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Dear BAMBI families,

I don't know about others, but I remember vividly how hard it was traveling with a baby. It wasn't fun for me—at least, not in the way I had imagined. I used to wonder how those calm, elegant, Instagrammable photos with babies were even possible. My reality felt very different—I was often tired and stressed. I even told my husband, "This is not a holiday for me."



I packed everything—formula, bottles, pacifiers, baby food, diapers, and countless plastic bags. My luggage looked like I was relocating, not going on holiday.

I still remember arriving in Pattaya after a few hours' drive, only to discover my baby had managed to get poop all over the car seat. The first thing I did at the hotel wasn't rest—it was washing both the baby and the car seat. Another time, in Khao Sok National Park, he developed a rash all over his body while we were staying on a lake—completely isolated, with nothing we could do in the moment. Lesson learned: don't introduce new foods when you're away, especially when your baby has just started solids. You never know what might trigger a reaction. I consulted a doctor remotely, but we were never quite sure what caused it.

Then came the toddler phase. Travel didn't get lighter—it just got louder. I became part entertainer, part negotiator, navigating snack demands and mid-journey meltdowns.

Now, my son is almost four, and something has shifted. He genuinely enjoys traveling. He eats (almost) like an adult—fried rice and french fries are solid wins—and can go to the toilet by himself. Not carrying bottles and diapers feels like a real life upgrade. These days, we're more relaxed. I still keep an eye on candy, ice cream, and screen time, but on holiday, we lean into a more easygoing rhythm—for everyone's sake.

So if you're exhausted, overwhelmed, and wondering if it's supposed to feel this hard—hang in there. It does get better.

Our playgroups continue to grow, bringing together families from all walks of life. As we expand, we are always looking for new playgroup leaders. If you've ever thought about getting involved, please don't hesitate to reach out—we have many opportunities across departments and would love to welcome you.

Wishing you a summer filled with shared laughter and just enough adventure to keep things interesting.

Warmly,

Erica Jeong  
Playgroups Co-coordinator





If parents' annual mental load could be plotted on a graph, I would imagine it would resemble a sine curve peaking sharply during the summer holidays. Let me explain.

With alarm clocks easing up, lunchboxes hibernating, and schools officially closed, we do our best to make the freer and slower summer days as magical, memorable, and meaningful for our little ones as possible. We ask one another about summer plans, create lists of daily activities, complete with backup plans just in case, organize trips, save every easy and enticing summer snack recipe we come across on Instagram and Pinterest, and hope that all the time, money, energy and heart we pour into creating "the best summer ever" will be worthwhile.

Yet, in the midst of managing our children's summers, we often end up neglecting ourselves, forgetting that whether we're jetting off, staying put, or juggling both, summer should also be a season of rest and growth for parents. Recognizing this, in this month's issue, we explore how families can make the most of the season by learning through play, staying connected, and finding joy in every sunny moment.

"Summer Without Burnout" by Anna Zarchi and Laura Devos' "Parenting Through The Long Days", are a timely reminder that it's okay to feel stressed and worried about the long weeks of summer childcare, but more importantly they're full of great tips to help us and our families thrive through the holiday heat.

Sara Salam brings more great ideas in "The Summer Staycation Guide". Aimed at those families who are staying put here in Bangkok, she's found plenty of fun, cheap, family-friendly activities in the heart of the city.

For those who are looking to get out of Bangkok, Erica Jeong's "Busan With Kids: An Underrated Coastal Gem", has some great advice for a trip to an often unexplored corner of Korea. Meanwhile Jex Leigh Roach's "How To Budget For A Stress-Free Family Holiday", is a must for anyone worrying about the costs of going away this summer.

But whether you're traveling or staying home this holiday, check out Kit Lang's book recommendations in Readers' Corner—"How To Do Nothing" by Jenny Odell, and "Wait" by Antoinette Portis. Both books extol the virtues of slowing down and noticing the world around us. Cooking can be a great way to do this, asserts Keren Granit in "Cooking With Kids: Fun Summer Snacks and International Treats to Try Together". She gives us convincing reasons to spend time in the kitchen with our kids this summer—the messy fun of cooking some simple recipes together can help fussy eaters feel more comfortable with new foods, and help create joyful memories and lasting connections.

Finally, off-theme, we have Joe Barker's "Why I Have Stopped Listening to My Kids", his realization that his people-pleasing strategies don't work with young children and why he now says no more often. We also have a coloring page for the little ones in Fun Corner.

So, as the days stretch longer and schedules loosen, perhaps the greatest gift we can give our families this summer is not a perfectly planned itinerary or a packed calendar of activities, but the space to slow down, reconnect, and simply enjoy one another's company. Whether your summer is filled with faraway adventures or quiet moments at home, we hope this issue offers encouragement, inspiration, and a gentle reminder that meaningful memories are often found in the simplest moments. Happy summer holidays!

Sanam Rahman  
Editor

# summer experience

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# WHY I'VE STOPPED LISTENING TO MY KIDS

Self-confessed people-pleaser Joe has finally learned to say no, or rather, to stop asking in the first place. Now he's learned to smile, nod, and quietly do whatever he thinks is best, and life has never run more smoothly.



## About the Author

Joe and his wife Diane moved to Thailand in 2018. Since the arrival of their son Martin in 2021 and daughter Alice in 2024, Joe has been a stay-at-home father. The whole family enjoys BAMBI playgroups and Thai beach holidays. Find Joe on SubStack: BangkokDad [bangkokdad.substack.com/](https://bangkokdad.substack.com/)

As a weak-willed people-pleaser I hate to say no, but I'm slowly realizing that cravenly giving in to my children's every whim is not working out for us. I don't mean in the sense that they're growing up spoiled with no sense of boundaries. Although this is undoubtedly the case, they're still young enough for that to be a future problem rather than an immediate concern. No, when I say it isn't working out, what I mean is, my children are terrible judges of what they want and will invariably scream, "Noooo!" when offered their heart's desire. This has become so self-evident that even I've spotted it, and am striving to reverse a lifetime of gently flowing along the path of least resistance. Now when I give my children options or ask them a question, I don't listen to their answers. Instead, I just do what I think is best, and try to ignore their outraged cries, safe in the knowledge that whatever I do they will shout at me anyway.

A few typical interactions with Marty will show you just how little he understands what he actually wants or enjoys. "I hate school!" Not a great start to the morning, but where once I would have offered a hug and a long, sympathetic, but ultimately futile, conversation about how we sometimes have to do things we don't like, now I just say, "I'm sorry to hear that. What would you like for breakfast?" Marty immediately forgets his hatred of school to focus on how he's not hungry and wants to play instead. So I pop a plate of toast on the table and watch him wander over and absent-mindedly start eating. We put his school uniform on and talk of this and that while he occasionally mentions that he doesn't want to go to school. I continue to ignore these conversational gambits and he soon moves on to other topics.

