BABYCCINO KIDS blog
daily inspiration for the modern family

WEEKEND GETAWAY: SEVILLA, SPAIN

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My husband and I spent a week in Sevilla over Semana Santa (Easter Holy Week) when our oldest was just 8 months old. It was such a magical, sunny week, and such a special time to be there (we lucked out - we had no idea of the Easter celebrations we would get to see!). We ***loved*** our trip so much and hope to go back some day. Luckily, one of our readers, Sarah, an American living in Seville, has offered to write a (very comprehensive!) guide to exploring her city. Sarah is mum to a toddler girl called Manuela, and has a blog called Babbles and Bibis where she shares what life is like as an expat raising a bilingual family in Southern Spain. Here is her guide:

Sevilla (Seville) is the capital city of the southernmost region in Spain and it is mostly known for its colorful flamenco, lazy siesta afternoons, bullfighting and of course, its delectable tapas. Visitors will also find it to be a great destination for a getaway with the whole family. There is so much to see and do, you might just have to stay a whole week.

You can visit Sevilla year-round but most tourists stay away in the months of July and August, when temperatures can climb into the 40s and most residents escape to the shores for relief. Sevilla is especially festive in the month of April, when Semana Santa (Easter Week) and the Spring Fair (flamenco-clad ladies and gents atop decorated horses and tents overflowing with jovial Sevillanos) completely take over the city. Accommodations can unfortunately triple during these

festivities, but if you want to experience Sevilla at its finest, do try to come for at least part of these special festivals. For dates and more information on Holy Week and the Fair, this is a good reference site.
I have put this guide together with the travelling family in mind ? so that the adults can hit all of Sevilla?s hotspots and the wee ones aren?t just along for the ride. For a spectacular visual of what Sevilla has to offer, check out this video:
Ven a Sevilla/ Come to Seville!

STAY:
It?s a good idea to consider renting a touristic apartment if you?re a party of 4 or more. Keep in mind that Spanish hotel rooms are generally smaller in comparison to other countries, so it will most likely be cheaper and more comfortable to rent a whole apartment. If this option suits you, check out Apartamentos Murillo (right in the middle of Barrio Santa Cruz), Corral de San Jose and Sevillaloft, both in El Arenal neighborhood, very close to the Cathedral.
If you prefer to go the hotel route, I have three recommendations for family-friendly hotels that are centrally-located, beautiful and comfortable:

Petit Palace Marques Santa Ana is located a stone?s throw from the Cathedral, has family rooms for up to 4 people and free use of cribs. It?s the only hotel I know of in the city that has a personal computer in each room for guest use. Renovated into a hotel from a 19th century Sevillano palace, this hotel has charm and function.

Located right on Plaza Nueva, Sevilla?s ?Golden Mile?, is Hotel Inglaterra, an elegant 4-star hotel with over 150 years of history in the city. The hotel recently upgraded its furnishings and décor, yet still preserving its classic style. Cribs are free, and connecting rooms are also available upon request. If you do stay here, don?t miss the fabulous French pastry shop Colette that just opened its second shop next door.

Hotel Bécquer is another fabulous hotel choice, located in Sevilla?s commercial district, and a close walk to all the major monuments. The Bécquer boasts a spa and rooftop pool, perfect for cooling off after a busy day sightseeing. Free cribs are available and the prices at this hotel are very reasonable. I can also vouch for the friendly and helpful staff, having worked personally with them for years.

SEE & DO:
Sevilla?s a walking city and you should be able to reach all the major monuments on foot, but do take advantage of our tram system to connect from Plaza Nueva to the Plaza de España. You can buy a multipass at most newspaper kiosks. There is hop-on/hop-off bus tour if you?d like to start there to get oriented with the city and not tire your kids out too soon. The Plaza de España is worth a walk-around for its fantastic Renaissance Revival architecture including Andalusian tile work, the fun water boats along the moat (both row and motor), and its little-known Military Museum inside (just by the Puerta de Aragón). Adjacent to the Plaza de España is Maria Luisa Park, where families can rent pedal quads for a fun way to see all that this beautiful park has to offer.

Two monuments you can?t miss in Sevilla are the Gothic Cathedral and the Alcázar (Royal Palace). In the Cathedral, children will be excited to check out Christopher Columbus? tomb and climb up to the top of the Giralda tower. The Alcázar has stunning gardens and even a maze for the kids to explore. These monuments are far from boring and are sure to be a hit with your entire family.

