

## Ep #149: Micro-Trips: Short Getaways With Mega Value



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

**Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg**

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## Ep #149: Micro-Trips: Short Getaways With Mega Value

Alex: Looking to take some shorter weekend getaways? Listen in as we share some micro-trips with mega value.

Welcome to *Points Talk with the Travel Mom Squad*. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. Sometimes, with work or being a parent, you might not be able to get away for a full week or ten days or more. Maybe you just want a quick, relaxing getaway and a break from everyday life. That's where micro-trips come in, and today we're sharing some great destinations tailored to different parts of the country because obviously, if you only have a few days, you're not going to want to spend a majority of that time on a plane that are great spots, you know, if you just have two nights or three nights or four nights. These are going to give you some ideas for places you can go that feel like you're far away when you're really not.

Alex: And we do have some, we do have some international ones though.

Jess: Yes, we do.

Alex: So stay tuned for those. You can still do a little quick getaway internationally.

Jess: All right, Pam. So kick us off with some things that everyone should consider before deciding on, you know, one of these destinations.

Pam: Well, we get a lot of questions from people wanting to know how long they need to spend in a certain place, a certain hotel, a certain destination. We believe that any time is better than zero time. I've had countless times I've gone

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on a trip, and I've gone there, and I thought, oh, it's only going to be, you know, so long. And after the first night, I'm going, this is totally worth it. I am so glad I did this. And if I had to go home tomorrow, I would be fine with having done it. We've actually done four days in Europe and I never regretted it. So a micro-trip is certainly worth it.

So for these destinations, we think that obviously, you know, two to four nights would be great, but it will be depend on your flying time as well. I think for a micro-trip, the flight times are usually shorter anyway. But you know what? We did a micro-trip to Europe, so you can do that too.

Alex: Hey, the key, if you if you can do business class, at least there, then it makes it a whole different situation.

Jess: If you're in business class, that's like part of the vacation. And so...

Alex: 100%. Yeah.

Pam: It's part of the journey. And so I could fly there, spend a night somewhere, fly home in business class, and I'd probably say that was a great trip.

Alex: Well, and people are probably wondering what we did. We did it, we've done it twice now, Mom, right? We did Paris, I think we were there for four nights. You have to account, it was a five-night trip, so it was a little longer because you have to account for the night flying over. And then we did four nights in Italy.

Pam: Celerina, Switzerland, yeah.

Alex: Yeah, it was Switzerland. We flew into Milan. And we did that because we were flying Emirates first class home. So it was like that was the only thing we booked, and then we planned a whole trip around that. So, you can do some pretty fancy micro-trips, but we're going to, they're not going to be that crazy for this episode. Most people don't want to do that.

Pam: But I remember Alex because we thought, okay, is this going to be even worth it? Because we can't stay very long. And like by the second day, we said,

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oh yeah, this is worth it. If I had to go home tomorrow, I would have thought this was worth it.

Alex: Yeah. Well, we just booked another for next summer for Grand Hotel Victoria on Lake Como. So we're planning, I think we're going to be gone for four nights maybe, four or five nights.

Pam: Yeah, I want it to be for five nights because I want to go to the Park Hyatt Milan because I've never done that yet.

Jess: Okay, you have to do that.

Pam: Yeah. So, so don't write off micro-trips. They can be amazing, and what a great way to just get away, relax, decompress. One of the things that I think that a Hilton free night certificate can be perfect to use for those kind of getaways. Because usually, most people only have two to four of them anyway. Use them for a luxury stay. That's my type of jam.

And the other thing is micro-trips are a great way to see more places. And I know Alex for you, with children, with little children, you need to be with a lot, sometimes you just can't get away for a lot of big trips. And you always tell me...

Alex: Or it's just stressful. Like, we're getting ready to head to Morocco soon. By the time this airs, we'll be back. But I'm like, oh, we're going to be gone for so long, and it's a little stressful because it's just like, oh, that's a long time to be away from my kids. Like they'll be fine, but it, you know, it just can get a little stressful.

