

Resorts bank on you being sick of your Zoom room

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It's only been a month or two of the work-and-school grind, but maybe you're already dreaming about a getaway, a place where the kids can do distance-learning, you can get your work done remotely, and everyone can enjoy a much-needed change of scenery. Also important: A place that's fun to explore during "recess" and work breaks.

Properties across New England and the country have gotten creative with their offerings, in hopes of filling vacancies — whether unused hotel rooms, timeshares, or cottages — while giving people a safe and comfortable place to stay.

Koala, a new Brooklyn-based startup, helps travelers locate and stay in timeshares across the country that would normally be unavailable to members of the public unless they purchased a unit. Through this Airbnb-like service, timeshare owners rent their properties to travelers. You'll find small one-of-a-kind lodges to large resorts owned by big brands such as Hilton, Marriott, and Wyndham.

If you want to stay closer to home, take your family to one of Koala's five New England timeshare properties, from the Bluegreen Soundings Seaside Resort in Dennis Port to Club Wyndham properties in Jamestown (R.I.), Hancock, and Smugglers' Notch



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At Club Wyndham Smugglers' Notch Resort, which offers apartment-style lodging, recess may include arcade games or ripping down 78 ski runs (and six terrain parks) at the neighboring ski area in northern Vermont.

(Vt.). Or take your family on an urban adventure at the Marriott Vacation Club Pulse in Boston's Custom House.

At the Bluegreen Soundings Seaside Resort, families can build sandcastles and ex-

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plore 365 feet of private beach, swim in the indoor and (depending on the season) outdoor pools, and visit nearby Plymouth Plantation. At Club Wyndham Smugglers' Notch Resort, recess may include arcade games or ripping down 78 ski runs (and six terrain parks) at the neighboring ski area in northern Vermont. Or Club Wyndham Bentley Brook in Hancock, about 150 miles from Boston, offers access to the slopes at Jiminy Peak, hikes along local rail trails, and cross-country ski trails at Field Farm just 6 miles away.

The benefit? These apartment-style properties tend to have plenty of living space with multiple bedrooms so your family can spread out, laundry facilities, and a built-in kitchen. They also typically cost less than a traditional hotel stay, and offer access to resort amenities. Get your work or school-work done and then go jump in the pool, grab a snack from the restaurant, or go golfing or cross-country skiing. Weekly stays at these New England properties range from \$672 to \$1,057 per week for a two-bedroom unit.

Koala also has a COVID-19 tracker that provides up-to-date info on the health climate and precautions being taken at property destinations. The live data lists the number of reported cases, case trends, and coun-

ty health preparedness scores for the neighborhood where each accommodation is located.

If you really want to get away, use Koala to find timeshare rentals from Myrtle Beach to San Diego — or, once the border reopens, even Canada and Mexico.

Maybe RV life is more your speed. Sun RV Resorts offers glamping experiences in RVs, cottages, or tiny homes (think: bearskin rugs, plush beds, kitchenettes, and heat) in more than 135 locations across the country. In New England, you'll find three RV resorts in Old Orchard Beach (Maine), and one in Saco (Maine), Old Mystic (Conn.), Dennis Port, East Falmouth, and Sandwich. The New England resorts close for the winter, but begin reopening in May, so start planning your spring getaways early (others across the country remain open year-round).

Wild Acres RV Resort in Old Orchard Beach has hiking trails on 30 acres of undeveloped land — great for enjoying fall foliage — a BMX bike track, and bike rentals for exploring the Eastern Trail (just a mile away), a 65-mile semi-paved trail for bikers and walkers that runs from South Portland to the New Hampshire border. (Come spring, you can also explore the resort's Aerial Adventure Park, which has seven zip stations, two ropes courses, and The Grove, a tree- and rock-climbing experience.)



VIRGINIA BEACH CONVENTIONS AND VISITORS BUREAU



RICHARD BOYD

Or stay on a spring-fed pond in Sandwich and use this as a base for exploring the Cape. Peters Pond RV Resort sits in the perfect spot for exploring the Cape Cod Rail Trail, nearby Plymouth, and the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge. Or hang out at the property and play cornhole and basketball, or rent a kayak and paddle around the pond.

Cottages at both resorts sleep up to six people and include a fully equipped kitchen, TVs, an electric fireplace, 1½ bathrooms, and free WiFi so you can stay connected to work and school. Some cottages even have a screened porch with a

grill and fire ring. Alternatively, you can bring your own RV.

If you're looking to go farther afield, Virginia Beach's new Surf, Sand, and Study program offers discounted access to outdoor adventures, educational programs, lodging and more. Sign up for a pass for free and you'll receive a link to available activities and to dining and lodging options (no need to download an app).

The passport, good through March 2021, offers discounts for zip-lining, surfing, kayak and paddleboard rentals, and the area's new Virginia Beach Sports Center, which features a Breakout Physical Education

program (it's like gym class minus any lessons). Families can also learn the history of this coastal city, where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean and First Landing State Park marks the spot where English colonists landed in 1607. Visit the Virginia Beach Surf & Rescue Museum, the Military Aviation Museum, and the Virginia Aquarium (home to sharks, sea turtles, and aquatic creatures). Or explore the city's art murals, visit local farms, or attend socially distanced yoga classes. Fun Funky Mixed Media, a visual arts school, even offers art classes for all ages, including "mommy and me" classes to art camps.

The passport provides discounts on 28 properties from the Historic Cavalier Hotel and Beach Club to the area's newest property, Delta Hotels Virginia Beach Bayfront Suites, which opens in December.

Maybe you need a place where you can drop the kids so they can study while you work. Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach on Florida's Gulf Coast has partnered with the local Clearwater Marine Aquarium

(home to Winter the Dolphin from the "Dolphin Tale" movies, for those in the know) to offer a new Study Hall in Paradise program. School-age children gather in small learning pods in the aquarium's classrooms — following all CDC guidelines — where they can do their own schoolwork and then learn about all things aquatic from a marine biologist.

The supervised Study Hall runs 8:30-11:30 a.m. and noon-3 p.m. and includes a boxed lunch and afternoon snacks. Your child will need to bring a laptop and headphones, if needed, to complete his or her own schoolwork. During the included aftercare program, your child can get a tour of the aquarium to visit rescued marine life and engage in fun activities, such as learning about dolphin anatomy and how dolphins have adapted to survive in their environment.

Meanwhile, parents can work in dedicated in-room workspaces, hotel meeting rooms, or even poolside. Parents get free high-speed Internet, free printing, lunch upon request, and two free 50-minute spa treatments per stay at the resort's Pallavi Luxury Spa. The Study Hall in Paradise program is available daily for guests when booking a three-night minimum stay.

Whether you want to learn about a new place or just enjoy a change of scenery, take work and school on the road — and embrace the world outside your home office and classroom walls.

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