Obviously he doesn't want to ride his bike, although I miss hearing him claim that he definitely doesn't want to ride it to school, as he is already



speeding, giggling down the soi while I race to catch up. His nonstop chatter is interrupted only briefly by my yells to watch where he is going and his intermittent complaints about attending an educational establishment. Arriving at school he attempts a final convincing declaration of his dislike of learning, but his argument is fatally undermined when he forgets to look sad and starts grinning and waving at his teachers and friends.

Leaving him to what he assures me will be a day of misery and torment and with instructions to fetch him as soon as possible ringing in my ears, I head home confident that when I return, he'll complain that I'm too

early and beg to be allowed to stay and play longer—a request that I will be happy to grant since this is a rare example of my child actually knowing what he wants.

Once he finally lets us leave school, we get home and I ignore the exhausted child when he explains that he can't possibly do anything other than watch TV, and that he definitely isn't hungry. Rather than argue, I potter about the kitchen and put some snacks on the table. By the time he's finished three slices of toast and most of a watermelon, he's full of energy and we can turn off the TV and focus our attention on the important business of catching up on the day's play.

Naturally it's not just on school days that I have to ignore Marty. Every time I suggest leaving the house he'll insist he's happy at home and doesn't want to go, but, as you'll know, staying inside with small children is never the right answer, since, like all wild animals, they need space to run around. So over vociferous objections we head out and are soon having a wonderful time. Similarly when I suggest going to a restaurant he'll swear that he's not hungry and certainly doesn't want to go to any restaurants. A position he loudly maintains right up to the moment that he wolfs down all his dinner and most of mine.

Of course, strenuously though he holds his contrarian views, Marty cannot compete with the illogical certainty with which his toddler sister insists that she doesn't want the thing that she really, really wants. Her tantrums are a wild and terrifying rollercoaster of emotions for all involved.

Woken from a nap Alice briefly seems at peace with the world, but then something displeases her. Perhaps I didn't pick her up quickly enough, or perhaps I, or one of her teddies, looked at her funny. Whatever the cause, she is suddenly screaming. I try to pick her up, but she hurls herself to the mattress, little feet drumming in rage at my affrontery. Assuming she wants to stay lying down, I ease back. Immediately she's standing, angry fists banging on the cot, demanding to be released. I reach for her, and she dives screeching into her pillow. This cycle continues, ever louder, until eventually I haul her screaming from her room.

Her howls rattle the house as I worry what the neighbors must think and desperately seek something to placate her. A squirrel on a telephone pole brings a delighted chuckle and I breathe a sigh of relief, but it's too soon! The squirrel was just a distraction, it has not



quenched the rage, the howls return. Even her brother only gains us a brief smile and a moment of quiet. Then she sees a picture of a dog, and the anger vanishes as her cheery giggles swiftly release the tension that's been building since she woke.

This process is repeated in traumatic reverse when she gets tired. Screaming in rage, she is lowered into her cot, absolutely insistent that sleep is the last thing she needs. She attempts to climb out, she throws her teddies at me, then wails for their return, shouts for mommy, and generally acts as though her imprisonment in a cot is a terrible miscarriage of justice, and sleep, a fate worse than death. In short it is neither a restful nor quiet experience, but if, with gentle cajolery, amateur teddy puppetry, and a lot of luck, I can get her to lie down, the screams instantly turn to gentle coos of sleepy delight at the joy of being in bed. The much needed sleep follows swiftly.

Hunger can trigger similar harrowing exchanges. Normally she loves nothing as much as a plateful of food, but if she thinks she is being deprived of tasty treats, her gastronomic pleasure swiftly turns ugly. She will dash the proffered plate from our hands, affronted by the paucity of our portions. Then, realizing that no one is offering her food, she'll scream in outrage and from there things swiftly spiral as her anger at not being given food is surpassed only by her distress upon seeing food. This incandescent fury only ends when she accidentally puts some food in her mouth. Instantly transfixed by this ambrosial nectar, she forgets her rage to focus on finding more. "Why", she seems to say, "have you been keeping this from me, didn't you know I was hungry?"

I could go on, but my children can hear the ice cream man coming, and I do hate saying no.

