

FREE

1000



ACTIVITIES

TO DO AS A FAMILY

THIS SUMMER



ERIN GIFFORD | KIDVENTUROUS.COM

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Moms & Dads,

Summer is here and it's time to get up, get out and explore with your kids. Whether you want to learn to fish, ride a train or plan and do several acts of kindness, there's no better time than now to get up and go.

Inspired by various "100 Activities to Do with Your Kids This Summer" checklists that can be found on the web, I decided to take this list to the next level by creating an ebook, complete with tips, advice, even mobile apps, guides and books to help you have a fun, fabulous and family-centered summer.

In this ebook, you'll find plenty of ideas to help you get outside, try new foods, learn new sports, even explore new cities whether by train, by boat, by bike or on walking tours. There's so much to do, so much to learn, so get out there and make the most of your summer as a family. And, don't forget to check back at [Kidventurous](http://Kidventurous.com) throughout the summer for family-focused travel tips and advice.

Erin Gifford

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1 Go Stargazing.

Go ahead, stay up late. Lie on your backs in the backyard and stare up at the constellations. Check out online kids game, [Constellation Hunt](#), to help you identify what's up in the night sky. Many science centers and national parks also offer evening astronomy programs, giving kids a chance to see the moon, meteor showers and constellations through telescopes.

2 Eat Dinner from a Food Truck.

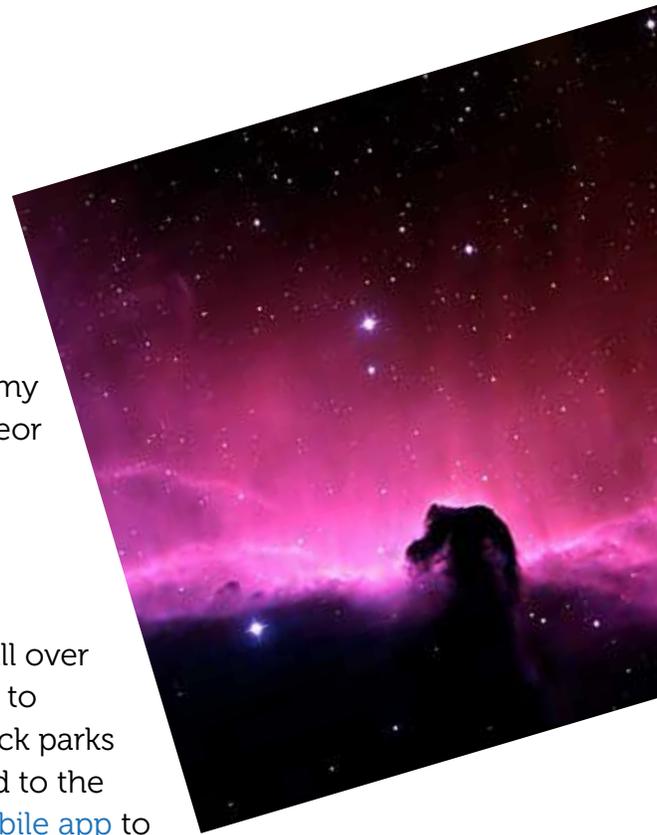
Food trucks, even food truck parks, have popped up all over the country, enabling communities to come together to experience the unique flavors of a city. Many food truck parks have picnic tables, live music and twinkle lights to add to the atmosphere. Some, like in Austin, TX, even have a [mobile app](#) to help you find what you want.

3 Go to a Drive-In Movie.

With so few drive-in movie theatres left in this country, it's a must this summer to see a movie under the stars. Pack some pillows and blankets in the car, put the kids in their PJs and bring along some extra cash for the snack bar. Then sit back in your car and enjoy.

4 Pitch a Tent (or Stay in a Cabin).

Whether you choose to pitch a tent or stay in a cabin, like [we did at two separate KOAs last summer](#), your kids will love the experience of camping. Hike around the campsite, roast marshmallows, get to know the other campers. Just relax and have fun in the outdoors.



5 Get Picking at a Fruit Festival.

Summer is ripe (pun intended) with fruit festivals with lots of favorites, like cherries, peaches and blueberries, in season. Grab a basket and hit the fields to fill up on pie-making favorites. Many festivals also have hay rides, bike rodeos and concerts. At the [National Cherry Festival](#) in Traverse City, MI, you can even participate in a cherry pit spitting contest.

6 Spend the Night at a Museum (or Zoo or Aquarium).

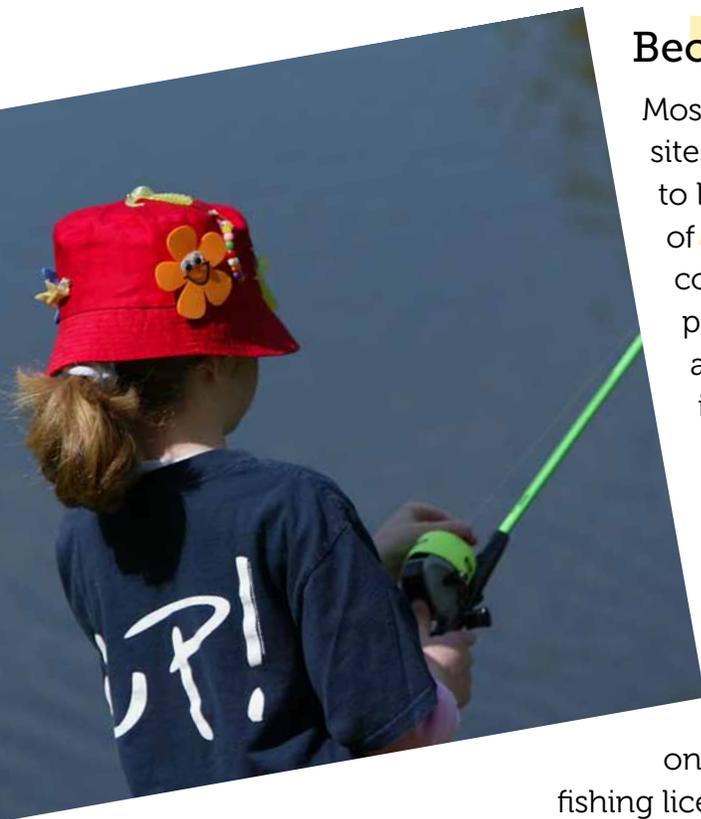
Grab your sleeping bag and head to your local museum, zoo, even a botanical garden for a night your kids won't soon forget. Enjoy workshops, guided tours and hands-on activities before you settle in for the night.

