

Teen adventures in Puerto Vallarta

A view from [Kara Williams](#)

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Outdoors, Mexico, Family, Couple, Adventure

Flyboarding, ziplining, and rappelling with teens and tweens in Puerto Vallarta

"Are we parasailing?" asked my 14-year-old daughter during our most recent vacation to [Puerto Vallarta](#), Mexico.

"Nope," I replied. "You guys have parasailed before. This is something none of us has ever done."

"Deep sea fishing?" asked my 12-year-old son.

"Nope."

The questioning was non-stop on our 30-minute walk from our [Puerto Vallarta resort hotel](#) to the Nuevo Vallarta marina location for Vallarta Adventures, with which I'd booked a surprise outing for my family of four. My husband knew what the plan was, but my children didn't.

And the suspense was killing them.

When we finally did reach the marina, when the gentleman who checked us in at the Vallarta Adventures activity desk said, "Hello, Williams family. [Flyboarding](#) for four," both kids questioned, "Huh?" and "What?"

I pointed to a brochure photo of this new-to-us water sport, and then we watched a video of participants standing on snowboard-like contraptions and being shot up into the air by a jet stream of water from below.

The kids said, simply, "Cool!" and "Sweet!" Even they were impressed.

I was impressed, too, when we boated to the bay and I watched each of them strap on flyboards (with the help of friendly instructors). Within minutes, my children managed to learn how to balance on the boards (by dipping forward on the toes or backward on the heels). They were airborne in no time.

Each of my kids got about 30 minutes of instruction and "air time" as personal guides gave pointers. The guides controlled the level of water thrust from jet skis (each board is attached to the jet-ski propulsion by a long hose). They also encouraged us with supportive comments ("You did it!" "Look, you're Ironman!"). By the end of the half-hour, my daughter was diving into the ocean and getting propelled back into the air on her flyboard, and my son was hanging onto the board with one hand, a la Shaun White in a snowboarding half-pipe.

My husband caught on quickly, too, which was no surprise, since he does most athletic things quite well.

I, on the other hand...well, it was rather ugly for a while.

My biggest problem was balance; I couldn't get the hang of balancing on the board as my guide made the water thrust skyward from beneath my feet. As soon as I felt the lift, I'd fall backward on my butt or forward on my face. After a number of falls, I was determined to get up in the air by the time my session ended. And I did. (Thank goodness.)

The feeling of hovering several feet above the ocean was incredible. It also was a little scary. Once I managed to get up in the air, I was proud of myself as I figured out how to lean a bit from side to side to make my way in a circle around my instructor on his jet ski. (Well, for me, it was a semi-circle, as I'd usually start getting cocky and move too quickly or look around and fall in.

No matter. The activity was thrilling--certainly one of the most unusual things we've done in Mexico (it ranked right up there with snorkeling with whale sharks near Cancun). Flyboarding is an activity I'd highly recommend for families with children ages 12 and older. In addition to seeing it in Puerto Vallarta, I've seen the activity offered in [Cabo San Lucas](#), too.

Outdoor adventure with Vallarta Adventures

For our second planned daytime excursion of this Mexico trip, the kids knew what we were doing. In fact, they helped choose [Vallarta Adventures' Outdoor Adventure](#), and did so because it combined several different activities in one full day. These activities comprised zooming in a jet-boat across Banderas Bay; driving a 4x4 to our adventure base camp (via Mercedes Benz Unimog); riding a mule ride up a mountain, then hiking and ziplining through tropical forest, maneuvering hanging bridges, and rappelling next to a waterfall into a natural river pool; and splashing down two of the steepest waterslides I've ever experienced.

Was it fun? Absolutely. It also was sort of exhausting. We were on the move constantly, but the variety of activities kept things interesting. The guides kept us on a need-to-know basis; throughout the day, they only told us which activity was coming up next. (I admit: The suspense added to the entertainment.)

My favorite parts of this adventure? The tandem ziplines where we were encouraged to let go of our harness line and fall backward in "Look, Ma, no hands!" bliss. Even my kids were brave enough to sail through the air upside down without holding on. Watching both children rappel down a rock face made my heart swell with pride, too. They both were so effortless as if they had done it every day of their lives (trust me, they haven't).

Throughout this adventure I felt perfectly safe during these extreme activities; matter-of-fact guides made ziplining 1,000 feet across a valley seem like "no big deal," so they put me at ease. I suppose the only heart-in-my-throat moment came when we reached the final waterslide: We took off our climbing gear and were outfitted with full-on protective headgear with face masks and elbow pads. The twisty, turning, ultra-steep slide was the freakiest one I'd ever been on. But it was a blast! Sure, I could have bypassed the scary slide by walking down adjacent steps. But I couldn't let my children show me up, right?

Traveling, to me, always means trying new things and getting out of your comfort zones. With these two exciting Puerto Vallarta adventures, my family did just that.