*Photos courtesy of the author*

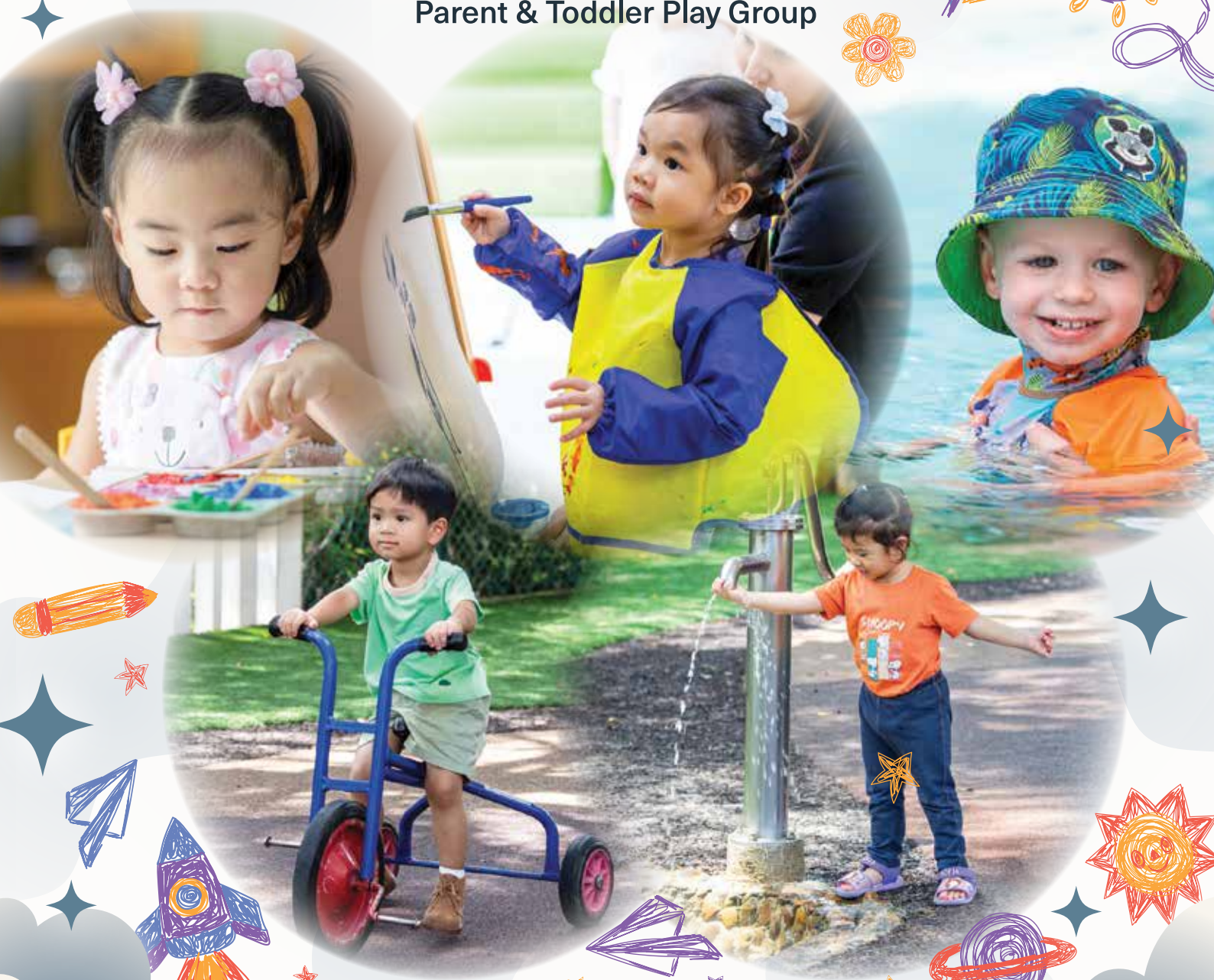


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# THE SUMMER STAYCATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS IN BANGKOK

The city gets quieter, the days get longer. Here's how Bangkok families can turn the summer staycation into something worth remembering. From ฿20 museum trips to themed playdate rotations, Sara has the practical ideas to make it work.

Photo by Luis Quintero from Pexels



## About the Author

Sara Salam is a mother to energetic boy–girl twins who keep her on her toes and regularly challenge her ideas about patience, boundaries, and quiet. She writes about parenting as she learns it—one day, one mistake, and one small win at a time.

When schools close for the long summer break in Thailand, Bangkok changes noticeably. Many expat families travel home, regular activities pause, and the city suddenly feels quieter. For parents staying behind, the weeks ahead can feel like a mix of freedom and pressure: how do you keep children entertained for such a long stretch without overscheduling every day or spending a fortune?

The good news is that a successful staycation does not need to revolve around expensive camps or elaborate outings. In fact, children often thrive on something much simpler: a sense of rhythm, familiar routines, and quality time together.

### CREATING A SIMPLE SUMMER RHYTHM

While holidays are meant to feel relaxed, unstructured days can become overwhelming for both children and parents. Having a routine helps create predictability and reduces the constant pressure of deciding what to do next. This does not mean scheduling every hour of the day. Instead, many families find it helpful to assign simple themes to different days of the week. For example:

Monday: Library or reading day  
Tuesday: Playdate day  
Wednesday: Baking or cooking activity  
Thursday: Museum or outing day  
Friday: Water play or park day

A weekly rhythm gives children something to look forward to while helping parents feel organized and less mentally drained.

### BUDGET-FRIENDLY PLACES TO EXPLORE IN BANGKOK

One of the advantages of staying in Bangkok over the summer is that the city still offers plenty of affordable, family-friendly spaces to explore.

**TK Park:** Located inside Central World on the eighth floor, this creative learning space remains a favorite among families. With books, reading corners, interactive zones, and regular children's activities, it is an excellent indoor option during Bangkok's hottest months. Entry for non-members is only around ฿20, making it one of the best-value activities in the city.

**Bangkok Art and Culture Center:** This Culture Center offers rotating art exhibitions, open spaces, cafes and can be a surprisingly enjoyable outing. Families can wander through the galleries at their own pace, introduce children to different forms of art and photography, or simply enjoy a slower afternoon away from the usual shopping mall routine. The center also regularly hosts workshops and cultural events, many of which are free to attend.

**Bangkok City Library:** Often overlooked by families, this beautiful library offers a calm atmosphere and excellent children's section. It

is a lovely alternative to malls and gives children the chance to discover books beyond their usual collection at home.

### Chulalongkorn University

**Museums:** For curious ones, museums can be surprisingly engaging. The university museums offer educational exhibits and provide a quieter change of pace from indoor playgrounds and shopping centers.

### THE MAGIC OF SIMPLE PLAYDATES

When many families leave Bangkok for the summer, children can begin to feel isolated or bored. Organizing simple themed playdates can make the break feel more exciting while helping children maintain social connections. These gatherings do not need to be elaborate or Instagram-perfect. Often, the simplest ideas are the most successful:

Pizza-making afternoons  
Lego building challenges  
Water play days  
Pyjama movie mornings  
Arts and crafts sessions  
Mini Olympics at the park

It also helps to coordinate early with friends who are staying in Bangkok and arrange to host on a rotation basis. This allows children to socialize while giving parents a shared support system during the break.

### FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

A Bangkok staycation can be an opportunity to slow down and experience the city differently. Without the usual rush of school runs, homework and packed schedules, families often rediscover simpler routines that feel calmer and more manageable. The goal is not to fill every hour of the day. It is to create a summer that feels balanced—with enough structure to keep everyone grounded, enough flexibility to stay restful, and enough small moments of joy to make lasting memories.



Photo by Pablo Merchan from Studio Colombia

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# HOW TO BUDGET FOR A STRESS-FREE FAMILY HOLIDAY

Everyone likes to travel during the holidays but going on holiday without planning ahead can leave you with a wonky budget on your return. Financial coach Jex Leigh offers sound advice and top tips on how to make your holiday budget work without breaking the bank.

Photo by 89Stocker



## About the Author

Jex is the mother of two daughters. She has a Masters in Business Administration and has studied personal finance since 2011. As the owner of Jex Leigh Financial Coaching, she helps individuals and families create better financial habits so they can achieve their dreams. To download a free editable travel budget or find out more about Jex's services, visit her Facebook page at: [facebook.com/jexleighfc](https://facebook.com/jexleighfc)

# M

Many people are familiar with the idea of creating a monthly budget for household spending, but few people have ever made a travel budget. Just as it's important to have a plan for your money throughout the month, it's equally important to have a spending plan while you're traveling. This can be done in one of two ways: figure out how much the vacation should cost, then save that amount over time; or look at how much you've saved for a vacation and then plan a trip that fits with the amount you have.

The travel category is a perfect example of a sinking fund. That's when you set aside a bit of money each month to use as a lump sum later. Most people don't have enough money left over at the end of a month to fund an entire trip, so it's important to set an amount aside each month. Take a trip once you have saved up enough for the trip.