7 Become a Junior Park Ranger.

Most of our national parks, monuments and historic sites offer a [Junior Ranger program](#), enabling kids to learn about these sites while completing a series of educational and observational activities. Upon completion, children receive an official badge or patch from a ranger. Some states, including Georgia and Maryland, also offer Junior Ranger programs in their state parks.

8 Cast a Fishing Line

Lots of learn-to-fish events take place across the country in early-June during [National Fishing & Boating Week](#) so grab your fishing gear and head out with your little ones for a on the lake. Make note that some parks require a fishing license and most have regulations regarding fish quantity and catch size.



Tour a Fire Station.

Call up our local fire station and ask for a tour. Most times, the firefighters and rescue crew are more than happy to oblige. It's a great way to show your kids the firefighting equipment up close and hear about daily activities. To thank the fire crew for their efforts in your community, bake some cookies to bring with you on your tour.

Splash in a Waterfall.

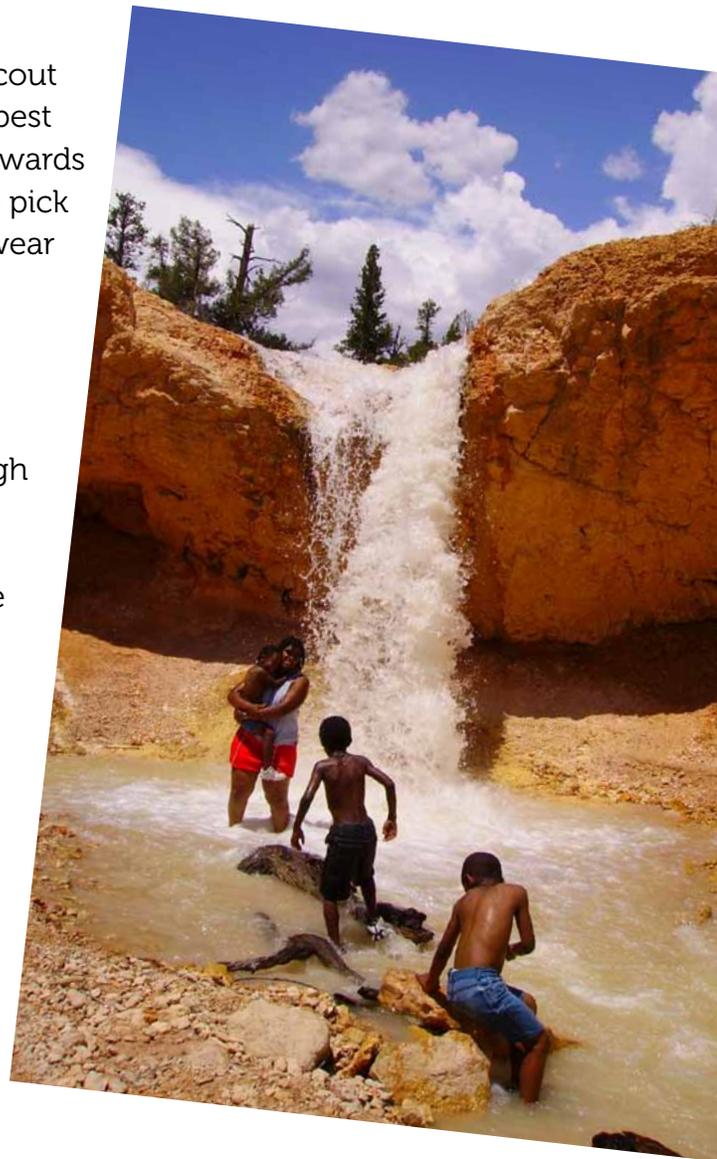
If you're taking a trip to a state or national park, scout out the waterfalls in advance and check into the best times of year for ideal viewing. One of the best rewards after a long hike is to splash in a cold waterfall, so pick a park with a few waterfalls to choose from and wear your swimsuit.

Stop at Scenic Overlooks.

Many parks enable you to take a nice drive through the park and stop at scenic overlooks throughout the park for panoramic views of nature around you. Often, you can pick up a map or guide in the visitors center that will point out the not-to-be-missed overlooks.

Hunt for Fossils.

Some national parks, like big [Glacier National Park](#) in Montana and [Big Bend National Park](#) in Texas, are home to some amazing fossils and cultural artifacts, but you can often find fossils anywhere sedimentary rocks are exposed. Hunting for fossils is a great way to explore Earth's past as you and your kids think about how life has changed on our planet.





Look for EarthCache Sites.

Grab a GPS device, a park map and a compass, then look for EarthCache sites, which teach visitors about the geological significance of certain sites within the park. EarthCache sites also teach your kids important skills, like navigation and map reading. Go online for a [list of EarthCache sites](#).

Canoe Down a River:

If your child can swim, then grab sunscreen and life jackets for everyone and head out to the nearest lake for an afternoon of canoeing. Teach your kids how to hold a paddle and paddle in tandem with you and you'll be on your way. As kids grow older, it's a perfect opportunity to teach them about the different canoe strokes.

