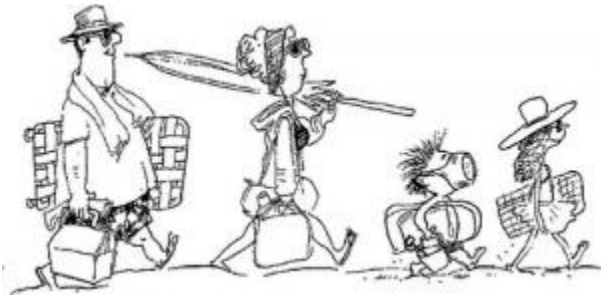


## How To Get Your Spring Break On



Spring break isn't just for party-hearty college students anymore. These days, families are also taking a break from winter and jetting off to sun-drenched climates to frolic on warm beaches.

Spring break for college students spans [the first few weeks of March](#), while families are more inclined to take their spring vacation to coincide with [the long Easter weekend](#), which runs from April 3-5 this year, or [Passover](#), which is April 22-30 this year. The fact that college and public school holidays don't overlap should ensure that PG-rated co-eds don't intrude on a G-rated family vacation.

Although toasting spring's arrival goes back to Greek and Roman celebrations, its modern incarnation is blamed on a Colgate University swimming coach bringing his team to Fort Lauderdale, Florida for training back in 1934.

Sensing a marketing opportunity, Fort Lauderdale organized an annual swim meet, and the rest is history. Buoyed by the 1961 movie "Where the Boys Are," starring George Hamilton; and the 1983 "Spring Break" with Tom Cruise and Shelley Long, the annual ritual has exploded. The 1986 arrival of the annual "[MTV Spring Break](#)" hasn't hurt either.

South Florida is still the center of the college spring break universe. So, if you can find a cheap flight and some friends to share in the cost of a hotel room, grab your bathing suit and beach towel and you're in. Beaches in Florida cities such as Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach quickly become oceans of tanned bodies once spring break hits, with crowds as large as 400,000 people.

While large crowds are considered a plus for college spring break celebrants, they can lead to frustration and annoyance if you're a family seeking relaxation while having a few young kids in tow.

Orlando, home of Disney World and other resorts, is a surefire hit with both kids and budget-conscious parents. But spring break is also the second-busiest time of year, behind Christmas and New Year's. Granted, you can [survive long lines](#) by arriving early and packing your own snacks. But if you go to Orlando for spring break, be prepared for company.

One popular strategy for guaranteeing family fun without blowing the budget is vacationing in an all-inclusive resort. [Familyvacationcritic.com](#) has a list of the top 50 all-inclusive resorts for families in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, the Cayman Islands and other exotic Caribbean locales. Rates during peak times start at about \$300 per person for a five-day stay. Resorts typically feature pools, beaches, fun-filled activities, and meals-all in a safe family-friendly environment.

Cruises are another popular option, offering activities and services for the whole family, including movies, swimming, waterslides, varied dining options and more.

But spring break doesn't have to be all about the beach, especially for families. Visiting a budget-friendly city with inexpensive airline flights can be both entertaining and an educational option for the entire family.

Los Angeles was the Fiscal Times' [top family spring break destination](#) due to the number of attractions and places to visit. In addition, airfare prices to the city generally don't experience a spring break surge due to the high volume of flights. Five new hotels, a strong U.S. dollar and a nearby adventure park helped make Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, the second most popular spring break family destination.

Las Vegas, Quebec City, Phoenix and New York are other great destination cities for family vacations. Norway also landed on the list due to competition among air carriers that has driven airfares below \$200, and Spain was suggested because airfares to Barcelona are on par with flights to South Florida this time of year.

For college students, eight of Kayak's [top 10 spring break destinations for 2015](#) are within the continental United States and four of those are in Florida.

Home to the annual SXSW Festival, down-home rib joints, great Mexican food and walkable avenues lined with jumping live-music venues, Austin, Texas topped the list. It was followed by Fort Lauderdale, with its beaches, beachside bars, warm weather and manatees.

Los Angeles was No. 3 on the list, with median airfare at just \$352 in late April. Southern California is home to magnificent beaches such as Malibu, Santa Monica and Venice. In addition, plenty of culture can be found in downtown Los Angeles. But be advised that spring is the wet season, and a powerful El Nino is in the forecast this year, so your chances of rain falling on your spring break parade are fairly high.

Miami, or SoBe for South Beach, has a lot going for it as a spring break destination. Its chic Art Deco hotels, fun atmosphere, packed beaches and club culture helped it reach No. 4 on Kayak's 2015 list. But timing is everything. Median airfares reach a high of nearly \$600 in early April, but fall to below \$400 later in the month. Try to avoid the Winter Music Conference, scheduled for March 21-24 this year. South Beach hotel rooms will fill up and airfares soar during that time.

Three other Florida beach towns also made Kayak's top 10, including West Palm Beach (No. 5); Fort Myers (No. 6), and the family-friendly Tampa (No. 10).

The two top spring break destinations outside the continental United States were Los Cabos, Mexico, with beaches, bars, and ocean activities; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, which boasts beaches and rainforests.

Although the typical beach party spring break remains a popular rite of passage for many college students, some are craving alternatives. A group called [Break Away](#) offers active citizenship and leadership conferences for college students during spring break. Similarly, [Projects Abroad](#) promises an opportunity to make a difference by participating in volunteer projects such as rebuilding homes for the poor in Jamaica, protecting endangered turtles in Mexico or providing educational support for underprivileged children in Costa Rica, Belize, or Fiji.

One thing is certain: Whatever your preference for marking the arrival of spring, there's something fun and affordable you can try, alone or as a family.