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## **Finding a baby sitter while on vacation**

If you're staying at a chic resort, chances are it offers day care and baby-sitting services. But what if you're on vacation, staying in a hotel or rental house, and really want a night out without the kids?

Going out while traveling — and finding a baby sitter to make it possible — is trending upward, according to hotels and baby-sitting agencies.

“People are starting to realize they can have a mini-vacation while on their vacation,” said Melissa Marchwick, executive vice president of Sittercity, a national baby-sitting agency. “That wasn’t an option before these services, unless you knew someone in the town you were visiting.”

The American Hotel & Lodging Association reports that more than half of its luxury hotels (including resorts) offer some type of child care, whether in-house or through partnering with baby-sitting agencies.

If you're staying at a hotel, check with the concierge; many have lists of preferred child care providers or placement agencies. As far as chain hotels, most Loews Hotels, Embassy Suites and Kimpton Hotels offer these services.

Hotel deLuxe, a boutique hotel in Portland, Ore., refers its guests to two local child care agencies, Northwest Nannies and Creative Childcare Solutions.

“We don’t work directly with the sitters so we can’t recommend specific people, but our guests have had great experiences with the professionals provided by these organizations,” said Kate Buska, public relations director for Provenance Hotels, which has five boutique hotels in Oregon, Washington and Tennessee, including Hotel deLuxe.

If you're not staying at a hotel, consider such online resources as Sittercity.com and Care.com, which screen sitters, do background checks, and, for about a \$35 joining fee, allow parents access to sitters' profiles, references and contact information.

If using an online agency, post the baby-sitting job at least two weeks in advance, as opposed to one week normally, suggests Sittercity's Marchwick, "to allow time to cull the responses and get the right person."

When posting the job, include the date and time needed, responsibilities the baby sitter will have, rate range for the hourly pay as it can vary widely (Sittercity has a handy — and free — baby-sitting rate calculator based on zip code), and a bit about your children.

Once you receive job applications via e-mail, screen and narrow down sitters by reviewing cover letters, profiles, background checks and call their references. Ideally, set up a video interview with your top one or two picks through Skype, or conduct a phone interview.

Finally, consider asking the sitter to come an hour before you go out, or even the day before.

"It's always a good idea to have the sitter come early to walk them through everything, but more importantly," Marchwick said, "to supervise the relationship between the sitter and your children, and make sure it's a good match."