



INSPIRING A LOVE OF TRAVEL THROUGH AN ADORABLE KITTY

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AAA has always been the go-to source for family travel. From mapping out TripTiks to navigating theme parks to arranging celebration vacations around the globe, our travel agents have the expertise to plan the perfect vacation for your family. And now, with everyone even more focused on the importance of family bonding and creating shared memories, AAA is strengthening our dedication to family travel by enhancing our family-focused vacation offerings and introducing a new Family Travel Specialist certification for travel agents. This program is designed to give travel agents the tools to help families identify their favorite vacation destinations and then develop a long-term plan for achieving those travel goals. The program also includes a special focus on the youngest members of the family, who will learn about the joys of travel through a fictional traveling feline named KeeKee, the star of a new AAA Travel partnership.

AAA *Traveler Worldwide* recently sat down with AAA's Senior Vice President of Travel Services Brenda Hunsberger and AAA member Shannon Jones, author of the children's book series *KeeKee's Big Adventures*, as the two announced the partnership. AAA is excited to include ideas from KeeKee on how to engage children in the vacation planning process and keep them delighted during the family vacation. KeeKee's books are now available for sale in AAA Stores and online at AAA.com/OnlineStore. Hunsberger promises special KeeKee surprises and travel-related messages for families when they visit their local AAA Store and at AAA.com/Family, among other things.

What is *KeeKee's Big Adventures*?

KeeKee's Big Adventures "introduces the wonder of travel to our younger generation," says Jones, who shares her passion for travel through picture books, podcasts, games, activities and a fan club, all featuring a lovable calico kitty as their wandering

travel guide. "KeeKee takes children and families around the world, inspiring and sparking curiosity."

The real-life KeeKee was Jones' pet calico, who moved with her from Seattle, Washington, to the Netherlands in 2006 and inspired her to create the feline's fictional travel adventures through a five-book series featuring Amsterdam, London, Athens, Rome and Paris.

Why the partnership between these two brands?

"There is a great opportunity for our members who have young children in their family to make a bigger connection between their AAA membership and travel itself," says Hunsberger. "This time of COVID-19 in some ways has made it more apparent how important it is to spend time with the people we love."

Jones adds, "AAA, KeeKee and I share such similar views on travel, and we realized what a great fit it is to work together to help families dream and inspire them to travel."



Shannon Jones' pet calico KeeKee inspired the fictional feline of the same name.



The five-book series *KeeKee's Big Adventures* takes young readers to cities around the world.

And why the focus on family vacations?

"I had the pleasure of being able to travel when I was nine years old. My mom was a flight attendant, and that was life-changing for me," says Jones, whose first book sends KeeKee off in a hot-air balloon to Paris, the City of Light.

Family travel is especially meaningful to AAA members, observes Hunsberger. "Our AAA agents can help families to learn about the world and develop a family travel plan," she says.

How do you encourage young children to be curious about travel and to be citizens of the world?

"Travel is more approachable for everyone in the family when you learn together about the destination you are visiting. For example, knowing a few words in the local language goes a long way," says Jones, who uses the voice of KeeKee to introduce children to other cultures, places and languages, including visiting famous attractions and trying local foods.

Hunsberger adds, "These introductions are the hooks that get our kids interested in travel, giving them a broader view of the world. It's a critical piece of a child's learning to travel and experience different cultures."

So, what's next for KeeKee? After five books featuring destinations abroad, Jones hints that KeeKee's hot-air balloon may soon set down in the States. She says there are more story ideas and projects in the works to help families explore the US and the rest of the world with KeeKee as the guide.

Learn more about KeeKee and family travel by visiting your AAA Store or AAA.com/Family.



Shannon Jones, author of the children's book series *KeeKee's Big Adventures*

