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AHEAD

THE FAMILY REUNION, MADE SIMPLE

As relatives start planning group trips again, hotels are recruiting experts to craft the perfect, please-everyone stay.

By Devorah Lev-Tov

AFTER MANY MONTHS—or even years—apart, families are finally getting back together. In fact, gathering for a multiday reunion is one of the biggest motivators for vacations right now, according to a spokesperson for Virtuoso, the global network of luxury travel advisors. That's prompted a number of hotels and resorts to create a relatively new role: the family-reunion coordinator.

Think of it as the evolution of the wedding planner. After all, many of these events have the same head count as you'd see at a small ceremony, with varying ages and interests—as well as travel logistics from multiple destinations to consider.

"We know traveling can be nerve-racking these days," says Florencia Oriolo, the experience manager at **Nayara Alto Atacama** (nayaraaltoatacama.com; doubles from \$840), in Chile. "So we make the experience for big families totally seamless by getting to know the group, the ages, and the interests, then creating a tailor-made program."

At the lodge's sister properties in Costa Rica, **Nayara Tented Camp** (nayaratentedcamp.com; doubles from \$1,200) and **Nayara Gardens** (nayaragardens.com; doubles from \$475), reunion coordinator Ivanova Barreda has arranged memorable experiences for big family groups. One was a picnic and photo session at the stunning Místico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park. Another was a visit to a sloth sanctuary where family members pitched in on conservation



efforts by planting Cecropia trees, which are a major food source for the animals.

Anna Cassasola heads up family-reunion planning at **Sirenian Bay Resort & Villas** (sirenianbay.com; doubles from \$450, all-inclusive), in Placencia, Belize. Some of her recent guests have enjoyed a family photo session on the beach, a huge barbecue with performances by Garifuna drummers and dancers, and a private class that covered chocolate-making, from bean to bar.

In Trancoso, Brazil, Iracema Gretchen Keseberg is the family-reunion expert at **Uxua Casa Hotel & Spa** (uxua.com; doubles from \$420). Her itineraries often include horseback riding along nearby beaches; lessons in capoeira, the Brazilian martial art; and private dinners at local restaurants.

The recently opened **Bishop's Lodge, Auberge Resorts Collection** (aubergeresorts.com; doubles from

\$699), in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is seeing plenty of family reunions, thanks in part to the Bunkhouse, its 12-bedroom private residence, says Laura Gerwin, the family-and-celebrations curator. She's kept guests busy with activities like a private kids' camp complete with a pony; fly-fishing or rafting; and generation-spanning experiences that include hot-air ballooning and private lunches served in the nearby wilderness.

Competitive families may find their match in the Great Race, organized by **Ojai Valley Inn** (ojaivalleyinn.com; doubles from \$609), in California. "The family is divided into teams, and each team participates in a series of challenges and activities that have an attached point value," says Sydney Romero, who arranges reunion activities. "It's so fun to see the family members working together—and also to see their competitive spirit come to life!"