Pam: And it's a lot of parts to work.

Alex: Yes.

Pam: To figure out what you're doing with them, who's watching them, and stuff. And so a micro-trip just eases a lot of that anxiety. You could probably enjoy it more and look forward to it more because it's easier to plan for.

Alex: Yeah. I will say too, there's, I wish I could remember the guy's name on Instagram, but he goes on day trips, and he'll be like, I just flew to Iceland for a day trip. He'll even do these things where he goes with no plan, no itinerary. He

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just gets a rental car and just goes where the road takes him. And I love it because I think that's, I don't know, it's not necessarily a pet peeve of mine, but I just don't like the idea of it's not worth it if you can't go for this long. And I love his account because it's like he just did an amazing trip.

It's like he'll go from New York to London. I mean, that helps when you're flying from New York, you fly there, you get there early in the morning, you stay all day and do all these things, and then that night he flies home. And I'm like, that's just kind of cool. It's like making the most of what you have.

And so I just hope that people that listen are like, okay, yeah, I, I only have this much time. I'm going to make that time maximize it, like make it the best it can because it's either I sit at home and just do the regular life, or I could go spend an amazing two days somewhere and have a completely new, fun, exciting experience.

Pam: Well, I think Alex, you're kind of the queen of doing both because you have these little kids still, and so you do a lot of micro-trips, but you also do some more long extended. And it sounds to me like the micro-trips are almost better for you. You feel, you know, you have a lot less stress and anxiety with them.

Alex: For sure. I mean, I think it's getting older now that my youngest is getting older, but it's like we're getting ready to leave soon, and I'm like, okay, my kids are in so many activities right now. And it's just Mitch that has to get four kids to five different activities because some of my kids are in more than one thing right now. And so it's, it's a lot to figure out, but he's really great and just, he doesn't, I think it helps that he doesn't stress out about. He's like, oh, we'll be fine. We'll figure it out. Like that is a huge reason of why I don't get as stressed as maybe I would otherwise.

Pam: Well, and he's really good about participating in the planning of how you do this, and he's very supportive of you doing it. But there's other families that maybe the mom takes on that role more, and then that's more stressful. So it's a lot easier for her to take a quick micro vacation either with her husband or with friends, you know, friends trip, it just works better. Yeah.



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Alex: Okay, so let's get to some destinations. We're kind of broke this up by different areas of the country where you live because like we said, typically, unless you're crazy like my mom and I, you don't want to spend eight hours on a plane for a micro-trip. And so we're we kind of chose destinations that would be easy to get to based off where you live.

So first up, if you live on like the western side of the United States, here are some suggestions for you. First is the Alila Ventana Big Sur. And this is located in California in the Redwoods.

I chose this as one because there's certain destinations that you don't need to go to for longer than a micro-trip. I wouldn't want to go to Alila Ventana Big Sur for a week. I would get bored and I would be like, okay, we're we're ready to go. We spent three nights here. I think you could even get away with two at the minimum. Three would be ideal. I don't think you need more than three nights.

So it is an adults-only, all-inclusive destination. It's just tucked in the Redwoods. Like, there's nothing else around besides like campsite. So if you want, if you enjoy hiking, or if you just want to relax in a quiet serene area, and like I tell Jess, I'm like, Ted would love it because Ted would just love sitting out there. You can see the ocean from different parts of the resort and just doing his crossword puzzle.

Jess: We actually have it booked for next year. So I am really, it's like totally his cup of tea. So I hope it works out.

Alex: Yeah, the only thing is it's a little, it's not like you fly right in there. Like we flew into San Jose, and then we drove for a couple of hours, so you will need a rental car, but it's like a beautiful, for the most part, it's a really pretty drive. And so I loved it. You we went through Carmel by the Sea, through Monterey. You could even tack on a night in one of those places, and that's what I wish we would have done. I wish we would have done two nights in Alila Ventana Big Sur, one night at like the Carmel Valley Ranch. I think that's what you have booked, right, Jess?