When you're traveling, the biggest costs are usually lodging, transportation, food and beverages, and entertainment.

For lodging, consider the cost of a hotel, vacation rental, campsite, or another kind of sleeping arrangement. Include the cost of a baby cot or an extra bed, if necessary. Remember to also add the amount of taxes based on your destination—on a long trip, this can be significant!

Transportation could include airfare, taxis, a rental car and fuel, ferries, or train tickets. Some smaller transportation expenses are parking, tolls, checked luggage, and baggage handling fees or tips.

Food and entertainment costs will vary widely from family to family and even trip to trip. On one trip, you might stay in a vacation rental, cook most meals yourself, and spend most days on the beach or at a national park. On another vacation, you might eat all your meals at the hotel restaurant and visit a lot of tourist attractions. When trying to figure out your food budget, remember



Photo by rakhmat suwandi from Pexels

that restaurants in Thailand charge 7% VAT and a 10% service charge, usually on top of the listed prices. Many other countries charge taxes and/or fees as well.

While those are usually the four largest expenses, there are many smaller things that are easily forgotten. If you plan to buy gifts or souvenirs, include those in your travel budget. Consider if you'll need to buy any weather appropriate clothing, such as warm clothes for a winter location, or activity-specific gear, such as skis or snorkels. Remember to account for any insurance you may need: trip, medical, rental car, and so on. If it's a long trip, you might include laundry expenses. If you're traveling internationally, include costs for visas, passports, and any currency exchange fees. Lastly, estimate any tips you might need to give

Now that you've imagined your trip from beginning to end and thought about all your expenses while you'll be away, it's time to think about things back home. What extra household expenses will you incur while you're gone? Do you have pets

who need a sitter or walker? Will you have someone to house-sit or clean?

Once you have an estimate of how much the trip will cost, add another 10–20%. This gives you some wiggle room for unexpected expenses, additional treats, or things costing more than you expected.

And as with any spending plan, it's important to keep track of your expenses so you know whether or not you're staying within budget. If you pay for things online beforehand, write down those expenses as you make the purchases. For everything else, the easiest way to stay within budget is to use a cash envelope system. Put your budgeted amounts in envelopes—you could have just one envelope for all travel expenses, or make one for food and beverage, one for entertainment, one for shopping, and so on. If there's money in the envelope, you're within budget, but if the money runs out, you're done spending in that category. And when you return home after your trip, you'll feel more relaxed knowing you had a plan and you stuck to it!

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# COOKING WITH KIDS:

## FUN SUMMER SNACKS AND INTERNATIONAL TREATS TO TRY TOGETHER

Cooking with children offers more than snacks and meals—it creates opportunities for connection, cultural exploration, and joyful summer memories.

Photo by Ekruilila from Studio Turkey

### About the Author



Keren Granit is a dietitian based in Bangkok, specializing in family and pediatric nutrition. She helps parents confidently guide their children's eating habits, from picky eating to healthy growth. Passionate about evidence-based, practical advice, she shares resources and guidance at [EatWithKeren.com](https://EatWithKeren.com).

Summer in Bangkok often means balancing indoor activities with creative ways to keep children entertained, nourished, and connected as a family. Between the tropical heat, rainy afternoons, and school holidays, many parents look for activities that are both meaningful and manageable. One surprisingly simple activity that brings together fun, learning, and family connection is cooking with kids.

Cooking together is about much more than preparing food. It creates opportunities for connection, confidence-building, sensory learning, and cultural exploration. Research consistently shows that children who participate in food preparation are more likely to feel comfortable around a wider variety of foods and more willing to try unfamiliar ingredients over time. For families navigating picky eating, involving children in the kitchen can be a powerful tool.

When children help prepare meals, they gain a sense of ownership and curiosity around food. A child who refuses cucumber on a dinner plate may suddenly become excited about adding cucumber to a rainbow wrap they created themselves. Repeated, pressure-free exposure to ingredients through cooking often helps children build familiarity and trust with foods naturally, without turning mealtimes into a battle.

Cooking together also strengthens the parent-child bond. In busy family life, especially for expat families balancing work, school, and life abroad, even small moments of connection matter. Measuring ingredients, stirring yogurt, rolling wraps, or decorating snacks creates opportunities for conversation, teamwork, and shared memories.

For multicultural families living in Bangkok, food can also become a meaningful bridge between cultures. Many expat families want their children to stay connected to traditional foods from home while also embracing the incredible variety of cuisines available in Thailand. Cooking together offers



Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels

the perfect opportunity to combine both worlds.

Bangkok's international supermarkets and local fresh markets make it easy to access ingredients from around the globe. Families can recreate recipes from their home countries while incorporating tropical fruits, fresh herbs, and local flavors. Children grow up understanding that food is connected to family traditions, travel, identity, and community.

The key is keeping the experience relaxed and age-appropriate. Cooking with children does not need to involve elaborate baking projects or picture-perfect creations. In fact, the simplest recipes are often the most successful. Younger children can wash fruit, mix ingredients, spread toppings, or assemble skewers. Older children can practice measuring, rolling, slicing soft ingredients, or following recipe steps independently.

Most importantly, try to focus less on perfection and more on participation. A messy counter, uneven banana slices, or yogurt spilled on the table are all part of the experience.

Below are four easy, family-friendly recipes perfect for warm summer days in Bangkok. They are simple, versatile, and designed to encourage

children to actively participate in the kitchen.

## TROPICAL YOGURT POPSICLES

These refreshing popsicles are naturally sweet, colorful, and perfect for hot afternoons.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt or coconut yogurt
- 1 ripe mango
- 1 banana
- ½ cup pineapple chunks
- Optional: honey or maple syrup
- Popsicle molds

### Instructions

1. Blend the mango, banana, pineapple, and yogurt until smooth
2. Taste and add a little honey if needed
3. Pour into popsicle molds
4. Let children add small fruit pieces into the molds
5. Freeze for at least 4-6 hours

### Why kids love it

Children enjoy choosing fruit combinations and watching the mixture transform into frozen treats. Parents love that these popsicles are refreshing while still providing fiber, vitamins, and protein.

**Variation idea:** Try dragon fruit, watermelon, papaya, or coconut milk for different tropical flavors.

## RAINBOW RICE PAPER ROLLS

Inspired by fresh Vietnamese-style rolls, these colorful wraps require minimal cooking and can be endlessly customized.

