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What Every Parent's Talking About

# parenting **OC**

*David Beshk of St. Margaret's Episcopal in San Juan Capistrano takes the title as Parenting OC's Top Teacher of Orange County, 2017.*

FOURTH ANNUAL  
**TOP 25**

**TEACHERS**  
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SPECIAL SECTIONS: K-12 EDUCATION, CAMPS & ACTIVITIES, PARTIES

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David Beshk of St. Margaret's  
Episcopal in San Juan Capistrano is  
the 2017 Top Teacher of OC.

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# Trips with Kids

By Sascha Zuger



## Mexico Dos Ways

It's that time of year, to plan Spring Breaks and look ahead to Summer Vacations. If you haven't yet shared the culture South of the Border with your kiddos, here are two ways to ensure a fabulous family getaway.

### Grand Velas Riviera Maya [GrandVelas.com](http://GrandVelas.com)

Everything at this very exclusive Riviera Maya luxury resort is impressive. The massive scale of the entrance is just a taste of jaw-droppers inside; the acres-big pool expansive enough to support a giant hamster wheel ball inflatable for kids to scramble inside, jungle trails that pass hidden historic underwater-springfed cenote caves, mariachis and authentic Mexican performers (with a slightly less authentic but certainly fun mechanical bull-riding pen), included kayak snorkel trips out to the reef to spot sea turtles, sugary white sand with gentle lapping aqua water shallow enough for any little one to enjoy...the possibilities are so endless you will quickly realize you have no need to leave the property.

The service is one of the high points, with butlers assigned to suites and served wading into the pool to deliver drinks (even when fully uniformed). During our stay there wasn't a staff member who crossed our path without a genuine smile and a personalized greeting after the first meeting. There are places where you feel well taken care of in the hopes that you will take care of them, in this resort it was clearly a step beyond that with everyone from bartender to housekeeper offering a genuine interest in your happiness.

The poolside servers tossed balls with the boys, and knew exactly which sushi rolls they favored and how many virgin pina coladas they could handle before turning green.

The inclusive experience is a godsend for those with bottomless pit tweens or teens that have suddenly grown spare bellies inside, but often that comes at the cost of good taste. That was anything but true at this resort, with high quality and varied menus throughout. The buffet breakfast alone had more choices of cuisine and fresh produce than three or four restaurant menus put together and somehow stayed fresh and well stocked throughout the morning.

We did not hold back, trying everything from the upscale Japanese restaurant, the authentic Mexican fare eatery and even a 12-course molecular gastronomy meal with food almost too gorgous to eat (almost) with wine pairings for the grownups. We did not have a bad meal at the resort, and the kids added extra courses even despite living in a room with a fully stocked complimentary minibar with personalized treats.

Although there were nightly events to enjoy as a family — stargazing, al fresco movies by the pool, live bands, we found ourselves enjoying a little time getting away from it all...even each other... as well. The kids club offers continual engaging activities and the teen club was swanky enough to make any grownup jealous. We actually saw several parents being shoo'd out. The cavernous club had a bar with smoothie'tender on hand, a dance floor with lasers



*Guides lead guests on a kayak snorkel trip to a nearby reef to enjoy the area's tropical marine life and sea turtles.*

and special effects, a massive wall of screens for group gaming or pajama movie nights, and a strong wifi signal.

While the kids were ocupado, we hit the amazing spa for a Hydrothermal Journey — a therapist-led experience with unique highlights like a Mayan clay room, ice room, steamy waterfalls and bubbling beds inches under the soothingly warm, chlorine-free surface to jet away your cares. After, indulge in an ancient pre-hispanic head-to-toe Uumbal Shawl Massage, using local lemons on pressure points and Mexican woven cloths for gentle stretching. Not quite ready for re-entry into responsibility, we took the long way back via the adults-only section of the resort and lounged poolside to the strumming of guitar and sound of the surf.

We did, reluctantly, tear ourselves away for the day to get a little culture into our vacay, wandering inland to the unique jungle Mayan ruins of Coba where we hopped a three-wheeled pedaled coach deep into the lush environs to climb the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan. On the way back, we hit town where we were shocked to find a very high end mall tucked in between the quaint cafes and family-run souvenir shops. We didn't stay long, a quick family vote determined everyone was of the same mind, yearning to return our new casa away from casa. In short, yes, it was a hike across the coast, although several airlines now have nonstop service from LAX, making it a quicker trip than most Hawaiian islands. But in this case, the destination was truly worth the journey.

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*The Hydrothermal Journey is a relaxing, therapist-led experience for all the senses.*