Have a Picnic.

Many state and national parks have picnic tables and restrooms, so pack a picnic lunch and head out for a day in the park. Check in at the visitors center to get a map with picnic area locations. Have a fun, exploratory hike on your way to the picnic area.

Go on a Photography Walk.

Some parks offer free walks to take photos of nature within the park. Or, just grab your camera or smartphone and start taking pictures of everything interesting that you and your kids see. Print them out or upload them to an online photo album to document your experiences.

Have a Campfire Cookout.

Let everyone show off their scouting skills with a campfire cookout. Cook dinner, maybe kabobs with meats, onions and sweet peppers. Wrap ears of corn in heavy foil to cook over the coals, and top of the meal with some s'mores. Yum.



Try Geocaching.

18 **Geocaching** is a real-world treasure hunting outdoor game. You and your kids will try to locate hidden containers, called caches, using GPS-enabled devices, such as your smartphone. If you find a cache, the rule is that if you take something from the cache, you must replace it with something, so have the kids pack a variety of trinkets for trading.

Try New Foods in New Cities.

Research what foods are famous in a city you plan to visit and make sure to try them. It's okay to go with old favorites, like chicken tenders, now and then, but try the Key Lime Pie in Key West or the Sacher-Tortes in Vienna. Yum.

19

Plant a Tree.

20 Planting a tree with your kids is a great way to engage them in gardening. It's also a great way to put something back into the environment. If you can, plant a tree to celebrate a birthday, the birth of a new sibling, or a milestone, such as the first or last day of school.



Hold a Bike Parade on Your Street.

A bike parade is a fun way to celebrate summer while spending time with adults and kids in your neighborhood. Kids can decorate their bikes with balloons, streamers, playing cards, anything they want, and don't forget prizes. Pick up some trinkets, like stickers, pencils and rubber balls, to give out as awards.



Go to Theatre in the Park.

Many communities have some type of outdoor community theatre, and often you'll find kids productions during the summer. These are a great way to introduce your children to musicals, comedies, puppet shows, even Shakespeare. Check your weekend section for show times.

Hunt for Animal Tracks.

Whether in the woods, in a field or in your own backyard, you're likely to find animal tracks all around if you look closely. Bring along a take-along guide, like [Tracks, Scats and Signs](#), and become nature detectives as you learn how to spot and identify clues and tracks that animals leave behind.

Create a Butterfly Garden.

Children love digging in the dirt and planting flowers, so go ahead and plant a butterfly garden to attract these fluttering insects. Choose a sunny location, then add flat stones and a small butterfly pond. Next, choose colorful, blooming flowers, and don't forget food for larva, like Mexican Milkweed or Passion Vine.

Rent Bikes and Explore.

Many cities have bikeshare programs that enable you to pick up and return bikes to various spots within a city, so you and your kids can explore at your leisure. Also, look out for guided bike tours in cities as well as national parks. These are great ways to learn about history, culture and the environment while riding bikes.



Go on a Scavenger Hunt.

For a fun way to explore a new city with kids, try a scavenger hunt. [Watson Adventures](#) coordinates a variety of themed scavenger hunts in cities across the country, as does [Urban Quest](#), which offers self-paced family scavenger hunts that end at a local restaurant. [Stray Boots](#) recently launched mobile apps with scavenger hunt-like trivia challenges for more than a dozen cities.

Catch a Meteor Shower.

Imagine seeing so many shooting stars in one hour that you aren't able to count them all. Look out for Perseid meteor showers in mid-August. It can be an exhilarating experience to share with kids. Take a look at the [EarthSky meteor shower guide](#) for the best viewing dates.

Have a Family Beach Clean-Up.

A day at the beach is a great way to spend time as a family, but before you leave, spend 15 minutes picking up trash and marine debris. Bring more than one bag to separate recyclables from other trash and talk to your kids about the importance of keeping our beaches clean.



Hunt for Seashells.

Beach lovers, if you want to find [great shells and sea treasures](#), stroll over to a less-traveled section of beach and also hit the beach at low tide and after storms. Once you've found some keepers, create seashell crafts, like picture frames and decorative boxes.

Take a Trolley Tour.

When visiting a new city, look for a narrated hop-on, hop-off trolley tour. We've taken Old Town Trolley Tours in both St. Augustine and Key West, FL. The tours last around 90 minutes and the drivers were very knowledgeable. Plus, it's a nice way to take a break and learn about the history and landmarks of each historic city.

Grab a Compass and Go Orienteering.

Orienteering is an adventure race that will engage your children as they learn to recognize map symbols, use a compass and gauge distances with a good degree of accuracy. Many clubs across the country sponsor races, or check out [National Orienteering Day](#) in September.

Take a Local Tour.

You can learn so much more about a vacation spot by taking a tour either by bus, on a bike, by foot or on a segway. Check in with the local visitors bureau to ask about area tours. Also, [Context Travel](#) offers walking tours of cities and museums just for families that are worth exploring.



Take a Boat Cruise or Ride on a Ferry.

A ride on a boat or a ferry is a great way to see a city away from the shore and appreciate its greatness. Many times you can find narrated boat tours, but even a ferry ride (some of which are free or low-cost) are fun ways to experience new locales.

Pick Up Trash in Our Parks.

Let's keep our national parks beautiful. If you see an empty bottle or a candy bar wrapper in the parks, pick it up and throw it away or recycle it if you can. Better, grab some family and friends and have a clean the park day. Celebrate with a picnic.

Hop Aboard a Train.

Ride on a train, whether an Amtrak train to ride a few hours to a new city, or on an old-time steam train, like those at [Strasburg Railroad](#) near Lancaster, PA. Look out the window, enjoy the scenery, take pictures. Even a ride on the subway can be a great learning experience as you take in new people and places.