### Ingredients

- Rice paper wrappers
- Cooked rice noodles
- Thinly sliced cucumber
- Carrot strips
- Mango slices
- Avocado
- Lettuce or fresh herbs
- Optional protein: tofu, shredded chicken, shrimp, or egg

### Simple dipping sauce

- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- A squeeze of lime
- Warm water to thin

### Instructions

1. Fill a shallow plate with warm water
2. Dip rice paper wrappers briefly until soft
3. Lay flat and let children choose their fillings
4. Roll tightly like a burrito
5. Serve with dipping sauce

### Why kids love it

This recipe feels like edible arts and crafts. Children can create colorful combinations while exploring vegetables and textures in a low-pressure way.

## MINI MEDITERRANEAN SNACK SKEWERS

These easy no-cook skewers work perfectly for summer playdates, lunchboxes, or poolside snacks.

### Ingredients

- Cherry tomatoes
- Cucumber slices
- Cheese cubes or tofu cubes
- Olives (for older children)
- Whole wheat pita or bread cubes
- Optional: grilled chicken pieces

### Instructions

1. Give children small skewers or reusable cocktail sticks
2. Let them build their own combinations using the ingredients provided
3. Serve with hummus or yogurt dip

### Why kids love it

Children naturally enjoy assembling food themselves. The colorful ingredients and hands-on activity make vegetables and new flavors feel more approachable and fun.

Variation idea: Create “international skewers” using ingredients inspired by different cuisines and family traditions.

## BANANA SUSHI ROLLS

This playful snack looks impressive but is incredibly simple to make.

### Ingredients

- Whole wheat tortilla or thin wrap
- Peanut butter, almond butter, or sunflower seed butter
- Banana
- Optional toppings: chia seeds, crushed cereal, coconut flakes, cinnamon

### Instructions

1. Spread nut or seed butter over the tortilla
2. Place a peeled banana inside and roll tightly
3. Slice into “sushi” rounds
4. Let children sprinkle toppings over the slices

### Why kids love it

The sushi-style shape makes familiar ingredients feel exciting and new. Children can customize toppings and practice spreading, rolling, and slicing skills.

Variation idea: Add strawberries or a drizzle of melted dark chocolate for a dessert-inspired version.

## MAKING SUMMER COOKING FEEL MANAGEABLE

For many parents, cooking with children sounds wonderful in theory but stressful in reality. The kitchen gets messy, attention spans are short, and not every child eagerly participates every time.

The good news is that cooking together does not need to be complicated to be meaningful.

Even involving children for ten minutes can have a positive impact. Washing berries, stirring yogurt,



Photo by wanderson 91 from pixabay

building wraps, or choosing toppings all count as participation. Small moments repeated consistently often shape children’s confidence and relationship with food over time.

It can also help to create small seasonal rituals:

- Friday smoothie afternoons
- Weekend popsicle-making sessions
- International snack nights
- Build-your-own wrap lunches

These routines often become cherished family memories.

Most importantly, avoid pressure around eating. Children do not need to taste every ingredient or finish every recipe they help prepare. The goal is exposure, curiosity, and positive experiences around food. Over time, those relaxed experiences can support more adventurous eating habits and reduce mealtime stress.

In a multicultural city like Bangkok, cooking together also gives families a chance to celebrate both old traditions and new experiences. Whether it is making Mediterranean skewers, tropical Thai-inspired popsicles, or wraps inspired by Asian street food, children learn that food tells stories about culture, family, and connection.

This summer, instead of focusing on perfect recipes or elaborate meals, focus on the experience itself. Turn on music, expect a little mess, and invite your children into the kitchen with you. Hopefully, this article inspires you to try a few new recipes together and create simple moments that your family will remember long after summer ends.



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# BUSAN WITH KIDS: AN UNDERRATED COASTAL GEM

Think Korea means Seoul? Think again. Erica, Bambi's playgroup coordinator, writes about her Songkran trip back to her hometown of Busan and why she thinks more families should have it on their radar.

Photo by Laura Lee Van Herck from Pixels



## About the Author

Erica is a Korean mom navigating motherhood one day at a time in Bangkok. Before settling here, she lived in Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands, where she picked up bits of the local languages along the way, but after four years in Bangkok, Thai is still proving challenging.

From what I've seen, many friends and families living in Thailand tend to travel within Thailand or around Southeast Asia. When they do head to East Asia, Japan is often their first choice; Korea usually isn't at the top of their list. If it does get to the top, most people think mainly of Seoul.

This past Songkran holiday, our family went to Busan, and we had such a great time that I wanted to share a bit about it. I think more people should know about this hidden gem.

First things first, Busan is actually my hometown. But having lived away for over 20 years, I have to admit I'm not the best tour guide anymore. When people ask me where to go or what to recommend, I honestly often draw a blank. I do visit regularly, but more in a "go home, stay in, and meet old friends nearby" kind of way. I'm pretty sure some tourists know the city better than I do.

This trip was different. My husband joined us, so we did a more "tourist-style" itinerary, and we both realized Busan is surprisingly great for traveling with kids.

## GETTING TO BUSAN

Busan is Korea's second-largest city and is quite accessible from Thailand. It's about a five-and-a-half hour direct flight from Bangkok, less than an hour from Seoul by plane, and around two hours by high-speed train.

## THE SEASONS OF BUSAN AND BEST TIMES TO GO

A very important tip: Korea has four distinct seasons, and timing really matters, as it can make or break your trip. I'd highly recommend spring (April) or autumn (October). May and September can also work, they're just slightly warmer. The rest of the year tends to be more extreme. Summers can feel even hotter than Thailand, while the winters can be very cold with strong winds from the

north. Overall though, Busan tends to be milder than Seoul.

## WHY BUSAN IS GREAT FOR KIDS

Compared to Bangkok, Busan has many public parks and playgrounds and a good number of free kid-friendly museums. Public transport is excellent, and, even better, children under 12 ride for free! If your child is a fan of the television show 'Tayo', you'll see Tayo everywhere. It's basically the mascot for Korea's buses since Tayo means 'ride' in Korean.

## WHERE THE MOUNTAINS MEET THE SEA

A fun fact: about 70% of Korea is mountainous. The "san" in Busan literally means "mountain," so yes, there are plenty of them. But what makes Busan special is that you get mountains, sea, and rivers all in one place. If it's your first visit, I'd recommend the beach areas like Haeundae, Gwangalli, Songjeong, and Songdo. For mountains, Geumjeongsan and Hwangnyeongsan are great options.

## TOP PICKS FOR FAMILIES

Here are ten family-friendly things I'd recommend. Our three-year-old boy is very into transportation so quite a few rides are involved!