Next on your list to check out should be Sevilla?s newest architectural marvel, the Metrosol Parasol, in Plaza de la Encarnación, and known to locals as las setas (the mushrooms) for obvious reasons. The views from above give a new view of old Sevilla in a modern frame of reference. Of course, you can enjoy this view from the terrace while enjoying a nice, cold drink. Also within the complex are the Antiquarium (a museum dedicated to the ruins discovered while digging for the project) and an open-air market.

The Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza, Sevilla?s famous bullfighting ring, is in operation from Easter Sunday and through the end of September and you can usually get tickets right at the ticket window on days when fights are scheduled. Year-round you can still get in to see the Museum and have a tour.

Right near the Plaza de Toros is the Torre del Oro, or Golden Tower, which holds Sevilla?s Naval Museum and huge historical significance for the city, as it was the control point for the riches travelling back and forth between the Americas and Spain during the Middle Ages.
If you and the kids fancy a boat cruise along the Guadalquivir, you can embark right by the Torre del Oro, with the outfit Cruceros Torre del Oro. It is worth it for a seaside view of Sevilla and to get a close-up look of the many architecturally-diverse bridges crossing the river ? they are all spectacular. You can also rent kayaks or pedal-boats in the river if yours is an especially active family ? check out Pedalquivir for different options as well as a terrace bar for enjoying the view and relaxing before and after your ride.

On the other side of the river from Sevilla?s monumental center are the areas of Triana and La Cartuja ? both worth a visit if you?re in town for more than a weekend. In La Cartuja, there is the Jardín Americano, Sevilla?s botanical gardens, and the Alamillo Park, with its own bike rental service and plenty of space for outdoor activities. For a full day of entertainment, there?s always Isla Mágica Amusement Park complete with water slides, roller coasters and theatrical shows.

Triana is a lively neighborhood where you can find plenty of tapas bars and lots of ceramics shops. This area has recently made its main street pedestrian (Calle San Jacinto), making it a lovely place to stroll. The bridge into Triana from the Center is beautiful when illuminated at night ? it is designed by Gustav Eiffel, of the Paris Tower notoriety.

If you want to experience flamenco while in Sevilla, a good show for the whole family is at Casa de la Memoria on Calle Ximenez de Enciso in the Barrio Santa Cruz. Much less pricier than the other touristy acts you?ll find advertised all over the city, the quality is just the same and the venue much more intimate. I suggest you go at mid-day to secure tickets for the

9pm show, and get there when they open right at 8:30pm to get seating right up front (it?s not assigned). The show isn?t too long, so the children won?t get itchy and you can go grab a tapa at one of the many bars in the area afterwards. If an evening show isn?t on your agenda and you still want a taste of flamenco, check out the Museo del Baile Flamenco on Calle Manuel Rojas Marcos, where your senses will be imploded by the sound, image, history and flair of the flamenco world.

Can?t leave a new city without checking out its art museum? The Museo de Bellas Artes won?t disappoint. Located in Plaza del Museo very close to the shopping district, it is chock-full of Velázquez, Murillo and more, and you can even participate in special family educational programs that will help you and your children make the most of your visit.

EAT:
Sevilla is known for its tapas bars and there are lots of things to try while you are here, so pace yourselves! However, don?t expect to find lots of places that pull out a highchair for your tot and present you with their children?s menu. If you look around, most families eating out have their babies in their laps or in their strollers, and the bigger ones are off playing in the nearby plaza.

People often ask me for recommendations for the best tapas bars in Sevilla and it always seems like such an overwhelming question to answer, as there are literally thousands of bars all over the city and none that are particularly bad. Here are just a few tried-and-true favorites, and ones that I?ve handpicked for their family-friendliness. However, do keep in mind that you can essentially take your family to any bar that tickles your fancy ? the waiters will gladly make room for your stroller and heat up your baby food if you just ask.

Puerto Delicia is more of a restaurant than a tapas bar, located on the Guadalquivir River on the Muelle de las Delicias. It?s on this list because of its particularly interesting offer of on-site entertainment (free with the children?s menu) for kids over the age of 3 during weekend lunches, while the parents eat in peace ? what a novel idea! The food here is top-notch while a bit on the pricier side.