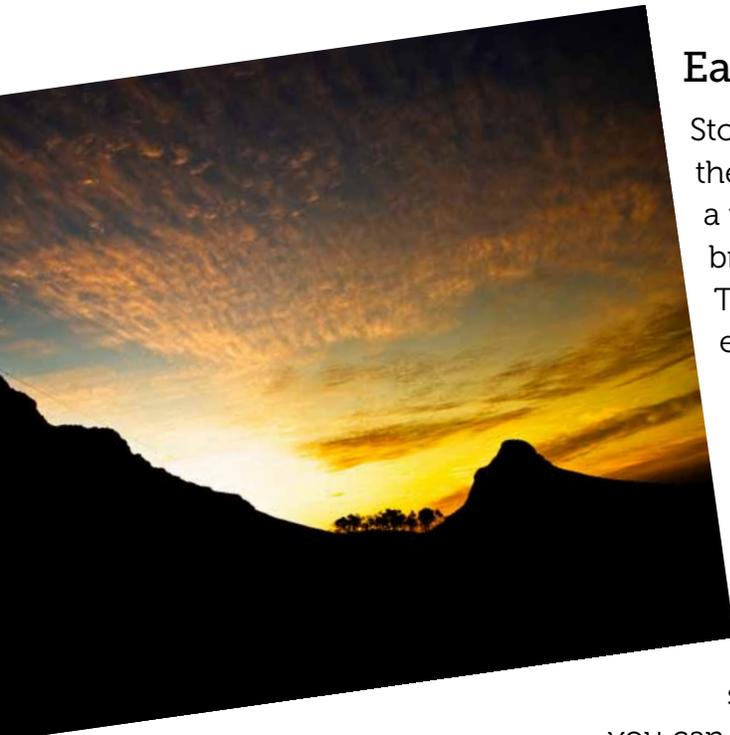
Take an Ice Cream Factory Tour.

Beat the summer heat by taking an ice cream factory tour. Last summer, we went to the [Turkey Hill Experience](#) in Lancaster, PA. Not only did we get all the free ice cream samples we could eat, but interactive exhibits let the kids make their own ice cream flavors and packaging. Also, try tours of [Ben & Jerry's](#) in Vermont and [Velvet Ice Cream](#) in Ohio.



Watch the Sunset.

Take a late afternoon hike with your kids. Head to the top of the nearest mountain and just wait for the sun to set. Bring snacks in case you need to wait a while. Planning to take pictures? Check out these [30 tips for stunning sunset photography](#).



Eat at the Counter of a Diner.

Stop in a 1950s style diner and sit on the stools at the counter (not a chain, like Johnny Rockets, but a real diner that's been around for years). Order breakfast any time of day or grab a milkshake. Take in the full experience, talk to locals and enjoy these family-friendly spots.

Take a Broadcast Studio Tour.

Teach your kids about how the news is made by [touring a news studio](#). Get a behind-the-scenes tour of CNN in Atlanta or learn about broadcast operations at NBC in New York. Or, simply call your local television station and ask if you can come by for a tour of the studio and newsroom.

What a great way for your kids to learn about journalism.

Travel Around the World (Culinarily Speaking).

Have English scones for breakfast, Chinese stir fry for dinner and Italian toasted ravioli for dinner. Then, make a craft to go with each country, borrow library books with photos from each region, and maybe even find pen pals from these new countries.

Pick Wildflowers.

Spring and summer are the best times to see spectacular displays of wildflowers along roads and trails. Bring a nature book to help you identify the various flora, and make sure you know which flowers are okay to pick. At the end of the day, make a pressed flower picture book or collage.

Visit a Wacky Museum.

Surprise your kids with a museum visit they'll never forget. The [National Mustard Museum](#) in Middleton, WI has more than 5,500 jars of mustard that make up The Great Wall of Mustard. Your kids will be in awe, for sure. Weird and wacky museums lurk around every corner, so find one close to you and give your kids a far-from-everyday trip to a museum.

Take a Nature Hike.

Grab your backpacks and hike a park trail with a waterfall or lake. Caves and hollowed out trees are also fun to check out on hikes. Bring water and protein-rich snacks to keep energy levels high. Use [TrailLink](#) to find local trails for hiking and biking.

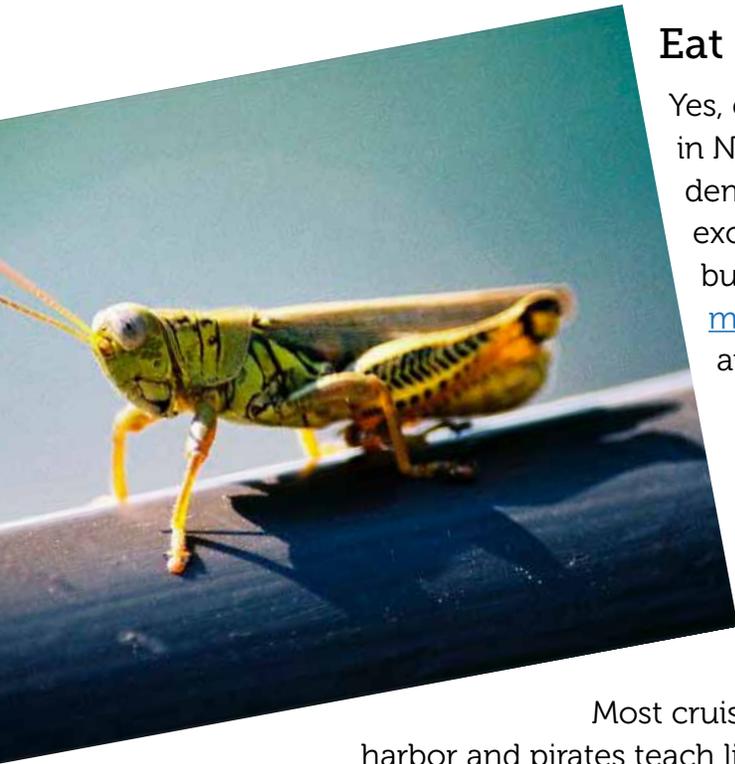
Celebrate Christmas in July.