Jess: Yeah. Carmel.

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Pam: Carmel.

Alex: Yes, Carmel is what I meant.

Pam: I finally get to correct someone. You all know who gets corrected the most on this podcast, but once in a while, I have the pronunciation correct.

Alex: Yes. Another one, if you're on the West Coast, would be the Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal, which just bumped up to a wild 250,000 points a night. So I would do that if you have Hilton free night certificates. I wouldn't pay that much to stay here.

Pam: No, I'd be going to The Cape.

Alex: Yeah, incredible use of a Hilton free night certificate if you have a couple of those. Another place where I think three nights here is fantastic. If you don't have that many Hilton free night certificates, you could use Hyatt points to stay at The Cape.

Jess: People also can't afford to stay more than three nights at the Waldorf because the food is so freaking expensive.

Alex: Yes, that too. It is good, though. I thought the food there was really good.

Pam: But there are a lot of restaurants nearby, too.

Alex: Yeah. Yeah, that's true. And you can even walk to some. All right. Next up is Disneyland. This is my, this is how I do Disneyland. I am not somebody who's like, let's go for a week to Disneyland. We're going to spend five days in the park. We are a let's get in, do one park per day, and then we're back home because I am beat after even two days at Disneyland. Granted, we're opening and almost pretty much staying till close. So we're putting in a lot of hours, but this is another great.

I've I know people who actually will do day trips to Disneyland. They'll fly in super early, spend all day, fly home. So I think that would actually be pretty fun and like a memorable thing to do someday. But we like the Hyatt Place and Hyatt House Anaheim. You can use your Hyatt free night certificates there.

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Great use of those, walking distance to the parks, and yeah, so I'm a fan of that as well.

San Diego is a great destination for a micro-trip. We've stayed at the Andaz there, which was fine. I wouldn't want to stay at the Andaz if I had kids with me. I think it's more of an adults-only place, but there is the Grand Hyatt Manchester that would be a good place for kids. So that's an option.

Jess and I just returned from the Miraval Arizona. I think any of the Miravals are perfect for a micro-trip. You don't, it's expensive on points. You wouldn't want to use more points for more than three nights there anyway. And it's another one of those things where it's like, you would maybe get, like, I think you'll be ready to go home after three nights because it's not, you're not going to be leaving the property to go do other stuff. When you're there, you're immersed in the Miraval experience, and then so I think two, we did two nights, and I thought two nights was great. But I think three nights would be ideal.

Pam: But it also is really nice like when you go with a friend like you guys did because like you said, the points are quite high, but if you're both chipping in, it's not a bad stay at all.

Alex: Exactly. It's not, it's really not. Especially where it's, everything's included. Like your food's included, if you, your classes are included, if you don't want to pay to do the other classes, the paid classes, you don't have to. You could like leave this resort with no bill if you wanted to and not pay for anything. Even your transportation to and from the resort is included. So if you're wanting to stay somewhere on a budget, you could literally pay \$0 for your whole entire vacation outside of your taxes and fees for your flights.

The next one would be the Waldorf Astoria Park City. I have used Hilton free night certificates to stay here. I loved going in the summer. It's so quiet. It's so pretty up there. It's a really nice place. And when I've gone and I know when Jess went, we both got upgraded to like a king suite with its own living room and a kitchen, and two bathrooms. So summer, I think here's a great time to go. I don't think you'll probably get that upgrade in the winter, but this would be a really great use of those Hilton free night certificates as well.



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Pam: Well, I think that one of the things that you were talking about the Waldorf Astoria is like a great micro-trip is people that want to go skiing or snowboarding for a long weekend. I mean, that's a great way to do a micro-trip. Nobody's, you know, is really going to have the time to go for a whole week. I know that you can, there's a Hyatt up in Vail, Colorado. I, too, have gone there in the summer for just a three-night stay, and it was amazing. But if you can snag some of those stays with when you want to go snowing, at snow skiing, snowboarding, I guess is actually more popular in the winter, that is a great micro-trip and a great use of points and miles.

