



Guest Editors' Note

By Chris and Suzanne Shoemaker

Since childhood, we've all sung the simple rhyme "April showers bring May flowers." Getting a little wet in return for a garden full of beautiful flowers seems like a fair trade. But another familiar axiom, "We can never get enough rain" doesn't sound so fair this year. Regardless, it is time to put the rains behind us, ignore the rising cost of gasoline and indulge the traveler's itch that begs for a thorough scratching. As Earth Day reminds us, it's springtime again!

This is the perfect season to exercise your traveling urge, and this month's issue offers some creative suggestions and unique opportunities to indulge your family's traveling appetite. Choosing the right activity for the right age groups in your brood often requires some careful planning. Check out page 50 for some very unique Traveler's Tales.

In exploring travel, especially family travel, don't always think in terms of spending big bucks and

long hours at airports. A bona fide trip may entail an adventurous stroll around a familiar block or a lengthier hike along an unknown trail. Blessed by California's abundance of unique destinations, many of us will surely pursue a daytrip in the family car- which has gotten far more stylish in recent years (see page 49). Given our recent rains, you probably couldn't find a better way to enjoy the countryside's abundance of wildflowers and the verdant blanketing of the grassy mountainsides. Even Death Valley is in bloom!

And what better time than in the blossoming month of April to acknowledge the increasingly important observance of Earth Day? Several of this month's articles address this special day set aside to honor both nature and life. Since Earth Day was originally announced in San Francisco at the November 1969 UNESCO Conference on the Environment, it has ushered in the year's first day of spring. Perhaps Earth Day's most important

function is to remind us to protect and care for Mother Nature including our human, animal, plant and water neighbors - not a bad habit to get into 365 days a year. Inspire your children to help the earth using our tips on pages 9 and 30.

Hans Christian Andersen, the brilliant Danish children's author who brought us such fairy tale classics as *The Little Mermaid* and *The Emperor's New Clothes* once said, "To travel is to live!" Did he ever get that right. For all its worldly freckles and blemishes, our planet is still a miraculous orb to behold. So plant some seeds, energize yourself, take a deep breath this month and enjoy the natural wonders of spring with your family!

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