

Editors' Picks

Suggested Sites for Families on Vacation

Vacationing families can make trips more memorable by visiting places where local residents take their children. This list of family-friendly museums, parks, and more includes some suggestions from *Young Children's* consulting editors Melinda Brookshire, Jessie C. Brown, Heather Lynn Gray, Susan Anderson Miller, Nancy G. Nagel, and Syretha O. Storey. Factory tours, for example, are a fun way for children to learn about the manufacturing process. (Their inclusion on the list does not mean that NAEYC endorses their products.)

The Websites below list information on fees, hours of operation, facilities, and so on.

Northeast

Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Factory, Waterbury, Vermont

www.benjerry.com/our_company/about_us/tours/

The weekday factory tours are really interesting and, of course, the fun part comes at the end when everybody (young and old) gets to sample the ice cream they have just watched being made. Yum!!

The Crayola Factory, Easton, Pennsylvania

www.crayola.com/factory/

During a tour of the factory, children learn about the process of making these popular drawing tools. There are many other related activities for children, teachers, and parents.

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, Massachusetts

www.picturebookart.org

Opened in 2002, this museum is dedicated to sharing picture book art with children and families. The galleries feature the work of Eric Carle along with changing exhibits of the works of other favorite artists such as Mitsumasa Anno, William Steig, and Dr. Seuss.

Fort Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga, New York

www.fort-ticonderoga.org

Visitors to this national historic site can explore what life was like when colonial America was struggling for independence. A short, cable-operated ferry ride takes passengers from Vermont across Lake Champlain to the fort on the New York side of the lake.

Southeast

Bele Chere, July 25–27, 2003, Asheville, North Carolina www.belechere.com

This free outdoor street festival in downtown Asheville marks its 25th year this summer. It is a celebration of arts and crafts, food, music (on nine different stages), games and attractions, and more.

The Children's Museum of South Carolina, Myrtle Beach www.bearweb.com/cmsckids/

This museum's interactive exhibits and educational programs "promote and stimulate self-discovery." The Magic School Bus exhibit includes a variety of activities that encourage children's experimentation and observation. Children can role-play in a well-stocked emergency room or dentist's office, create artwork to take home, and learn safe boating skills.

Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Atlanta, Georgia www.fernbank.edu

If someone in the family is a dinosaur enthusiast, then this is the place! On permanent display are several truly enormous specimens, including a 123-foot-long plant eater, *Argentinosaurus*, that weighed over 100 tons. An IMAX film will complement this summer's exhibit on polar explorer Ernest Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica.

Huntington Beach State Park, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

www.discoverouthcarolina.com/stateparks/parkdetail.asp?PID=1020

This nature-lover's haven is a few miles south of the hubbub of Myrtle Beach. Adults and children can look for shells and fossils on the beach and explore a freshwater lagoon, salt marsh, and forest. The park is one of the best birding sites along the East Coast. Across the highway is Brookgreen Gardens, home to an expansive public sculpture garden, a nature trail, and exhibits about the history and culture of Carolina low country.

Midwest

Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Indiana www.childrensmuseum.org/catalog/home.asp

Founded more than 75 years ago, this hands-on museum offers five levels of fascinating things to see and do. Experiential exhibits include a preschoolers' play environment, a carousel, a hands-on science gallery, and real-life paleontologists working on a new exhibit, Dinotopia. A well-stocked library helps children answer questions; a theater shows films and plays; and a planetarium opens up the skies.

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Kansas City, Missouri www.nlbm.com

Dedicated to preserving the history of baseball's Negro Leagues, this museum includes a large multimedia exhibit with film, videos, and interactive computer stations. The Field of Legends features life-size bronze statues of twelve outstanding Negro League players; a sports entertainment center simulates play.

Southwest

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson www.desertmuseum.org

This combination zoo, natural history museum, and botanical garden is open to the public every day of the year. Paths wind through the desert where visitors can see Gila monsters, hummingbirds, and blooming cacti. Live animal demonstrations feature snakes, tarantulas, scorpions, kangaroo rats, owls, and more.

Children's Discovery Museum, San Antonio, Texas www.hotx.com/cm/overview.html

In this bilingual downtown museum, children can operate a front-end loader and create bubbles in many ways (including all around their bodies) in a room devoted to bubble making. They can ride in and pilot an airplane, control it from the tower, and sell tickets for the ride.

West Coast

Adventure Park at the Berkeley Marina, California www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/parks/parkspages/AdventurePlayGround.html

Adventure Playgrounds originated in Europe after World War II when people noticed that children enjoyed building and creating with rubble and debris. This outdoor playground features unique play opportunities and encouraging staff. Children can hammer, saw, and paint; eat a picnic lunch; climb on a hanging tire jungle gym; and zoom across a zip line.

