by  
HANNAH CARPENTER



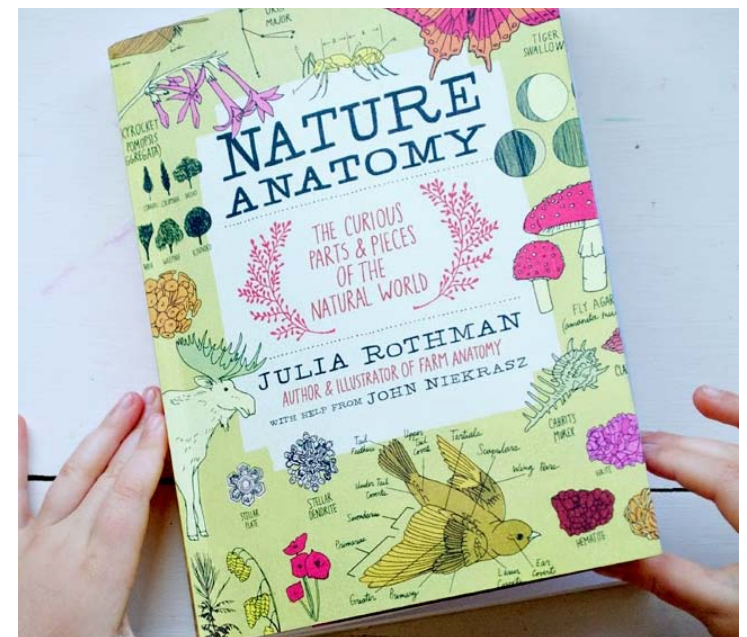
## *Nature Anatomy*

I break my blogging hiatus for only the best of the best. And this, my friends, is just that. I don't know when I've enjoyed a book so much. If I'm honest, I don't know when I've enjoyed a book. I'm not an avid reader. I like pictures. That's why this book, Julia Rothman's *Nature Anatomy* is great for me. It's sneaky, because while I'm looking at all the pretty illustrations, I can't help but devour the oodles of information about nature that is included alongside the beautiful eye candy. It's one of those books that makes you want to read and know stuff.

As is the plight of all crazy homeschoolers out there, I'm always looking to find great informational books that make you want to jump in and learn. Well, look no further, fellow crazies. I asked Enid to sit down with this book so I could snap some photos of her looking at it. She of course was all huffs and puffs over having to do something so demanding, but I loved watching her bad attitude melt away once she opened the cover and started getting lost in the pages of this wonderland of a book. I mean, look at these faces!

Totally sincere. And in came her brothers... Not many books are so captivating as to draw in an 8 year old and 3 year old alike! My kids have asked me countless times about the sun and moon and Earth and why there are seasons, etc. Typically, I respond with, "We need to look that up," because I can never remember this kind of information! And it honestly is just really hard for me to comprehend. I need someone to draw me a picture! That's precisely what Julia Rothman has done for her readers in this book. And it's simplified so even dummies like myself can understand it and relay it to my kids. It's not super duper in-depth, but it's basic. It's the stuff you remember after studying in-depth about subjects like this.

I highly recommend getting this book. Be it for your mom, your kids, or yourself, it's a purchase you will not regret. And if you homeschool, it's a no-brainer. Check out her other publication, *Farm Anatomy* while you're at it. It's on my book order short list!







*Travel Legacy*  
**BEGINS WITH THE  
DECISION TO GO**

*told by*  
**VANESSA BELL**



# *Travel Legacy*



Before Daddy D and I became parents, we were individuals that loved to travel. It was easy back, then, even easier than when we were married. You bought one plane ticket, you bunked with friends and you just went! You ate street food, or exquisite meals, you took tours or just wandered the streets. You did whatever you wanted, whenever you wanted! I didn't travel nearly as much as D did, but having the foundation of that travel legacy is important to our parenting values today.

This Mother's Day was probably was probably the best one I've had as a mom because it was a day that fed my heart for the adventures that I want my kids to grow up on – the legacy of movement, excitement, growth and learning. We packed up the kids for a quick road trip, drove 300 miles south west and spent the day at the San Diego Safari Park.

Some of my fondest childhood memories are when I traveled with my family. We rarely went anywhere exotic, but it was the feeling of togetherness that I recall most. My parents divorced when I was young, but the travel memories I had with either set of parents (and even some when they were together) are moments of family legacy that I will never forget. And I want that for my kids. I want to experience other environments with them, to share memories with them. You just have to decide to go!

So when I kept thinking of a plentitude of reasons why an overnight road trip to a less than exotic locale was crazy – when I hear the questions of whether its even necessary to travel with kids as young as mine, since they won't remember it anyyay – it was really Alina who convinced me that we had to go. She began telling me about the things she learned at her Kidville Summer Camp during Safari Week – “Cheetahs have spots and so do giraffes. Giraffes eat leaves, too. Can I see a cheetah in San Diego, Mama?” With that, it was clear to me that we had to go.