Alex: Yeah, and those resorts can be so expensive in the peak season like that. And I also just think with Hilton devaluing again, those free night certificates are perfect for micro-trips. So... Okay, moving on...

Pam: No, I think you've got... I've got two more that I want to mention. And that's if you're going to, if you're in Western USA and you want to go to California, there's two that we absolutely love that are very good for a micro-trip. And I've done one of them. I've done the Seabird in Oceanside, and I've gone there for three or four days, perfect, plenty of time, gorgeous resort, right on the beach, lots of fun things to do. And the hotel itself is just so cute. And I think you went for when you went, it wasn't for a long trip, was it, Alex?

Alex: I think we did four nights.

Pam: Okay. And then the other one that we've done in conjunction with Disneyland is to go to the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach. We've all gone there. We've all loved it. We all think their Globalist breakfast is one of the best in the world. And so that is another great beach escape in San Diego, perfect for a micro.

Alex: In Huntington. It's not in San Diego.

Pam: Well, yeah. Yeah. But nearby. So, so yeah, so we love the Huntington, the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach, and it's perfect for three, two, or three days. That's all we've ever stayed there.

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Jess: All right, I am going to talk about if you live in the more Central, Southern part of the U.S. So I'm based in Houston. I've actually done a lot of micro-trips that I'm going to talk about. The first one is I actually haven't done this one, but Coconut Point in Florida is a super popular destination among our followers in our Facebook group. It's constantly getting recommended. And so that is an option.

A few that I have done lately. It's funny because being in Houston, I'm closer to Mexico and Costa Rica than I am to California or New York, you know? And so a lot of times international trips actually make more sense for me to do from Houston. I have done the Andaz Papagayo for three nights. We literally flew Houston to Liberia, three nights Andaz Papagayo over President's Day weekend, flew home. Would do it again in a heartbeat.

Alex: I'm so jealous of you for that because for me getting to Costa Rica is such a pain. And for you, it's like, oh, you can just take what two and a half hour flight if that and you're there. Nothing nice one for you was Roatan, right? Isn't that a quick flight for you?

Jess: It's close. Yeah. I'm going there in January. I think it's a three-hour flight. So, yeah, it's pretty, it's pretty convenient. Alex and I did Impression Moxché in Cancun for, I think that was three nights that we were there. Yeah, it was. Ted and I did San Miguel de Allende, which is in Mexico, again, three nights there. And so, I mean, if you're in Texas or anywhere around here, like you have it made with these micro-trip destinations.

I've also done... So we did the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale. We did three nights there over Easter weekend. Like Molly had Good Friday off, so we went Friday, Saturday, Sunday. I've done the Hyatt Tamaya in Albuquerque for three nights. I have done, we drive to Hyatt Hill Country and Hyatt Lost Pines regularly. Like, if we just need somewhere to go, we're like, we want to get away, two and a half hour, two and a half, three hour drive for us to get to those places.

Alex: We did Hyatt Hill Country as well for three nights. We couldn't drive, but it was well worth going there for three nights. We loved it. I would totally go there again. Did I say Hill Country? I meant Lost Pines. I don't know what I said, but we did Lost Pines.

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Jess: I feel like Hill Country and Lost Pines are so nice because they're like smack dab in the middle of the country, you know? So it could make sense as a micro-trip for a lot of different people, you know, depending on where you are. So yeah, those are some of our favorites, and now I'm like, I need to go back to the Andaz Papagayo and Impressions and San Miguel. This has me having FOMO and wanting to go back to all these places.

Alex: Well, the nice thing is though is if you're going, you can be like, all right, I'm going for a long weekend. You can do all of it. That's what I love about micro-trips because you can be like, you know what, I just feel like getting away. I've been home. I haven't had a trip in a little while. Where can I go on a quick little trip? And that's what we did, my sister and I, when we went to the Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal last year, is I had a couple of free night, Hilton free nights, and she had one. So there's a tip for you too. If you don't have enough, go with somebody else that has them.

