

Travelling While Home-Schooling

Travelling should be seen as a wonderful learning opportunity for your children, says MARTIE DU PLESSIS

There are many families today that would like to travel together to local destinations, take a sabbatical or even do an extended world tour, but would never consider it due to restricting circumstances such as children being in schools and limited finances.

Many families wait until they retire to do the "dream trip." Truth be told, had they done these trips as a family they could have contributed positively to their children's education, and even then have left a legacy through it.

Our world has gone through huge changes and one of the best ways to educate and equip our children for the 21st century is to let them take part in travelling experiences with parents. In this way the world becomes

Before my daughter started school, she attended the playgroup that I ran from home. Soon after when I started the work of Dynamis I also started with home education and we travelled throughout South Africa doing seminars and assisting families. Being a home educating parent I took the responsibility to ensure her learning was never interrupted. My thinking was that if she could learn to manage with discomfort for a few years, she would ultimately be better equipped for life and be able to survive many situations. One of the main reasons for travelling during this time was to offer my daughter a wider education and to make her a better rounded person. Looking back I am convinced that she is much better prepared through "life as a field trip" and the "world as a classroom." I can understand why George Bernard Shaw said that the only time his education was interrupted was when he was in a school!

Parents are the primary educators of their children and every good parent should take full responsibility for their child's education, even if they use schools. My encouragement to parents would be not to limit educational opportunities by fearing the risk of taking their children with on their travels.

WHAT ABOUT FRIENDS?

This often seems to be a common concern from those who have never home schooled, but in reality it is not a problem. Many studies show that home-schooled kids are actually better "socialised" than many schooled kids. Your children have many more opportunities to socialize with people of different ages, different geographical areas, and in several languages. It is a huge

the classroom and the educational advantages are obviously enormous - it contributes to developing skills such as risk taking, creativity, collaboration and cross-cultural experience. Mark Twain said that he would never have wanted schooling to get in the way of his education. Schools in general are not meeting the needs of students resulting in them being generally ill equipped and not motivated to learn.

"What children need is not new and better curricula but access to more and more of the real world; plenty of time and space to think over their experiences, and to use fantasy and play to make meaning out of them; and advice, road maps, guidebooks, to make it easier for them to get where they want to go (not where we think they ought to go), and to find out what they want to find out."
(John Holt)

advantage that they are not confined to an artificial, age-specific peer group. They are capable of making friends instantly with every age and can make lifelong connections around the world. Home schooling mainly offers families precious extra time together. When a family really battles with relationships, the best advice I can give to them is to travel together. It exposes families to different lifestyles and cultures that naturally bring families together. To be able to adapt to different kinds of changes and accommodation while travelling is probably the most valued lessons that we can teach our children. One year a dad, after a Dynamis consultation, went home and bought five backpacks and went on a tour with his three young adult sons that could not tolerate one another - the outcome was remarkably positive.



"Research shows that a recipe for high achievement consist of 1) much time spent with warm, responsive parents and other adults, 2) very little time spent with peers, and 3) a great deal of free exploration under parental guidance." (Dr Raymond Moore)

You might ask, "But how can it work?" Simply ask yourself if your children are learning. If they are not, it is simple to take them out of school and take a family vacation or trip away. Many families are integrating home school travel with their children's education. Travel is a direct mode of learning; it brings life to the study of history, geography, cultures and many other thematic studies. Children can put a few hours of dedicated studies to skills subjects like languages and maths and the rest of the day more informal learning on subjects related to the area or culture (content subjects).

Drs André and Jenny Roebert, the founders and senior pastors of River Ministries, travel extensively and these are Ps Jenny's words...

"Travelling extensively with three, young, school going children to countries and different destinations across the world for up to seven months out of a year, may sound extremely challenging. The truth is, we have had so much fun, adventure and bonding as a family, in the past three years of travel. However without the discipline of a daily, flexible routine, I don't think we could have managed as well as we have. Knowing the amount of schooling needed to be covered does dictate to our routine as a family in spite of the demanding schedule. Whether on a train, plane, boat or RV, the routine is applied. Our aim is to dedicate the necessary hours, five days a week to theoretical education. The remainder of the time is considered as a "school of life" field trip where we make the most of investigating the areas we are visiting. Travel schedules make everyday a potential learning experience. Whether in the wilds of Africa, the museums in the US, or the castles in Europe, we learn as we explore and experience. We certainly have had our moments of frustration while living in confined spaces for long periods of time or just having those good old "bumpy" days where children can't focus and mother's sense of humour and good character is worn thin. There is no denying that the life experiences we have gained are priceless. Our children see things with a completely different perspective to how they did before we travelled. They have learnt to appreciate different cultures and people and understand seasons, diverse weather conditions, economics, financial currencies and so much more through practical experience. Travelling has only excelled their hunger and love for learning and knowledge. As parents, we are so grateful for the opportunities of travel and ministry and the choice to do so with our family."

Drs André and Jenny Roebert with their children, Jordan, Faith and Christian visiting Nantucket Island 30 miles off the coast of USA (near Boston) - this is one of the Island Lighthouses.



Louis and Hettie Britz (public speaker and gospel singer) also travel extensively with their children and share their experience:

"We have travelled extensively with our children, even spending a total of 11 months out of the country in a 3 three-year period when our three kids were respectively unborn, 2 years old and almost 5. Even though only one of our

kids started "formal" schooling in those years, we started seeing the benefits of travels meeting home-schooling! In fact, it was on these trips that we spent time with other home-schoolers in Canada, England, the US and Scotland and learnt a great deal about how other families, mostly also regular travellers and missionaries, make it work. Being in our ninth year of home-schooling now and having travelled during school terms every year, we have quite a few stories to tell, including doing math at an altitude somewhere near the sun and doing spelling in a Burger King. Our children have plastic trays that fit over their laps that they can put their books on. These have containers for stationery on either side, which form the legs of their little "lap tables". These get loaded with all they might need and each takes along a variety of sticker fun books, Sudoku, puzzle books and the type of spelling and math books that are a dime a dozen at any bookstore. When we fly, though, we try to travel light when it comes to school books. We make sure the supplemental "travel" books are on their level and we take only their official Math and English books along. We also pack a few CD-ROMS as these are light and compact. We spend time researching the places where we are headed, draw maps, do budgets etc. and we refer back to these, adapt them, make notes on them and later paste pictures on them as we travel. We also keep a lookout for educational opportunities in the cities we visit. Our kids have joined libraries in Tennessee for just three days. This to us strikes a fair balance between doing no schoolwork and turning what should be a fun time for our family into an intense academic exercise. In this way the kids love and remember what they learn without falling behind." ▣

Dynamis is operated from Clarens and is a nation-wide ministry to equip families and home educators. The goal is to let parents understand that they can take responsibility and have the authority in defining their child's education and success in future, even when they travel together.



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Transforming People

A New Generation of families

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