- Visit Haeundae Beach and ride the Haeundae BlueLine Park Sky Capsule or beach train or just play in the sand all day
- Spend a day in Yeongdo: explore the Huinnyeoul Culture Village, ride the Taejongdae Danubi Train, visit the National Maritime Museum, and enjoy the coastal views—you could even take a cruise
- Spend time at Busan Children's Grand Park
- Visit Jagalchi Fish Market and take a cruise
- See the Gwangan Bridge light show at night—there's also a drone show every Saturday evening
- Enjoy Songdo Beach, ride the Songdo Marine Cable Car, and take a scenic coastal walk
- Visit the Osiria area: shop at Lotte Premium Outlet and enjoy attractions at Lotte World
- Explore beautiful temples like Beomeosa and Tongdosa
- Hike Geumjeongsan and ride a cable car—yes, another cable car!
- Go on a night hike and enjoy the Busan night view from Hwangnyeongsan Observatory

If you're looking for a family trip that's a little different from the usual, Busan might just surprise you—in the best possible way. For me, this trip was a reminder that sometimes the places closest to your heart are the ones you forget to really see. Going back as a tourist to my own hometown turned out to be one of the best things I've done and I have my family to thank for that.



Photo courtesy of the author



# PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

BAMBI holds regular playgroups and activities around Bangkok, open to both BAMBI members and non-members. BAMBI playgroups are characterized by both structured and free play, and the use of venues' toys and playgrounds. BAMBI Activities provide a wide range of opportunities for children aged one to six years old to develop their athletic, creative, and cognitive skills.

## PLAYGROUPS

Name	Location
Wonderkids	Wonder Woods Kids Café & Co-Learning Space
Little Seeds	The Tiny Seeds International Pre-School
Kiddiezilla	Market Place Nanglinche (3rd Floor)
Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Little Tots	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre
Niko Niko	The Prestige 49 (Sukhumvit Soi 49)



## ACTIVITIES

Name	Location
Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit24
Football	Noah Futsal
Little Athletes	Noah Futsal
Lego Construction STEM <b>new!</b>	Bricks4Kidz - K Village
Junior Tennis <b>new!</b>	The Lobb Club

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# SUMMER WITHOUT BURNOUT

Summer break is anything but a break for parents. Anna shares simple, realistic ways to hold onto routine, protect your energy, and avoid burning out before September.



Photo by Aflo Images



## About the Author

Anna works for New Counseling Service (NCS), an internationally recognized mental health center in Bangkok with a diverse team of licensed counselors. NCS has provided counseling services in Thailand and surrounding regions for over 20 years, with therapists specializing in a wide variety of issues such as anxiety, depression, work stress, relationships, and more. For more information visit [ncsbkk.com/ncs/](https://ncsbkk.com/ncs/)



Photo by RDNE Stock project from Pexels

Summer is the time of year that kids look forward to the most—two whole months of no school and no homework. But for parents, this often ends up being the busiest time of the year. From caring for your children during non-school hours and weekends to caring for them all day, every day. It's great to have more time with them, but when they are home all the time, you might find it hard to find even a spare moment to get some rest and take care of yourself, especially with younger children.

School provides structure for kids, but also for parents. Daily routines tend to be structured around your children's school day: breakfast, drop off at school, then picking them up and extracurricular activities. So when the summer holidays roll around and the school-day structure disappears, you might find yourself struggling with how to organize your day. This is why routines are important—without one, boundaries tend to slip away as everything blurs together. You might find yourself doing way more than you're equipped to, your sleep schedule and mealtimes might be disrupted, or you might feel unprepared for each day. Counselor Savinee explains that:

"Routines make things more predictable and therefore less

stressful for parents ... Stress can very easily lead to burnout, so having a stable routine with a set self-care time every day is a good preventative measure. I've found that having a routine is very helpful to a lot of parents in stress management. However, sometimes being too strict with those routines can end up causing stress as well. It's important to know when to be flexible too. If you're feeling more tired than usual and need an extra hour of self-care, it's okay to forego whatever you had planned. Think of routines as general guidelines, not as fixed rules."

You might be thinking something along the lines of, "It's just two months, I can get some real rest once they're back at school." But unfortunately, it doesn't work like that. Constant responsibility causes both physical and mental fatigue, which can build up if you don't get regular rest. This affects both your mood and your health, which in turn affects how well you are able to care for your children. So even though you might feel guilty at the thought of some self-care during this period, resting and recharging actually has a direct positive impact on your children. For them, summer is more fun with happy and healthy parents!

To help out, our counselors at NCS have put together a list of self-care

and routine ideas for parents to implement during school holidays, including ways to make time for yourself.

### CREATING ROUTINES AND MAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF

**Create your own daily routine:** Instead of letting the days go by without knowing when anything will happen, create your own routine for the holidays to give yourself some structure. What time will you wake up? When is breakfast? When do you spend time with the kids and when do they play alone while you do your own thing? You might reserve two hours a day for swimming classes, sports groups, biking or other activities. Having the kids at home full-time can feel a lot more manageable with a daily routine, even if it's very flexible.

**Taking turns:** If you're lucky enough to have family living nearby—rare for expats, we know—then family members can take turns looking after the children. This way, you can get some rest days into your week. For example, every Monday could be grandparent day, when Mom and Dad get a break from the kids. Alternatively, take turns with other families so that all the kids come to your house one day and then the next day, all the kids go to another family's house. Giving you some vital



Photo by Karola G from Pexels

childfree mornings! Even if this isn't possible it is important to make sure that Mom and Dad take turns so that they both get some time each week for self-care and rest!

#### **Doing different things together:**

Find activities that you and your children can do quietly and separately, but in each other's company. For example, they could play with Legos or do some coloring by themselves while you do a jigsaw or journal. The activity they're doing should be something they can do safely without supervision, so no scissors or other sharp objects. This way, you have time for your own hobbies while still being close enough to step in if anything happens. You can also sit a small distance away from them instead of being right next to them, so that you have a bit of your own space and they know that you are not actively involved in what they are doing.

#### **SELF-CARE IDEAS**

**Get some movement:** Movement is a great way to de-stress, and it also helps our brains release what we call the "happy chemicals": dopamine, serotonin, endorphin, and oxytocin. This can be going for a walk, a pilates class, working out, playing a sport, dancing, or something else. As long as you're moving your body, your brain will release those

chemicals to help you feel better, so pick a type of movement that you enjoy and try to do it daily!

**Journaling:** You might be thinking of a diary, and while that is one option, there are a few different types of journaling you can try:

**Journaling prompts:** For those who want to start a journal but don't know what to write, there are plenty of journaling prompts you can look up to help you get started. When you're struggling with what to write, it can be helpful to write in response to a specific guiding question. You can also get a journaling workbook, where each page has a different prompt for you to write about.

