



Money

## Flush baby boomers funding big family trips



By Beth Pinsker

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**NEW YORK (Reuters) - When Barbara Grover and her husband received an inheritance they were not expecting five years ago, they planned a luxurious family trip.**

Rather than plowing the money back into retirement savings, the Grovers took their two daughters as well as their spouses and children along on an eight-day safari in Tanzania.

Total cost for 11 people: around \$65,000.

"It's a lot of money, there's no way to get around that part," Grover said. But considering that price included 11 flights, two guides, almost all meals and an unforgettable experience spending time with her kids and grandkids, she said it was a bargain.

Now Grover, who lives in Pittsburgh, is plotting another family adventure - to take her whole brood on a cruise around the Galapagos Islands next year. The route is one of the most popular with multigenerational family groups like hers, which is why Grover had to nail down plans a year in advance in order to secure a ship.

Industry analysts say the increase in popularity in multigenerational travel is being driven by spry baby boomers who are gathering up their dispersed kin to spend quality time together.

A soon-to-be-released survey from MMGY Global, a travel industry research company, finds that around 5.5 percent of all vacation trips now consist of grandparents, parents and children traveling together. However, there is not a great deal of historical data to compare the growth overall in the industry in recent years.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/08/us-travel-family-multigenerational-idUSBRE9470SY20130508>

Travel agents and hotel groups say bookings of large family groups are increasing. Preferred Hotel Group, for instance, says traffic to its dedicated family travel website ([preferredfamily.com](http://preferredfamily.com)) is on track to double this year over last year. In 2011, a company survey found that 40 percent of active leisure travelers had taken a multigenerational trip that year.

### **WHO PAYS?**

On many of these excursions, grandparents foot the bill for the whole group. The price tags can be exorbitant. For the Grovers, part of the impetus for the Galapagos trip - which could cost up to \$90,000 - comes from the need to take required minimum distributions from their individual retirement accounts.

The Internal Revenue Service requires distributions after age 70-1/2.

It is possible to travel on the cheap, too.

Jon Andre, a certified financial planner with Financial Management Group in Cincinnati, Ohio, had a client who for her 70th birthday, took her whole family on a \$500 ziplining expedition at a resort in southern Ohio.

"She was getting a little agitated that her grandkids were spending most of their time inside in front of TV," he says.

### **WHERE TO GO**

Judy Gross and her husband, who live in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, find that their budget of around \$30,000 works best for a beach resort for their brood of 10. They typically travel during winter vacation or spring break. Most recently they all went to the Turks & Caicos islands in the Caribbean.

"The hardest thing for me is the grandchildren want to go someplace different every year," says Gross, who turns 70 in June.

Showing up at a vacation destination with 10 people of varying ages and interests can be chaotic. Gross highly recommends all-inclusive meal plans. On their last trip, the self-titled chief executive officer of her family only pre-booked three days of meals for the family, which made it difficult and expensive to organize meals on the remaining days.

Hotels are increasingly changing to accommodate groups like this, trying to be more family-friendly with villas and suites, says Preferred Hotel Group's Michelle Woodley, senior vice president of distribution and revenue management.

Cruises are another popular option with families. The industry will add another 12,000 new beds in 2013, bringing total capacity up to more than 350,000, according to the Cruise Lines International Association, a trade group.

For groups larger than 16 on off-peak vacations, cruise lines start to kick in some discounts, such as offering one free bed as well as points that can be traded for services, said Lauren Goldenberg, a Philadelphia-based travel agent who runs The Family Traveler agency with her sister, Mindy.

## **HEAD OFF CONFLICTS**

But with so many people of varying ages in close quarters for days at a time, family harmony can be in jeopardy without advance planning, Goldenberg added.

The first step is to look at meeting the needs of the children - how long a plane trip can they tolerate, what activities can they do, will they eat anything beyond chicken nuggets?

Next she suggests finding a place where family members can amuse themselves during the day, usually on their own dime, and come back together for a pre-arranged evening meal, often paid for by the family elder.

She recently booked a trip for a group of 15 to Scottsdale, Arizona, for a grandparent's 75th birthday. The location worked since family members from California, Boston and Washington, D.C. could all get there on non-stop flights, which they paid for individually. The resort had villas where each family could sleep on its own, for less than \$500 a night per family. There was a spa, a pool, tennis, mountain biking and hot-air ballooning.

"Plenty of grandparents come back these trips and say, it was best ever. We got away from electronics and enjoyed each other's company," Goldenberg said.

(Editing by Lauren Young, G Crosse)