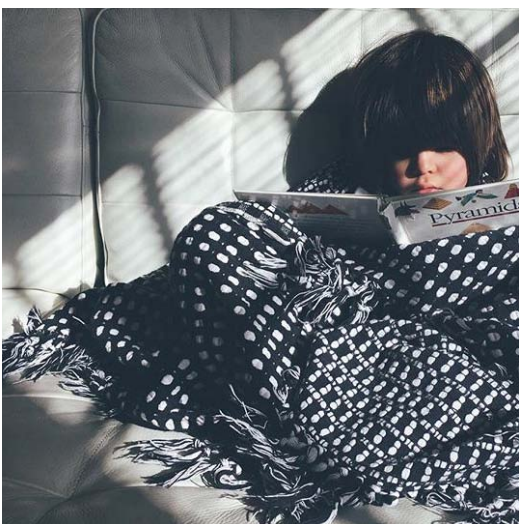
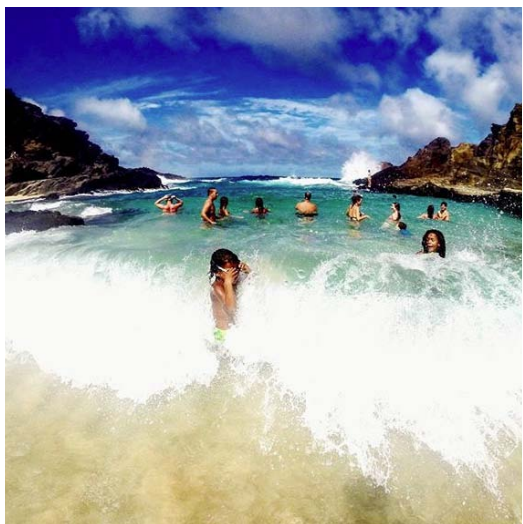
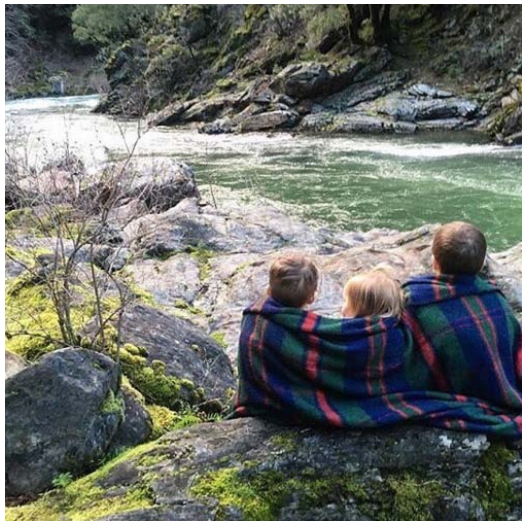
We had the most wonderful time while at the San Diego Safari Park (I got the tickets half-off on Amazon Local). But my favorite part was exposing Alina to a practical element of what she learned within a school setting. I hope we can continue to do that as my children get older. And to think I almost thought the trip wouldn't be worth it...

We're new to the concept of family travel; my babies are young, and while we have done so in the past, I hope that my family gets better and more efficient as the years go on. I would love to travel to Latin America, specifically, to immerse my babies in my family's native language. I would love to take an actual African safari, I want that for myself, but I would only do it with my kids too. Family travel is so much more than a relaxing week by the beach for me these days (although that sounds wonderful, too!). It's also about identity and connection to the global perspective.

We're building a legacy of travel because by experiencing parts of the world, you begin to understand the parts of your identity that would otherwise feel homeless. Travel can bring you back to your roots and give you license to claim another. That's what I hope to achieve for my children, anyway. Major kuddos to parents who are building their travel legacy – and I have several friends who are doing so in major ways! I totally look up to you!







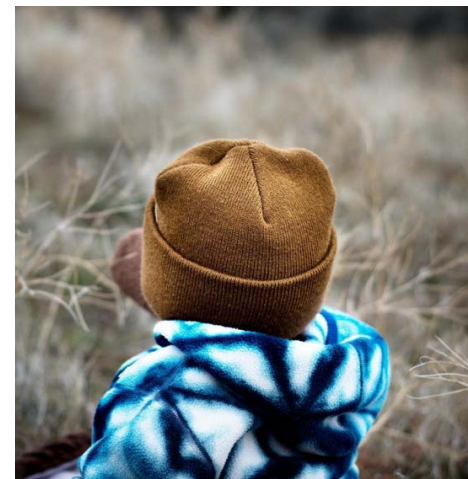






# Community Poll





## FAMILY TRAILS DIRECTORY

GETTING TO KNOW THE FAMILY TRAILS COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT TO US. IN EACH EDITION OF TRAILS MIX, WE'LL ASK FOR YOUR INPUT ON A PARTICULAR TOPIC, QUESTION, OR ISSUE. THIS QUARTER, WE WANT TO KNOW:

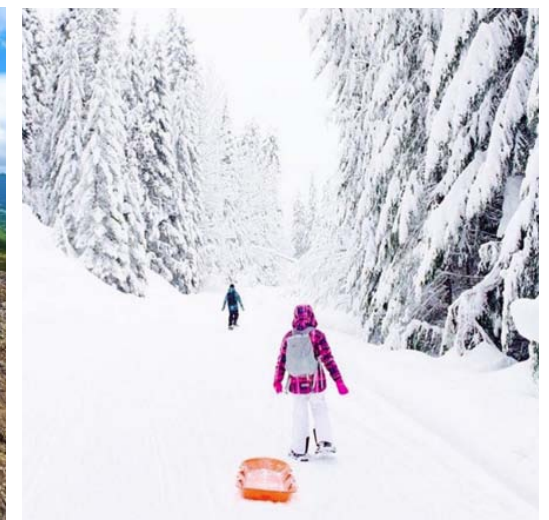
“WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE AND/OR BE INCLUDED IN A FAMILY TRAILS DIRECTORY?”

SHARE YOUR RESPONSE AND INFORMATION BELOW. AS A TOKEN OF OUR APPRECIATION, WE'LL SEND A FAMILY TRAILS GIFT YOUR WAY. IF YOU OPT NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE DIRECTORY, YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION WILL BE USED ONLY FOR SHIPPING YOUR GIFT.

Take the Poll!











**#FAMILYTRAILS**