



Sensei Porcupine Creek, a tranquil hideaway in Rancho Mirage, California

There is Nothing Better Than a MOMCATION

SWAPPING THE STROLLERS AND TANTRUMS FOR SOME SOLITUDE AND ZEN WILL MAKE YOU AN EVEN BETTER, MORE-BALANCED MOM. HERE'S HOW TO SLIP AWAY IN STYLE.

BY ALYSSA SHELASKY

I'm half alive when the email comes in.

It says something like: *Good Morning, Ms. Shelasky! Upon your arrival to the Hamptons this afternoon, a Tesla will be waiting to bring you to the Shou Sugi Ban House, where you may slip into a bathrobe, enjoy a warm rice bowl in front of a private fireplace, and slowly be escorted to your sound bath and spa treatments.*

I nearly burst into tears.

Readers, I needed it. I am an overworked mom who hasn't slept in seven years. My son is a toddler (need I say more?), my daughter is seven going on 17, and my partner is always away. We've never had a nanny and every day I have a deadline. The only reason I'm still standing is because—thanks to my job as a freelance writer who occasionally writes about travel—every few months, I get a staycation. Or more specifically, a Momcation.

Some mothers dream about wilding-out with girlfriends. Others, a few hours on the couch streaming Netflix. Me? Nothing compares to a luxurious hotel suite—don't even think about putting me in a “yurt”—complete with room service, massages, Champagne on demand, a

Taylor Jenkins Reid book, and a day or two of rest and relaxation.

I discovered the joy and necessity of the Momcation a few years ago, when I felt so burnt out that I left the house to get milk, passed The William Vale in Williamsburg, Brooklyn along the way, and subconsciously floated straight to the front desk. I asked for a room without knowing what I was saying. And before I even realized what I'd done, I was soaking in a bubble bath, in pure bliss, texting my family that I'd be home tomorrow. *Ciao ciao.*

Since then, I've treasured my Momcations. I've taken them on a whim to local gems, and booked them in advance when more travel and planning is involved. Because the thing is, I'm a great mom; my family is my life; and I'm totally comfortable leaving them when it's appropriate. All to say, I refuse to pack any guilt.

As one of my mom friends, Mary Giuliani, author of “How to Lose Friends and Influence No One,” puts it: “It's a must. You go to regain your sanity, your sense of self, and to remind yourself that you belong to you, without anyone asking for mac and cheese for at least 24 hours.”

Here are a few of my favorite destinations around the country. See you there, mama.

THE RANCH HUDSON VALLEY (Hudson Valley, New York)

If you've ever dabbled in wellness travel, you already know about The Ranch Malibu (if not, don't ask questions and fly to LAX right away... they'll pick you up and you'll never look back!). This year, the Ranch is expanding with The Ranch Hudson Valley, and it's easily going to be the top Momcation destination of 2023. Nestled amidst 200 acres, in an historic lakefront estate, The Ranch Hudson Valley is 45 minutes from NYC and like Malibu, this one will immerse guests in exercise, emotional and physical health, and boundless nature. This is where you UNPLUG. Famous for their deep tissue massages and a plant-based diet that's inspired several incredible cookbooks, Upstate New York will soon have everything we need.

SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE (Watermill, New York)

This haven in Watermill checks all the boxes. The food is healthy and phenomenal—they literally have world's cleanest and umami-rich rice bowls. There's yoga and exercise if you're so inclined. The spa is one of the best in the country. The staff is ultra-accommodating—nothing is a problem. And you're in the Hamptons, which means there are excellent options for shopping and socializing if the mood strikes.

THE WELL AT MAYFLOWER INN (Washington, Connecticut)

Moms with great taste and healthy budgets have long flocked to this countryside paradise by Auberge Resorts Collection, but things have gotten even dreamier for us sleep-deprived parents with new sleep and nap programs instituted by The Well. The complimentary turn-down includes salted caramel chocolates infused with soothing CBD and CBN, accompanied by a bedtime story. Um, yes.

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MONTAGE HEALDSBURG (Healdsburg, California)

Ask any food and travel snob and they'll swoon for a Montage hotel. But this Montage hotel is where wine country meets spa fantasy. Think: a Sonoma Blend massage, which uses locally sourced, cold-decanted olive oil from Comstock Wine's olives. Add some nature plus stress-release with e-bikes, archery, hiking; and all the indulgence of delicious French-influenced California cuisine at Hazel Hill. And *obbbbvously* there's an endless stream of fine wine waiting just for you. There's also a house car (and driver) to take you to any of Healdsburg's famous restaurants, or tasting rooms, all within a 10-minute drive.

BLACKBERRY MOUNTAIN (Walland, Tennessee)

Blackberry Mountain is a much-desired oasis in the Great Smoky Mountains where the outdoorsy mom can escape in every sense. This place is pure utopia and luxury and continues to win all the awards. Lose yourself on hikes, biking, and arbor adventures—there are 5,200 acres to explore. Restorative wellness services include forest bathing, sunrise vinyasa, and crystal reiki. You'll forget all about chicken nuggets and chocolate milk with Blackberry's cherished culinary program: think lemon oats and chia with coconut milk for breakfast, and tagliatelle with Burgundy truffles over sunset.

THE NEWBURY BOSTON (Boston, Massachusetts)

Here's what's perfect about this new-ish hotel (besides having a Leading Hotels of the World distinction): it's extremely sophisticated and very adult. Kids are allowed to stay there, but you won't see or hear many and there's definitely not a kids' club or anything of the like. You get a handsome room, and a fireplace butler, and, on the roof, the restaurant Contessa is the sexiest restaurant I've ever eaten at. When you go there solo, you feel like the star of the next season of *White Lotus*, and there's nothing childish about that.

SENSEI PORCUPINE CREEK (Rancho Mirage, California)

This newly opened retreat nestled against the Santa Rosa mountains is truly a paradisiacal addition to the prime Momcation wish list. The exclusive hideaway is tranquil and intimate, with only a small number of hotel rooms inside a former estate house, and private villas clustered throughout the grand, luscious property. There's golf, tennis, yoga, spa, and dining by Sensei by Nobu. Most notably, this is an adults-only property. No kids allowed!

WHAT TO PACK

*Take a load off and stick
to these essentials.*



Gucci
GG tote bag, 305.868.6504



Chanel
Round sunglasses, 305.868.0550



Loro Piana
Cashmere stole, 305.867.1680



Haremlique
Evil Eye peshtamal, 305.420.5649



Ferragamo
Sneakers, 305.866.8166