Children's Museum 2nd Generation, Portland, Oregon www.portlandcm2.org/

Young children ages one through eight will enjoy a myriad of exhibits and displays here. The many special events for children, teachers, and parents include plays, puppet shows, storytelling, and a weekly scavenger hunt.

The Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, Berkeley, California www.edibleschoolyard.org/homepage.html

Built in collaboration with renowned chef Alice Waters, this school-based garden is a unique example of the use and utility of outdoor space. Teachers, parents, and children will all enjoy this site. The garden is open to the public on weekends and after school. (Visitors must make arrangements for other times.)

Griffith Park, Los Angeles, California www.ci.la.ca.us/RAP/grifmet/griffith.htm

The zoo and train park are great fun, as is Shane's Inspiration, a fully accessible playground built in memory of a child who had a debilitating disease. His parents wanted to create a playground where all children could play.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium, Monterey, California www.mbayaq.org

The aquarium features a number of exhibits, including a very interesting sea otter rescue operation. The beach nearby has tidal pools that are great to explore with children and good places for just digging in the sand.

Oregon Coast Aquarium, Newport www.aquarium.org

Children and families can see fifteen thousand undersea residents in three hands-on exhibits, including one with a 200-foot underwater tunnel. This summer a virtual voyage opens in a 3-D submarine simulator.

Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Portland www.oms.edu

The exhibits at OMSI will interest preschoolers through teens. They can take a trip to Moneyville, a new exhibit about the history, science, and culture behind money. Visitors can climb aboard the *U.S.S. Blueback*, the Navy's last non-nuclear fast attack submarine.

Family Vacations for Fun and More

Alice S. Honig

Family vacations can be for enjoying the pleasures of time together, swimming, and sunning. They can also imbue children with a lifelong love of nature, archeology, and appreciation of different cultures.

Finding fossils

Because Syracuse, New York, was under Devonian Seas 350 million years ago, its many rivulets and streams are filled with rocks containing seashell fossils. One of the most gratifying afternoons I can spend with a friend and her young children is wading in the streams created by waterfalls, such as Chittenango Falls or Pratt's Falls. We bring sturdy plastic bags to carry the treasures we find and a bag to carry the children's sneakers and socks. Children can wade through the very shallow water at the edge of a streamlet. I show the children how to turn over small rocks and look with sharp eyes to spot seashell fossils. There are zillions of them everywhere. Children will remember this kind of afternoon for years afterward, especially when one prepares them for the expedition by explaining about seashells from ages ago, how they turned to stone, and how we can go searching for them.

Wandering among the wildflowers

Another memorable outing is to take a wildflower book on a visit to a park. Children have such bright eyes. They can learn about some of the wonderful native wildflowers by spotting them in the forest and in glades: for example, a meadow rue, a Jack in the pulpit (that one never fails to awe children!), a trillium, a violet, and whatever is native to your area. This is a wonderful way to awaken a lifelong love of wildflowers and to sharpen children's perceptions to look for the wildflowers at each season. When vacationing near a waterfall children may even spot wild columbines, so red and lovely, growing where the water spray reaches them daily.

Most children adore the Asian day flower, a tiny low growing wildflower with blue "Mickey Mouse" ears that brings a smile of pleasure to any child that sees it. Walking in parks can provide hours of endless fun and the

triumphs of seeing the wildflowers blooming . . . different ones near water, different ones in dry areas, different ones early in the season or later on.

Exploring archaeology

If you are taking a trip through the western states, be sure to visit archeological sites such as Mesa Verde and the 800-year-old pueblos built high on canyon walls. This is a wonderful way to fill children with pride in the awesome constructions of people who lived long ago, before there were cars, cell phones, or computers.

Children have to dress carefully (so as not to get poison ivy) when exploring the archeological treasures hidden in woods in New England—home to many stone chambers. The beehive chamber in Upton, Massachusetts, has a long tunnel (6 feet high and 14 feet long) leading into a hill. The inner chamber is 12 feet wide and 11 feet high. This chamber dates back to 710 A.D.

At the Gungywamp complex, in Groton, Connecticut, for example, there are stone chambers probably built by monks in the eighth century who fled to North America from Ireland and Iceland. Mystery Hill, called the American Stonehenge, is found in North Salem, New Hampshire. At this fascinating site you will see observatories with specially cut stones—one high shoulder and one low shoulder—that are said to have permitted ancient peoples to sight stars and bodies in the sky. Seeing some of the stones with ancient Ogham writing on them will help young children appreciate how different the writing is of people not only who live in different cultures today, but those who lived centuries ago.

South of Utica, New York, near the town of Herkimer, families can picnic and spend the day searching for treasures hidden within old rocks! In the fields of certain farmers and at a "diamond mine," families can rent mallets and hammers to open old grey rocks and find awesome quartz crystals called "Herkimer Diamonds." These crystals are unique to this area and are exhibited in museums all over the world.

Hope these ideas will help you think about new places to take children in your own locale or while away from home. Have a wonderful summer!