Go ahead and experience Christmas during the summer at [Santa's Village](#), an amusement park in Jefferson, NH. Another one to try is [Holiday World](#), which has a special Christmas section with Rudolph's Reindeer Ranch and Kringle's Kafé. Or, simply visit a holiday ornament shop.



Go to a Free Museum Day.

Bank of America customers, get in free at more than 150 museums, zoos and gardens across the country on the first weekend of each month through the Museums on Us program. Meanwhile, for active duty military, look into free museum entry through the Blue Star Museums Initiative. Or, just [use your library card for free museum passes](#).



Eat Bugs.

Yes, eat bugs. You can do it at the Insectarium in New Orleans. Just stop in for a daily cooking demonstration called Bug Appetit. You'll sample exotic culinary creations prepared by resident bug chefs. Or, check out one of a number of [bug museums](#) across the country that teach kids anything and everything about insects.

Take a Pirate Cruise.

[Pirate cruises](#) are a fun and family-friendly way to spend an afternoon while enjoying pirate stories, face painting, water pistol battles, costumes and even treasure hunts.

Most cruises are around 75 minutes as they sail around a harbor and pirates teach little ones dances and pirate speak.

Explore a Castle.

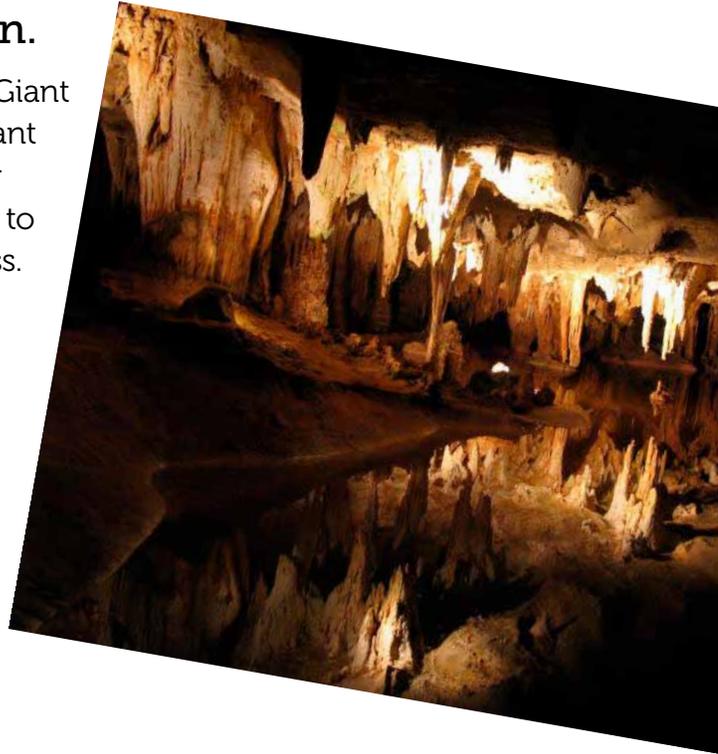
You don't need to leave the country to get up close with royalty. Head to Loveland, OH to check out [Loveland Castle](#) or visit [Singer Castle](#) in Chippewa Bay, NY for a look at some castles that will impress the royal watchers in your family. You'll also find castles in New York and Connecticut, among other spots in the U.S.

Stop at a Funky Roadside Attraction.

Going on a road trip? Don't forget to stop by the Giant Roller Skate in Bealeton, VA or the Peachoid (a giant peach water tower) in Gaffney, SC. Wherever your travels take you, stop by RoadsideAmerica.com first to find some of the funky spots you won't want to miss.

Go Underground in a Cave.

Grab the kids and go below the earth's surface to take in [breathtaking caves and caverns](#) across the country. Learn all about stalagmites and stalactites on guided boat or walking tours offering geology lessons for the whole family. Outside the caves, many also let you pan for gemstones.



Visit a Fire Museum.

If you've already toured the fire department, then make a trip to a fire museum to learn all about the history of firefighting. Head online to [The Fire Museum Network](#) to search 300 museums dedicated to fire engines and fire fighters by state.

Get Down with Dinosaurs.

Many museums across the country have dinosaurs on display, and some, like the [Children's Museum of Indianapolis](#), offer hands-on digs. Dino digs, sculptures and even "walking" dinosaurs you may see at [Dinosaurs Alive](#) in Ohio, are all great ways for paleontologists-in-training to learn about these giants that once walked the earth.



Go to a Science Center.

You'll find fabulous science centers in most major cities with loads of hands-on learning activities for families. Before you go, check out the [10 Best Science Centers](#) for a look at the very best centers teaching kids about gravity, innovation, the human body and geology.

Participate in the Great American Backyard Campout.

On June 22, grab your sleeping bags and pitch a tent in your backyard for the [Great American Backyard Campout](#). As part of this activity, families also have the opportunity to raise money for the National Wildlife Federation's "Be Out There" movement to get kids and families outside.

Celebrate Shark Week.

For [Shark Week](#) in August, various aquariums across the country celebrate with special shark-themed sessions, activities and shows. Kids will also have the opportunity to listen in on shark talks to learn about sharks and watch divers as they interact with sharks in the water.

Plan and Do Several Acts of Kindness.