**Junk journals:** Collect old receipts, pieces of paper, packaging, gift wrap, envelopes, stickers, and so on, then stick them into a journal.

**Photo journals:** Print or develop photos from your week to put into your journal. You can also decorate these and add a caption for each one. If you don't feel like writing, but you also don't have enough material to junk journal, this could be a good option for you.

**Written journal—the classic diary-style:** Write down what you are feeling and thinking, how your day or week has been, and any other

thoughts or reflections that come up.

**Call your friends or set a date to meet up:** It might feel easier to just text, but seeing your friends or even just hearing their voices can help you feel more connected to other people, especially if you're feeling isolated or lost in your identity outside of being a parent.

**Join a social group:** There are plenty of social groups surrounding specific activities in Bangkok that you can join. For example, there are running groups, meditation groups, book clubs, and more that you can join to meet others with similar interests, or to just quietly do your own thing in a new setting.

**Go somewhere you wouldn't usually go:** Discover new places outside your comfort zone. What's a place you saw online and thought, "that's pretty", and never went? Maybe it's a temple, or a boat tour, or a hidden alley in Chinatown. You can also do fun activities like a color or flower hunt while you're out to add a little whimsy!

I hope you find some of these activities helpful, and that this is a great summer for both you and your children. If you're ever feeling guilty please remember: self-care is not selfish!

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# PARENTING THROUGH LONG DAYS: STAYING PATIENT AND POSITIVE WHEN ROUTINES DISAPPEAR

Staying in Bangkok over the summer break? Parent educator Laura has a feelings-first, practical approach to help you stay patient, present, and composed through the long weeks ahead.

Photo by Brooke Balentine on Unsplash



## About the Author

Laura Devos is a certified Parent Educator, former teacher, mama of three, and founder of Extra Roots, where parents and teachers are empowered to gain greater connection with themselves and their child(ren) through workshops, online courses and parent circles. Learn more at [www.extraroots.com](http://www.extraroots.com) or contact her at [laura@extraroots.com](mailto:laura@extraroots.com)



Photo by Breno Cardoso from Pexels

As summer approaches, kids get excited for a break, for fun, play, and adventure. For staying up late, for play dates, the park, and no homework! But for parents, the feeling is different. Whether parents are working or not, the overbearing question is: “How will I keep my kids occupied during this long summer break?” It can induce worry, stress, and anxiety, especially if you have a high-energy child or if you are tight on funds. And it's not just for a week or two. Depending on your child's school, it can be for seven to ten weeks. That's a lot of time. Recognizing this challenge, I'm here to support you with three key steps to get you through the summer.

### **FIRST THINGS FIRST: RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS**

Feelings? What? Yep. It's important to recognize if you're feeling anxious, worried, or stressed as summer approaches. This is even more important as the feeling most likely clashes with how your children feel—really, really excited. Journaling can be very therapeutic. Get out your journal, and if you don't have one you can easily pick one up—even 7-11 has simple options—get a pen, and write it out.

Start with your emotions. We have six primal emotions: anger, sadness, joy, surprise, disgust, and fear. Which do you feel? Close your eyes in a quiet moment and run through that list while listening to your heart. Are you sad to lose the routine? Are you fearful of all the free time and how you will manage your workload or life admin? Write down your emotions. From there, identify two-three feelings. If you're sad, maybe the feeling is being powerless, or worried about being lonely when 'everyone' has left for summer. Or if your emotion is fear, maybe the feeling is anxious, or worried about the lack of routine.

### **SECONDLY: IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS**

As parents, we know that we can't pour from an empty cup. Our children can ask, take, and ask some more, and after we give, and give some more, we find ourselves drained. Exhausted. And unable to show up how we want to. This is when we're easily triggered, we may snap, yell, or do something we regret. During the long summer weeks, we must ensure that our inner well, our cup, is replenished. The easiest way to do this is to do a needs-scan. Do it before summer

starts and then do mid-summer check-ins. How am I feeling? What do I need? How can I address my needs? One need that I often hear from parents is a need for rest, parents feel tired, and depleted. They are either working in overdrive during the day and can't take a moment to rest, or the stressors of the day, or mama guilt, keep them up at night. These don't support them having restorative rest to show up energized the next day.

If you're having long days with your child in the summer, schedule in a pause. Call it what works for you, it might be “calm time,” or “quiet time” or “break time.” Even if you're scheduling it in for you, know that they need it just as much as you. It's not a punishment, it's a nourishment. This is especially true during beach days or long swimming and outdoor days. If your child is under five and you don't have help around, try to find a very comfortable position, relaxing on a bed or couch, and do some quiet drawing together. Enjoy a nap with them if they still nap. If they are a bit older, they might enjoy a sticker book alone, while you rest on the couch. Load up on sticker books, there are many affordable options in the Thai sticker section at B2S or Kinokuniya—฿90 a piece.

If your child is eight years or older, they might be happy curling up with a book. Get a Neilson Hayes library membership and save lots as you check out books all summer long.

Your need might be 'community,' or 'connection,' in which case you'll want to brainstorm with other parents who are staying in Bangkok over summer. Make a plan to rotate playdates at each other's houses or do one day a week at the library or Chatuchak Children's Museum as the week's social outing. Try to do this planning before school closes so you feel equipped and ready.

Recognizing and listening to your emotions, feelings, and needs will be key to remaining patient and positive during the summer months.

### THIRD: COME UP WITH A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE WHILE ADDRESSING YOUR NEEDS

You may be thinking, what? My needs? But there's no point in designing a schedule that exhausts or stresses you out, that's tough on the finances, or that is too demanding of you or your child. If your nervous system is on fire in HarborLand, skip it.

Let's keep three words in mind as we plan our summer schedule: simplicity, creativity, and flexibility.

**Simplicity:** For children under eight, you can imagine their needs are like yours. They flourish in simplicity and still need down time. What does this look like? Think about a morning activity then lunch, followed by quiet time and an afternoon activity, then prep dinner and unwind before bed. Done.

**Creativity:** If you have the time and space, imagine summer as your canvas. What's something that you love to do that you never have time to do? Is it pottery? Painting? Bike rides in Rod Fai—you can rent bikes even with babyseats, and tricycles in this beautiful park with a safe bike lane. This is your time to do it. Bring your passion and creativity, show your children your interests, and learn and bond together. Kids love this. It builds connection, which is



Photo by Yiwen on Unsplash

the opposite of power struggles over the iPad. Prioritize connection. This is what will help you have a peaceful summer.

