

Kiddie conservation: Resorts with the coolest eco-classes for children

Mark Rogers, Special for USA TODAY | *Published on May 7, 2015*



The flash card image of the Caribbean is of a beautiful vacation destination, with bright white sand, an astounding blue sea and glittering resorts. The Caribbean is also a place of diverse ecosystems and wildlife, with much of it poised in a delicate dance between nurture and destruction. Children vacationing with their families can get a deeper understanding of the Caribbean by attending eco-classes and tours at a variety of resorts. These resort-based tours make sure that fun is a major component, and kids will be thrilled with up-close looks at such creatures as sea turtles, iguanas, and monkeys.

Curacao

Curacao, one of the ABC islands, is home to numerous iguanas. At the [Curacao Marriott Beach Resort & Emerald Casino](#), kids between the ages of 4-12 can set off with a trained guide to learn more about these reptiles – including the correct manner of feeding them. Along the way, they'll also learn about other aspects of the island's ecology. Parents are also welcome to take part in the tours. Also on the island of Curacao, the [Santa Barbara Beach & Golf Resort](#) has teamed with National Geographic Kids to offer the Camp Arawak experience. During their stay, kids can enjoy a variety of eco excursions and activities, including photo safaris, birdwatching, iguana feedings and animal-centric arts & crafts.

Turks and Caicos

[Ocean Club Resorts](#) in the Turks and Caicos offers the Seafari Game environment exploration program; a scavenger hunt that teaches young guests about the island's plants and wildlife. The way it works is that at check-in kids are given a Seafari Game kit that provides the information to identify the indigenous wildlife that can be found crawling and buzzing around the resort's grounds, which includes hummingbirds, rock iguanas, geckos, and the island's resident bottlenose dolphin, Jojo. The budding naturalists use their Seafari kit to record their observations throughout their stay, with a prize being given for completed searches.

Jamaica

All three [Beaches Resorts](#) – the two in Jamaica and the one in Turks & Caicos – provide some unusual guides for their kid-centric nature excursions: life size versions of iconic Sesame Street characters. Bird Watching with Big Bird is open to kids of all ages. The huge yellow fellow takes kids around the resort, where they'll learn about the variety of birds that make the island their home, or who just might be passing through. Kids are then christened, "Birdketeers" and are given feather headbands before they join Big Bird in a special dance. Trash to Treasure with Oscar is all about recycling, with grouchy Oscar bringing kids to his own personal "Trashland" where he shows them how to reuse and repurpose cardboard, plastic and paper, transforming trash in works of art. The third component is Explore with Grover, where kids join Grover in a nature walk and scavenger hunt.

Cayman Islands

At [Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort](#), in the Cayman Islands, kids ages 5-12 can join the "Lizard Lovers", and make their own lizard sun catcher and learn about the lizards and iguanas and other reptiles in the Cayman Islands.

The preservation of sea turtles is a huge initiative throughout the Caribbean, and there are numerous resorts where guests can lend a helping hand to this endangered species. Children will be particularly enthralled by watching the little hatchlings make their way to the ocean, so time your visit during the summer and fall months for optimal viewing.

Nevis

Nevis in the West Indies has the ambience of the Caribbean of yesteryear. One of the best ways to enjoy the island is at the [Four Seasons Resort Nevis](#) which occupies the site of a former coconut plantation. Kids staying at the resort can participate in the Sea Turtle Education and Adoption program. They'll learn about this endangered species, and how humans can assist them in nesting, laying eggs and providing optimum conditions for the tiny hatchlings to survive in the wild. Participants also receive an adoption certificate for an endangered sea turtle. Adventurous kids can also head off-resort for a guided Monkey Excursion, led by a local naturalist, where they'll hike through a tropical rainforest to encounter wild green monkeys.

Barbados

[Colony Club](#) in Barbados has a unique take on sea turtles, by combining one of the hottest sports on the scene with getting up close to these amazing creatures. The resort offers a turtle excursion that utilizes stand-up paddle boards. Kids (parents are also welcome) begin at the resort's beach, using stand up paddle boards to make their way to the Lone Star Restaurant, where turtles often convene in the waters off the restaurant. Then it's a dive into clear waters to view hawksbill and leatherback turtles.

Jamaica

The two [Beaches Resorts](#) in Jamaica, in Negril and Ocho Rios, have a turtle program in partnership with Island Routes Caribbean Adventures and the Sandals Foundation.

Guests get the chance to observe endangered turtles during the nesting season, which is between the months of May to December. There's a true scientific component to this tour, since kids will be accompanying actual research teams to learn how endangered sea turtles interact with their surroundings. An added benefit is that all proceeds of the tour go to support research and conservation of the endangered species.

<http://experience.usatoday.com/caribbean/story/resorts-all-inclusives/2015/05/07/resorts-with-the-coolest-eco-classes-for-children/70897958/?csp=travel>