Nothing feels better than showing kindness toward others. These can be as simple as smiling at someone or picking up trash. Or, you may want to tackle a kind act that involves more planning, like building a home with Habitat for Humanity. Take a look at these [101 Random Acts of Kindness](#) for more ideas.



Walk as a Family for Charity.

Charity walks are a great way to stay active as a family while raising money for a good cause. You can find thousands of walks on [Active.com](https://www.active.com), as well as fun runs for your family, which are great to do together whether at home or on a family vacation.

Explore a Space Museum.

For kids who love space and rocket ships, [head to a space museum](#) for plenty of interactive exhibits and artifacts, including satellites, rockets, even real-life space shuttles. These museums are a great way to learn about the history and future of our space program.

Set a Theme and Create a Weekly Meal Plan.

Work with your child to create a week's worth of new foods for dinner each night. Maybe try a week's worth of finger foods, and pick foods like Thai chicken skewers and Japanese sushi rolls. It's a great way for your kids to learn about new foods and cultures.

Try Out a Farm Stay.

Taking your kids to stay overnight on a working farm is a fantastic way to teach children about how a farm operates on a day-to-day basis. Depending on the farm, kids will have the opportunity to milk cows, collect eggs and brush sheep on the [farm stay](#).



Go on an Animal Safari.

No need to hop a plane to Africa to [go on a wild animal safari](#). You'll find plenty of safari parks across the country that you and your kids will love. Get up close with rhinos or have giraffes eating out of the palm of your hand. Several parks even have overnight programs and walking excursions into the parks to learn more about the wild animals.

Feed the Ducks.

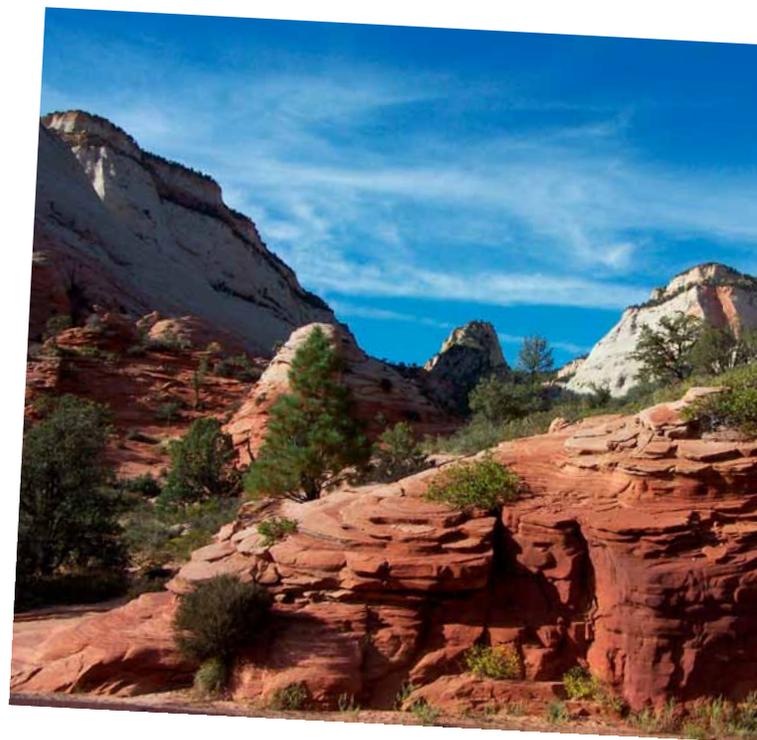
Sometimes it's the simple pleasures, like feeding ducks, that make for the best days. Just bring a few bread slices and relax as your kids gently approach ducks, toss in the bread and make a few duck quacks as they try to communicate with these feathered friends.

Visit a National Park for Free.

Every year, the [National Park Service](#) sets aside a certain number of days that are fee-free. While the majority of parks are free every day, just over 130 charge admission, so these special days are great days to get to know more about your parks—for free.

Plan a Day of Free Family Fun.

Plan a "free day" and only do activities that are free, like parks, outdoor concerts and riding bikes. Do a quick Google search for "[free things to do](#)" and the name of your city or the city you plan to visit. You'll be surprised at how many fun free events and attractions are retrieved.



Visit your State Capitol to Learn How Laws are Made.

Go online to find out whether your state capitol offers free tours and whether they are guided or self-guided (ask about self-guided tour booklets if this is the case). Find out if and when the legislature is in session too, since you may be able to meet the representative for your area.

Perfect Your Bird Calls.

Bird enthusiasts, grab the kids and your binoculars and notebook to prepare for a day of birding. Some parks offer special birdwatching walks, and others offer resources with photos and descriptions of birds to be found in their parks. Better, [learn some bird songs](#) to increase your enjoyment of the park's native birds.

Go Rock Climbing.

Some parks, like [Grand Teton National Park](#) in Wyoming, offer climbing schools with world-class guides. It's easy to do rock climbing inside too, and it's a perfect sport for kids since it teaches trust as it builds stronger bodies.