**Flexibility:** Whatever schedule you come up with, keep things flexible. It's rainy season, the bike ride may need to be cancelled, the picnic may need to be moved to the living room. It's okay. It happens. By approaching your schedule with ease and flexibility, you'll model to your child that it's okay, and safe, to make changes. That we can go with the flow and feel good. You can, of course, always keep a Plan B list of activities in your back-pocket to help.

Last but not least, remember to have fun. Oftentimes the silly moments make the happiest memories. If and when you can, lean into these moments, and in the hard moments, remember to take a deep breath, reminding yourself that summer is not forever. But with intention, we can make it the best summer yet, by putting yourself first.

*Here I am!*



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## HOW TO DO NOTHING

By Jenny Odell

Jenny Odell's "How to Do Nothing: feels like a gentle but necessary pause especially during the summer months when the pressure to "make the most" of time can quietly become overwhelming. Rather than promoting idleness, Odell reframes "doing nothing" as a conscious choice to step away from constant productivity and reconnect with what truly matters.



Reading this through the lens of family life, it becomes a reminder that summer doesn't need to be packed with plans to be meaningful. Slowing down—whether through unstructured play, shared moments outdoors, or simply being present—creates space for deeper connection. Odell invites us to notice, to linger, and to value attention as a resource. In doing so, she offers a powerful message: the most meaningful summer memories are often found not in doing more, but in noticing more together.

*How to Do Nothing by Jenny Odell was published in the United States by Melville House in 2019. A copy can be found in the nonfiction section of Neilson Hays Library.*

## WAIT

Written and illustrated by Antoinette Portis



"Wait" by Antoinette Portis is a gentle reminder of how easily we rush past meaningful moments. The story follows a caregiver encouraging a child to hurry, while the child repeatedly pauses to notice small details in the world around them. These simple moments of observation gradually reshape the rhythm of the story.

Particularly fitting for the summer months, "Wait" encourages readers to slow down and be present. In a season often filled with plans and activity, it suggests that value is found less in doing more and more in noticing what is already there.

The book highlights the beauty of unstructured time, where curiosity can lead without direction and everyday surroundings become sources of interest. From a snail moving across the pavement to the sounds of a busy street, these quiet observations create lasting impressions. "Wait" gently shows that when we move at a child's pace, we make space for presence, connection, and a calmer way of seeing the world.

*Wait by Antoinette Portis was published in the United States by Neal Porter Books in 2015. Portis is a children's author and illustrator known for her simple, thoughtful storytelling that encourages observation and patience. A copy can be found in the children's section at Neilson Hays Library*



Prepared by Kit Lang (@mskitlang) for Neilson Hays Library, Thailand's premier English-language library. The Children's Program offers Saturday Story Time, a cozy Children's Corner, and special holiday events. Adult programs include concerts, art exhibitions, book club, and book sales. The library is located in a beautiful historic building with a garden and cafe on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook.

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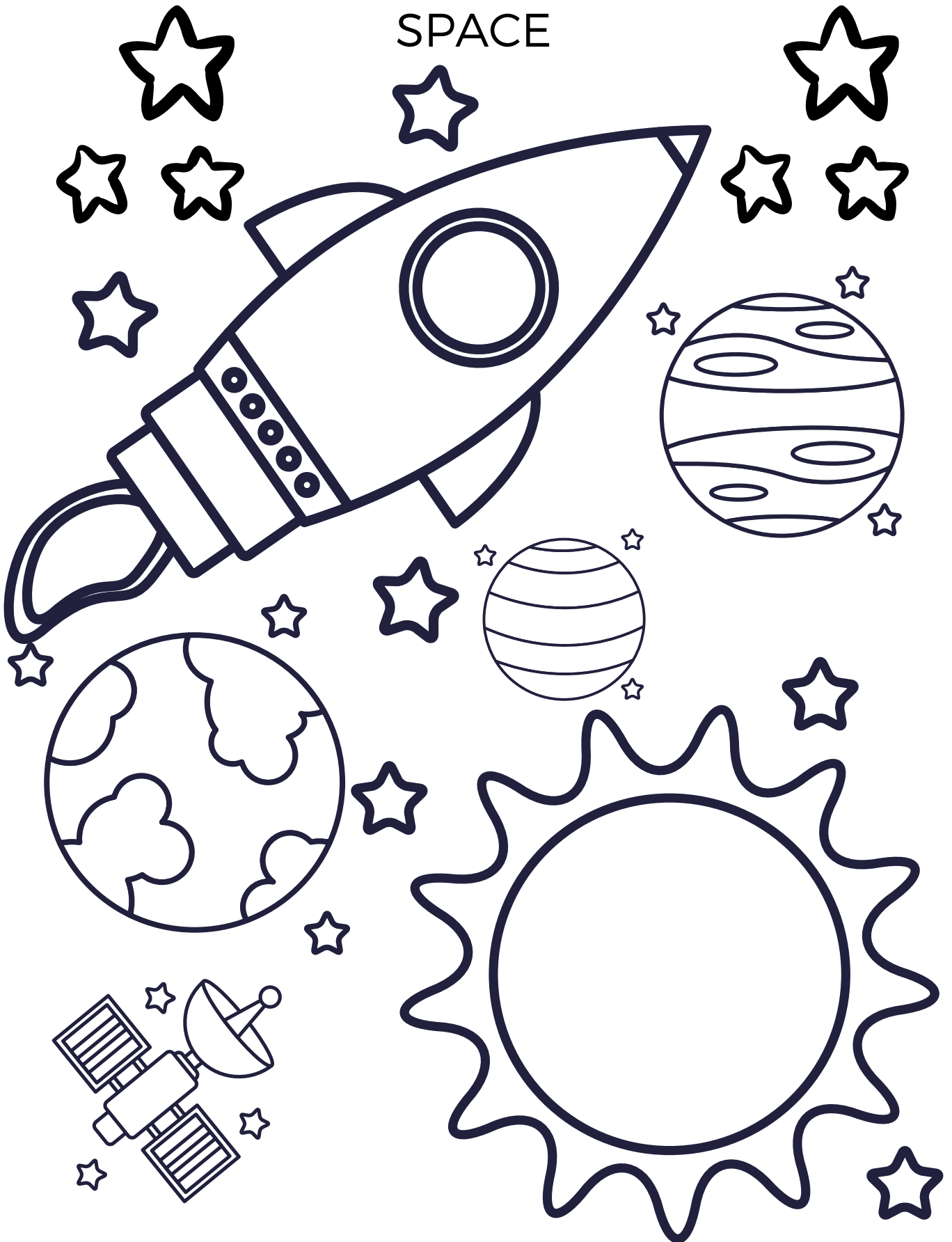
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SPACE





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**The views expressed in the articles in this magazine are not necessarily those of BAMBI committee members and we assume no responsibility for them or their effects.**

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