Jess: Recruit another person who has free night certificates.

Alex: Yes. And it was like, this is great. We booked it like two weeks before we went because we're like, oh, there's availability, and we both have these certificates we're not sure how to use. Let's just go. And so that was, that was really awesome.

Pam: Okay, we're going to move on to the eastern part of the USA. The first place we're going to talk about is great if you live there, but you know what? This place is great wherever you live. I would go here for a micro-trip anytime. In fact, I wrote down as we were doing this, plan a micro-trip to New York City. Because I love to see plays. For me going there for three nights, no problem. It's like four hours to get there. I stay in a great hotel like the Thompson Central Park or the Park Hyatt. All of us love those hotels. Go see some plays, fly home. Oh my goodness, that's my idea of a perfect getaway.

Jess: I just got back. I just got back from New York, even though from Houston, New York probably isn't considered a really big micro-trip destination, but we went, my friend and I went for four nights, stayed at the Park Hyatt, had an amazing time, saw two shows, you know, and so I think it's a perfect getaway for a family trip or a girls trip or anything.

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Alex: Yeah. So the other day I ran into my friend and she's like, you're not going to believe what I just, what we did last weekend. I was like, what did you do? She's like, I was texting my husband and I was like, do you want to go to New York today? Let's go to New York. I found flights and they're pretty cheap.

So that day, that evening, like two hours after she sent this text, they were driving to the airport. They flew to New York, which that's not, I wouldn't call that like super close from Salt Lake City. Like it's like a four and a half hour flight, I want to say, around that, maybe even five, I'm not exactly sure. I will let you know. I'm taking the flight, I'm taking the flight here in a few days.

But anyway, she, they stayed for one night, and she has done that a couple of times, where she'll take a red eye. And she's like, it was so fun. We rode bikes all up and down the city through Central Park. We got all the pizza that we wanted, like from her favorite place. We did this, we did that. And she's like, it was so fun. But we were tired. But I'm like, that is so fun to just be like, hey, let's just go. I think I just love the spontaneity of that. That's kind of like, I'm not really like that, but I'd like to be like that. I'd like to be like, hey, who wants to go do this? Let's just go. This would be so fun and just make it happen. So you can even make it a micro-trip from Salt Lake City and go for one night.

Pam: Well, aren't you going pretty soon to see Hamilton? That didn't happen yet, did it?

Alex: Yeah, I am going, but I'm going, originally we were going for three nights. We have three nights booked at the Thompson Central Park. But with flight times, I texted my friends, I'm like, what do you guys think about going the day before? We'll get in late to LaGuardia, get, I'm using my IHG free night for a, like my annual free night certificate for an airport hotel there. We'll get in late, we'll just stay at LaGuardia and then we'll take an Uber into the city, drop off our bags at the hotel, because I'm sure we won't be able to check in at, you know, that early, and we'll just start the day and have a whole extra day instead of getting there at like 5 p.m. and missing out.

Because the few of them have never been. I'm going with, there's four of us going. We got two rooms at the Thompson. And I think two of them have never been to New York City. So I was like, oh, let's go longer. If you haven't been, we

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want to be able to do more. But still, four nights, I could still consider that a micro-trip.

Pam: You know, I am dying to do this now that we're talking about this. I've got so much FOMO now. It's like, I need to find someone who has points and miles because I love the idea of not using all my points.

Alex: We still have Kai, that's my, he's turning 10 this year.

Pam: Oh, that's right. We are going to do that.

Alex: And he wants to do New York City. And so we're, we're going to be going. It's just figuring out when we can go with our schedules because, yeah, his birthday's in January, but...

Pam: I do have a micro-trip there.

Alex: Yeah, and you have somebody to split your stay at the Park Hyatt with.

Pam: Exactly. I know, I'm excited. We need to do that. We need to come up with a date.

Alex: Yeah, we're going to, we're going to do it.