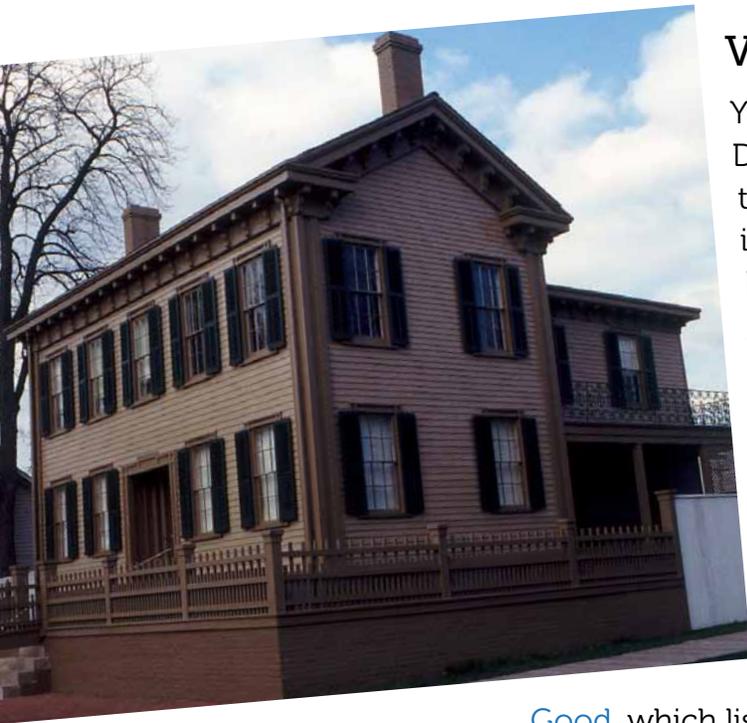
Go to a Free Summer Concert.

Free outdoor concerts abound during the summer, so keep your eyes and ears open for free concerts in the park. These are a great way to introduce your children to various styles of music, as well as new dances and cultures that may show up in these musical performances.



60 Grow and Release Butterflies.

It's easy to grow butterflies and your kids will love the experience. Start by ordering a [butterfly kit](#). You'll receive all the larva and supplies that you need. Then, watch them grow, form a chrysalis and release them once they have become butterflies.



70 Visit a Presidential Site.

You don't need to live in or near Washington, DC to brush up on presidential history. In fact, there's at least one worthy presidential activity in every U.S. state. Just take a look at this Huffington Post article, [50 States, 50 Presidential Sites](#), for a state-by-state list of top picks.

80 Volunteer While on Vacation.

Taking time to volunteer while on vacation is a great way to re-connect as a family while helping those in need. If you're planning a trip to the Caribbean, Central America or Mexico, for example, check into [Together for](#)

[Good](#), which lists schools and orphanages in need of school supplies, diapers, baby clothes, etc. you can donate in-person.

90 Explore Fun Public Art Sculptures.

If your kids aren't up for art galleries and exhibitions, go check out the public art sculptures that can be found in many cities across the country. Your kids will love [Big Blue Bear](#) in Denver and [Make Way for Ducklings](#) in Boston's Public Garden.

Create a Travel Journal.

Have your child personalize an empty journal with stickers and decorations, as well as dates and maps for your destinations. Then, encourage your kids to keep a daily journal with both written stories of your adventures and pictures. Collect souvenirs and take pictures along the way to fill out the journal.

Take in a Family Art Program at Your Local Art Museum.

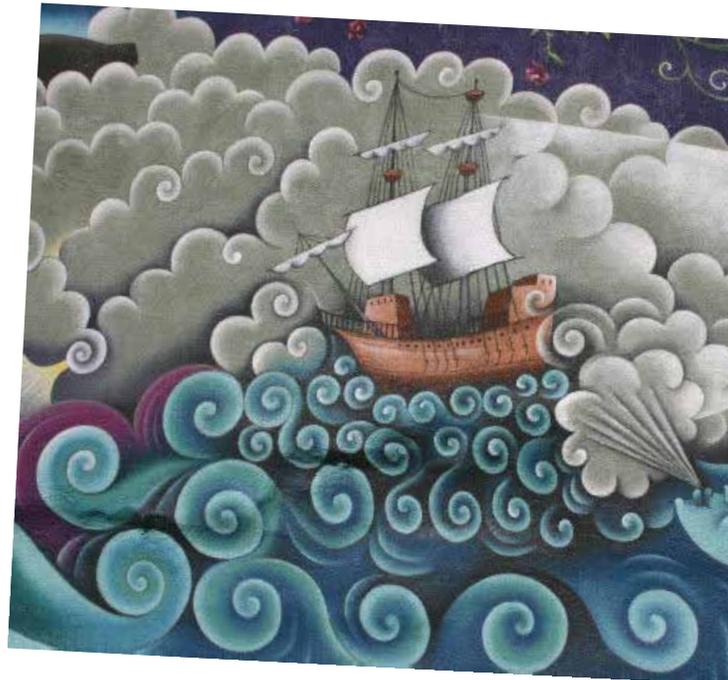
These days, art museums offer so much more than self-guided tours. Look for family-friendly art programs, like hands-on workshops, story hours and scavenger hunts, as well as family gallery tours to help kids discover different works of art.

Go on a Mural Tour.

Some of the best works of art can be found on the sides of buildings. And best of all, it's free. Some cities offer guided tours of murals around town for a small fee. Or, hop on your bike or in a pedicab to explore the various murals on your own.

Take Travel Photos with Your Kids.

Go on a photo tour with your kids. Encourage them to experiment and have fun. Have them get high, get low, up close, even if you know the shots won't be great. Bad shots are learning tools and can open the door to [sharing tips on how to compose better shots](#).





Create a Travel First Aid Kit.

It's a good idea to pack a first aid kit when you travel, so why not work with your child to put one together before your next trip. I like to start with bandages, antibiotic ointment and children's Tylenol, but brainstorm with your kids what should go in your own [travel first aid kit](#).

Go to a Botanical Garden.

Botanical gardens are great places for children to learn about plants, wildlife and environments. Look for children's gardens and fountains.

Some botanical gardens even have scavenger hunts, which make it fun to spot different varieties of plants and flowers across the garden.

Teach the Kids Frisbee Golf.

Once your kids know how to throw a Frisbee, it's time to take them to a Frisbee golf course. It's a fun way to spend an afternoon and also offers educational opportunities for little ones as you can teach about colors and counting.

Explore a Local College or University.

Local colleges have much to offer children, whether sporting events, art exhibitions or music programs. Look for an events calendar on the websites of local universities near you for educational activities of interest to you and your family.

