Let's drag the kids halfway around the world! To Africa! If you've never had this thought, that would make you a perfectly sane parent. But even though a safari sounds daunting, the annual migration made by millions of hungry zebra, wildebeest, antelope, and other animals in East Africa does play out conveniently during school holidays (from July to about October). All of Africa's Big Five—lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, black rhino—are sighted regularly in the Mara Triangle, the northwestern part of the Maasai Mara National Reserve. In addition, the Mara River is home to hippos and some of the continent's largest crocodiles; you'll also see jackals and cheetahs, and the kids will be able to tell friends they spied a creature called the bat-eared fox.

Where to stay
The Angama Mara lodge (angama.com; $1,400 per person per night, all-inclusive) may look familiar: It's where Out of Africa was filmed. Formerly a private estate, it was converted into a full-service resort last year. The facility is separated into two camps, each with 15 glass-fronted tent suites that sleep two. In each camp, two pairs of tents are

What to do
Aside from jeep and walking safaris, children and adults can fish for tilapia and catfish above the nearby dam, bead jewelry and belts with Maasai women in the craft studio, or learn how to throw a spear with a Maasai warrior. You can volunteer to bring supplies to a nearby village, or join a breakaway group for a horseback ride along the Mara River.

Take Your
FAMILY
to
Angama Mara, Kenya
What to eat

Dine in an open-air lodge with spectacular views and tableside service. Angama Mara's all-Kenyan cooking team uses local ingredients such as avocado, mango, and illia in global-minded dishes (think grilled haloumi on fruity tabbouleh). Meals are accompanied by chapati flatbread and kachumbari, a local salsa made from tomato, cilantro, onion, and chilli, and they're finished off with Kenya's most cherished dessert, the ruata, a doughnut (here, inside papaya). Meals are relaxed, with no set times, and children can come into the kitchen to learn to bake—or sit around a fire making smores.

Insider tip

See the Maasai Mara from above by booking a one-hour hot air balloon ride ($400 per person). You'll float over open grass plains, across the Mara River—and lions will stop and look up as you drift by.

Travel Lesson No. 4:

Make Necklaces en Route to Maui

I'm a believer in limiting screen time when we travel with our daughters. I see it as a treat and like to abide by the experts' suggestion of no more than two hours per day. On a holiday trip, flying from San Francisco to Maui, my wife and I decided we were going to save the screens for the last third of the six-hour trek.

For the first four hours, we focused on games and art projects. My kids' favorite was paper chains.

I brought a pad of construction paper and a roll of tape. We couldn't bring scissors, so I had the kids fold and tear the paper into rectangular strips. Then I told them to make chain links with the tape. The two of them—one is almost 7, the other 4 and a half—got into it. They made short chains to give to flight attendants to wear as festive necklaces. The girls also challenged each other to see if they could make one really long chain. They got to 84 links. It was a genius move. It kept them busy forever.

—As told by Matt Villano, freelance writer, founding member of the Family Travel Association

As an alternative:

Greenough, Mont.

Explore the great outdoors without leaving the U.S. in Big Sky Country, where you can herd cattle, raft on the Snake River, or go fly-fishing. Make PawsUp (pawsup.com) in Greenough, a half-hour from the airport in Missoula, your home base. The ranch-resort popularized the concept of “glamping” ($623 per person per night, including food and activities). Activities include horseback riding, fly-fishing, bird watching, and history tours.

What do we pack?

Luxury safari lodges often have amenities handy—ponchos for cooler early-morning drives, binoculars, hats, mosquito spray—so pack light. That's important, because bush planes have strict weight restrictions. And don't ignore the lodge's request to bring soft luggage: Smaller planes need every inch of available space in the cargo hold, and soft luggage is easier to squeeze in. You might think dust-colored safari clothing is all you need, but think again: Safari guide and author Jonathan Goodwin says, “If you feel hot and uncomfortable, you're not going to be looking for wildlife.”