Pam: Because I want to get a suite there. Okay, another, another great place for you Easterners is Chicago. Has a great Park Hyatt there, a really a nice Park Hyatt. I really loved my stay there and but there's tons of other Hyatt properties. And we tend to talk a lot about Hyatt properties, but all of these places, there are Hiltons, there are Marriotts, there's IHGs. So, you know, all of these places are great, no matter what points you have.

I love people, the fact that people that live in the eastern part of the U.S. have such great access to the Caribbean. You guys are so lucky. It's kind of like you feel like we're lucky because we can go to Hawaii and not travel as far, but we still travel farther than you travel to the Caribbean. I would be just, I love the Caribbean, and to be able to fly there in two or three hours would just be a dream.

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And so you have so many options of going to Aruba, going to St. Lucia, going to so many different places. Aruba is really popular. The Hyatt Regency is popular there. I stayed at a Renaissance in Aruba and loved it. Aruba is a magical destination. The people are so kind, such a great place to go.

Dominican Republic, another great place to go. I stayed at the Zoëtry Punta Cana, which is a great stay, but there's so many other hotels in the Dominican Republic, and that there's, you know, Hyatts in the Dominican Republic. So lots of options. Secrets St. Lucia, we just had a post on this week, and that's on my list. I know a lot of people have loved their stays there. So that's on my places that I want to try.

Alex: And that hotel's brand new.

Pam: Yes. And I love a new hotel.

Alex: Yes.

Pam: Who doesn't love a new hotel? Another place that is really popular and you know, I can't imagine wanting to stay more than three nights in Washington, D.C. There's so many free activities, so many fun things to do, but three days is probably fine. We did that with one of Alex's, her oldest, when he turned 1,0 and we had a great time. It was short. I never once thought, oh my goodness, this wasn't worth it. You know, we needed to stay longer or it wouldn't be worth it. It was perfect.

Alex: Well, because I think you kind of get like, all right, I've seen enough museums and done enough of that for this trip. I'll come back and see the other ones another time.

Pam: Right. And I think even Cancun, you know, is very reachable from the eastern part of the United States. So and you've got, you've got places, you know, well, we talked about Florida from the south, but it's not bad from the, you know, some places in the East Coast too. So you've got, you have a lot of options for really great micro-trips. So are there any others you guys can think of?



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Jess: I know Baha Mar is really, really, really popular with our audience, especially for a family trip. We have not been there, but that one is like people are constantly posting about that one in our Facebook group. And so...

Alex: I also think like any big city is a perfect place for a micro-trip because you're usually not like, I need a week here. Like Seattle, I think is a great place for a micro-trip. Boston. Yeah, any of those would be so great.

Pam: Denver, the Rocky Mountains. There you go.

Alex: Yep. You know. And I think it's fun too, like thinking of like my kids and what they like to do, like going to a sporting event in one of these areas would be like a really fun thing. Like if we went to Boston and went, like we're planning a trip to Boston. We're going to be there for just a few nights, go to a Red Sox game. I think that can be really fun. Or like Jess has done a lot of micro-trips for Taylor Swift concerts.

Jess: I did New Orleans as a micro-trip. I did Milan as a micro-trip.

Alex: Milan as a micro-trip. I love it.

Pam: So I think you guys can see that, don't think that you have to use your points and miles just for long trips. If you don't have the time to get on a long trip and you're thinking, oh, this isn't going to work for me, this points and miles, because I just, you know, don't have very many times I can go for a week or two weeks or something. Consider micro-trips. Micro-trips are amazing. We love them. They are refresh your soul. And so we encourage you to think of some of these episodes, some of these places to go.

Let us know some places that we've missed, some places that you think would make great micro-trips. And we really hope that you enjoyed this episode. We hope it's given you some ideas for weekend getaways and quick trips. Make sure to share this episode with the person that you want to take on a quick, quick, can't even say it, getaway. See you soon.

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the show notes to learn about everything we discussed in today's episode. And to stay connected and follow along, follow us on Instagram @TravelMomSquad. We can't wait to see where in the world points and miles take you.