Take a Road Trip.

Road trips offer fantastic opportunities for learning, both on your way to your destination and once you arrive. Play [math games](#) in the car to spark learning while counting cars and looking for road signs. Then seek out science centers and museums to enjoy in your final destination, or as good places to stop for a break along the way.

Visit a Nature Center.

There's much to learn about animals and nature at your local nature center. Speak with an interpretive naturalist to find out more about wildlife programs and environmental education, as well as local hiking and fishing opportunities.

Go to an Amusement Park.

No summer is complete without the thrills and splashes of an amusement park. Theme parks also provide a great opportunity to learn about physics. Before you go, have fun with this interactive activity to learn about the [physics of amusement parks](#).

Take in a Minor League Baseball Game.

You just can't beat the fun and the sense of community you'll find at minor league baseball games. Plus, you'll love \$6 kids tickets in a stadium where every seat is a good seat.



Plant a Vegetable Garden.

We all want our kids to eat more vegetables, and planting a vegetable garden together is a great way to inspire interest and encourage healthy eating habits. Choose no-fail varieties, like snap peas, cherry tomatoes and cucumbers, which are easy to plant, grow and harvest.

Go Bowling.

Children can enjoy two free games of bowling every day during summer, and all you need to do is register your children on the [Kids Bowl Free](#) website. The program offers a great way for bowling centers to give back to the community and provide safe and secure ways for kids to spend their time.

Watch Fireworks.

Staying up late to watching fireworks on the 4th of July is a must, but be on the look-out for other opportunities to catch fireworks displays. Lots of towns have summer festivals that cap off with beautiful displays that kids love.

Go to a Water Park.

On a hot summer day, nothing beats cooling down at a water park or a splash park. Even better, you can often find discount tickets on daily deal sites, like Groupon. You may also want to look to the Entertainment books for coupons and two-for-one deals.



Take a Nap Together.

After a busy morning of activities, take a break and get some shut-eye together. It's a nice way to bond with your child and a great way to recharge before a busy afternoon of summer activities.

Do a Kids Fun Run.

Participating in a Fun Run with your kids is a great way to be active as a family. Some festivals and fairs tie in a Fun Run as part of the festivities, so keep your eyes open. You can also find a variety of Fun Runs listed on [Active.com](https://www.active.com).



Try Out Different Playgrounds.

Go ahead, try out a new playground. By now, your kids are probably well aware of all the swings and equipment at the two or three playgrounds near your house. So, pack a picnic lunch and try out a few new playgrounds to the delight of your kids.

Get Your Passport Stamped.

Through the Passport to Your National Parks program, your kids can get their passport books stamped at national parks across the country. Each stamp records the date of the visit and the name of the national park for your child. Order a [passport book](#) online or you can buy one at many parks. Your kids will love getting new stamps every time you visit a new park.

Take the Summer Reading Challenge.

As a way to keep little brains active, many local libraries offer a Summer Reading Challenge. Or, sign up for the [Scholastic Summer Challenge](#) and compete in weekly reading challenges. Participate with your kids and log your own reading minutes as they log theirs.

Build a Bird Feeder.

Backyard bird feeders are a fun and easy way to see and learn about local birds. Homemade bird feeders, whether a Pine Cone Feeder or a Cranberry-Popcorn Feeder, can be quite easy to make too with instructions from the [National Audubon Society](#).

Take an Alphabet Photo Tour.

Grab a camera for each child and go on an Alphabet Photo Tour. Start with the letter A and have your children take pictures of things they see that start with that letter, like an apple tree or an ambulance. Print out the pictures to make alphabet memory books.

Plan a Theme Week.

Together with your kids, plan a theme week during which at least one activity each day will tie back to that theme. For example, if you pick science you could go to a science center one day, then the next day you can conduct a science experiment or two, and so on.



Go to a State or County Fair.

State and county fairs offer so much to see and do for kids over a week or two, including lots of farm animals, parades, contests, spelling bees, face painting, horse shows and more. Go online to check schedules since every day offers something fun and new for kids at the fairs.

Go on a Night Hike.

Depending on where you live, [a night hike](#) might be in order. Take a hike with a flashlight, or go on a scavenger hunt, looking for nocturnal animals you may not see during the day. Make sure motorists can see you, and stay in areas that are safe for you and your family.

See New Baby Animals at the Zoo.

The baby zoo animals are out in full force, so now is a great time to head to the zoo as baby animals are starting to take their first steps and strokes. Or, visit a farm or petting zoo where you'll likely see baby sheep, goats and ducks making their first appearances.

Ride in a Kayak.

Many parks offer guided kayak tours or allow you to take a kayak out onto their waters. Ask about best places to kayak at the visitors center. Calm waters with minimal currents are best, and don't forget your life vest.



About Erin Gifford



Erin Gifford is a family travel expert and founder of [Kidventurous](#), a travel resource designed to help moms and dads plan adventures that are both educational and fun. A mother of four children (ages 3, 5, 8 & 9), Erin serves as one of five Smart Family Travel experts for *Scholastic Parent & Child* magazine, dispensing tips and advice to families interested in memorable vacation experiences. Recently, she was named to Merck's Active Family Project Play Council, which seeks to empower moms to enjoy healthy and active lifestyles with their families. Erin is also a regular contributor to Fodors.com, Family Vacation Critic, MiniTime, Trekaroo and NBCNews.com Travel, among others.

Kidventurous has received multiple accolades, including Best Family Travel Blog awards from *Parents* magazine and Luxury Travel Mavens. In addition, [Kidventurous](#) was named a Finalist, Top Family Travel Sites in the 2012 Red Tricycle Totally Awesome Awards. Follow Kidventurous on [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Twitter](#) for more family travel tips and advice.