

High Fives and Two Wheels

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Most parents would agree that there's a better chance of finding WMDs in Baghdad than getting their teenagers excited about doing anything with their parents anywhere on the planet.

So, why then, on a recent summer afternoon, was my family tooling around Kansas City's magnificent Country Club Plaza, a smile on my son's face as he high-fived on-lookers and listened to our guide tell about the numerous fountains and sculptures that distinguish the Plaza as one of the world's most intriguing shopping districts?

Segways.

Not only are Segways the global answer to parental prayers when traveling with teenagers, they are also the hippest way to explore some of the most interesting places the world has to offer.

First manufactured in 2002 as a zero-emission form of transportation for people with mobility issues, Segways have caught on quickly with the tourism industry. Right now, more than 170 tours are in operation worldwide.

Imagine riding a Segway along the Champs-Élysées or zipping around the Eiffel Tower plaza with a baguette and bottle of wine in your handlebar bag.

In Valencia, Spain, glide under a canopy of fragrant orange trees, past the world-renowned Calatrava hemisphere to the Mediterranean port that hosts the America's Cup.

Of course, my son was not happy about having to wear a helmet and even less happy with the helmet-hair look when the tour was over, but it's law in most states in the U.S. and just good common sense. Segway riders must be at least 16 years old to operate on a public street, but in places like zoos and private parks, that age often drops to 12.

Segways move at three speeds: black, yellow and red, and of course, my son was the first to advance to the more daring, red 12-mph-speed. He was soon rolling backwards at the speed of, well, 12-mph, spinning in place and off-roading in the grassy terrain of the Country Club Plaza. He actually smiled as we posed for photos and even asked if we could all do it again sometime. From his on-line research, these are some of the family vacation destinations he "might" consider with us, based on the availability



these are some of the family vacation destinations he “might” consider with us, based on the availability of Segway tours:

Amelia Island, Fla., where the outing takes families along bicycle paths for an intimate look at wildlife, flowers and other elements of that island’s pristine landscape.

Traverse City, Mich., where Segway tours follow the Lake Michigan shoreline while zooming out on peers in the bay and past a fabulous statue of the world’s most productive milk cow.

Route 66 is just retro enough to interest my son, so he wants to combine riding a Segway and driving a Corvette along the historic Route in Albuquerque, NM.

This weekend, we plan to rent the recently released movie, “10 MPH,” a fun story about two burned out corporate executives who quit their jobs to travel across the country on a Segway.

As long as my teenager stops rolling his eyes at me like Mad-Eye Moody, I’m game for anything.

By Diana Lambdin Meyer, RED Travel Writer

Photo by Bruce N. Meyer