La Alicantina in Plaza Salvador, one of the sunniest and most lively squares in the city, has been open for almost a century, and you must try its prized ensaladilla tapa. Get here early on a sunny day for a table on the square. By the way, lunch in Sevilla is typically served from 1pm-3pm and dinner any time after 8pm. Try to get into the rhythm of the mealtimes as it?s the best way to get to know a city?s culture!

La Bulla in El Arenal district is a fun, hip tapas joint with a modern menu. The waiters are on top of their game and they?ll make recommendations for you so you don?t have to figure out what to try. There is probably not much in the way of options for kids here, but a good place to come with one or two younger ones who eat their own food.

La Sureña is a beer garden franchise popping up all over the city, and its newest one is located in La Alameda, which is a lively spot for having a bite to eat and walking around. There are plenty of parks for the children to play in nearby. This is a great place to sample Sevilla?s famous pescaito frito (fried fish) offerings paired with a nice, cold beer. Interestingly enough, this place stocks Mahou, but the beer of choice in Sevilla is actually the local brew, Cruzcampo.

Rio Grande is located on the Triana side of the Guadalquivir River, with spectacular views of Sevilla. It has a tapería (the pictures on the website will make your mouth water) that is really worth checking out.

In the mood for Italian? For authentic pasta and pizza dishes, look no further than Al Solito Posto, with two locations in the city center with ample seating capacity.

Around the city?s monumental center, you will come upon many different bars all with the same name ? Robles. Placentines, Laredo, Tapas and Casa Robles are all recommended, reputable establishments for a sit-down meal or just a tap.

If the kids have been behaving and it?s time for a treat, then head to Rayas on Calle San Pablo (very close to Hotel Bécquer ? this is its second location, the first one is a bit harder to find) for the best homemade ice cream in the city.

In terms of breakfast, any of the tapas bars you have lunch or dinner at will also most likely open for breakfast in the morning. Tostadas (toast) with any topping are usually on the menu at any bar. The local favorite which I suggest you try is con aceite, jamón y tomate (olive oil, cured ham and fresh tomato). If you go to a confitería or pastelería (pastry shop) then you?ll have your pick of succulent sweets to choose from. For a real treat, look for the churrería on Calle Jovellanos (off Calle Tetuán) for doughnut-like sticks dipped in hot chocolate. The kids (and you!) won?t be able to get enough churros con chocolate.

SHOP:
If shopping is on your agenda, there?s plenty of that to go around in Sevilla. The streets Tetuán, Sierpes and Cuna (off of Plaza Nueva) contain nothing but storefronts and all the tiny side streets radiating off have the hidden gems of smaller shops and boutiques that you might not find elsewhere in Spain.
Some things tourists like to take back from Sevilla are fans, mantones de Manila (they make the perfect throw for any formal outfit) and ceramics. All of these you can find at the souvenir shops in the monumental center. For really good mantones, go to Juan Foronda on Calle Sierpes and for nice hand-painted fans check out Diaz, also on Sierpes. You will find ceramics in this central shopping district as well, but if you really want to buy the real stuff, and at better prices, you should cross the bridge into the original ceramics district, Triana, and check out the shops along the streets Antillano Campos, Alfarería, Castilla and San Jorge. Don?t missCerámica Triana on Antillano Campos.

In the residential neighborhood of Los Remedios just adjacent to Triana across the river, there is a pedestrian street full of shops called Calle Asunción. The area is particularly known for its children?s clothing boutiques. If you don?t want to head all the way over there and are looking for classic Spanish children?s clothing, look no further than Plaza del Salvador and the Calle Francos for a few good shops.

There are two very modern shops for children?s clothing, toys and baby gear in the city center that I highly recommend ? one is Bam Bam on Calle Cuna and the other is Flor y Pondio on Plaza de Encarnación (very close to the mushroom complex). Always a fun and educational toy store for the children is Imaginarium, the biggest one is located on Calle Tetuán.

Librería Rayuela(across from Flor y Pondio in Encarnación and also on Calle Barcelona right off of Plaza Nueva) has amazingly beautiful children?s books and educational toys, including a wide variety of bilingual reads.

If you like to bring wines, oils or other culinary goods home from a trip, I suggest you pop into El Baco on Calle Cuna, a specialty market with all the Spanish goods your kitchen desires.

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