

SUMMER ON THE CHEAP!

FUN FOR THE FAMILY, EASY ON THE WALLET

Photo by **Amy Smith**



Fun and inexpensive activities to make summer 2013 the most memorable yet!

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1. START A SUMMER TRADITION

Create a Wall Calendar

Start your summer off by making a family fun calendar. Have your kids create a giant chalkboard wall calendar to quickly jot down your summer bucket list. Follow these DIY steps on how to create your own: <http://tatertotsandjello.com/2013/03/navy-chalkboard-wall-and-giant-calendar-tutorial.html>

Make a Summer Blockbuster Movie

Your child can write, produce, direct and star in his or her own short film. You know that smartphone of yours has video capability, so use it! The kids will have a blast being creative, and that blooper reel will be a treasure for you in years to come.



SUPER FUN SUMMER

day-of-the-week schedule

Make-It Monday

ATTEND AN ART CLASS

Take-a-Trip Tuesday

EXPLORE A NEW TOWN

Water Wednesday

GO TO A SPLASH PAD

Thinking Thursday

VISIT A MUSEUM

Friendly Friday

HELP A NEIGHBOR

2. FUN IN THE SUN

Love to get outside and fill up on vitamin D? Well, Florida is the place to do it!

THE BEACH

With nearly 1,200 miles of coastline, Florida has simply breathtaking beaches. Pack a lunch, and hit the road. Not sure where to go?

PLAYGROUND's top beach pick: Jetty Park at Cape Canaveral

The park has a concession stand, restrooms, a playground, crystal clear water, a beautiful beach (that people don't drive on) and a great fishing pier off the jetty, where you can watch cruise ships set sail — so fun!



Jetty Park playground



Cruise ship leaving Port Canaveral

SPLASH PADS

For the littler ones, a splash pad may be a better alternative than the pool. And it's affordable. However, not all splash pads are created equal. Here are PLAYGROUND's faves and a star rating of each to boot. (The hours vary, so call before you go.)

Lake Mary Splash Park

550 Rantoul Lane
Lake Mary
407-324-3068
Cost: \$2 (everyone)

City of Oviedo Splash Zone

148 Oviedo Blvd.
Oviedo
407-971-5570
Residents: \$4
Non-residents: \$9

Capehart Park

715 Capehart Drive
Orlando
407-254-9160
Free

Downey Park Splash Playground

10107 Flowers Ave.
Orlando
407-254-9180
Cost: \$1 (everyone)

Trotwood Park

701 Northern Way
Winter Springs
407-327-6597
Residents: Free
Non-residents: \$3

Dr. P. Phillips Community Park

8249 Buena Vista
Woods Blvd., Or-
lando
407-254-9038
Cost: \$1 (everyone)



↑ Hey, parents can have fun too!

WATERY PARKS

- **WEKIWA SPRINGS:** A great place to go swimming in a cool Florida spring. Pack a lunch, and have a picnic. Cost: \$5 per vehicle. 1800 Wekiwa Circle, Apopka 407-884-2008
- **WEKIVA ISLAND:** A fun little setup with river-banas, canoe rentals, swimming, fishing, drinking, beach volleyball, a fire pit and a boardwalk. This carbon-neutral green oasis is a hidden treasure. 1014 Miami Springs Rd., Longwood 407-862-1500 www.wekivaisland.com
- **WEKIVA FALLS:** Swim, hike, fish and, best of all, canoe in Wekiwa Springs' 6,400-acre park. Pack a lunch, and have a picnic. Cost: \$8 for adults and \$6 for children (ages 2 to 11). 30700 Wekiva River Rd., Sorrento 352-383-8055 www.wekivafalls.com
- **KELLY PARK:** Grab a tube, and float your way down Rock Springs. Park admission is \$3 to \$5 per vehicle. Bring your own inner tube, or rent one at a rental shop near the entrance. 400 E. Kelly Park Rd., Apopka 407-889-4179



3. BEAT THE HEAT

Stop sweating and relax in cool comfort. These indoor activities are chill.



MUSEUMS

Think art museums are too stuffy and boring for kids? Not these museums, which go out of their way to make kids feel included.

The Mennello Museum of American Art

Family Free Day is the second Sunday of each month. Between noon and 4:30 p.m., families get a mini gallery tour. Between noon and 2:30 p.m., visit the craft station for a make-and-take goody. Don't want to go on Sunday? Prices are affordable every day. 407-246-4278 www.mennellomuseum.com

Art & History Museums Maitland

Family Day is the third Saturday of every month at 1 p.m. and runs about 45 minutes. Event themes: June 15 — Ticket to Ride; July 20 — Happy Birthday, Maitland; August 17 — What's So Cool About School? 407-539-2181 www.artandhistory.org

The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art

Each summer, the Morse organizes free programs exclusively for elementary school-aged kiddos and their parents. Programs start June 18 and run through July 30. Family tours, which include a take-home art activity, are on Tuesdays, and Family Films are on Fridays. Space is limited. Call 407-645-5311, ext. 136, to reserve your spot. (A \$5 refundable deposit is required to secure a reservation.) www.morsemuseum.org

Fort Christmas Historical Park

Kids will enjoy this outdoor discovery of Florida heritage during the American Indian Wars. You'll get to walk through the original fort (built in 1837 during the Seminole Indian War), a traditional Florida "Cracker" house, seven pioneer homes and a sugar cane mill, and climb onto historical farming equipment. Pack a lunch, and have a picnic near the playground. It's closed on Mondays, but every other day is free admission. 407-254-9310 www.nbbd.com/godo/FortChristmas

Orlando Fire Museum

Emergency, emergency — bored kids on a summer day! Never fear; the Orlando Fire Department has been answering the call since 1885. Visit this free museum Fridays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 407-898-3138 www.cityoforlando.net/fire/museum.htm

Winter Garden Heritage Museum

Housed in the 1918 Atlantic Coast Line Train Depot, the museum is a must for any train-lovin' tot. Kids will love the caboose and antique cars. Admission is free daily from 1 to 5 p.m. 407-656-5544 www.wghf.org/wghmuseum

Orlando Museum of Art

June 14: The Art Adventures preschool class Acting Up with Art should definitely be on your summer bucket list. Look for fun designs in art, and return to the classroom to create a puppet theater and have some puppet fun. The cost is \$10 per adult with one child (\$5 per additional child). This program requires advance registration by the Friday prior to the event. Call 407-896-4231, ext. 262, to register. www.omart.org

OMA's new summer reading program ...

Families can borrow "A Book and a Look" bags and take them inside the galleries. Each bag contains picture books related to a specific artwork and kid-friendly discussion starters. "A Book and a Look" bags are recommended for preschool through elementary-age children. The bags are available for checkout at the front desk and are free with museum admission.

BRAND NEW!

The Chocolate Kingdom Factory Adventure Tour



This interactive journey uncovers how chocolate transforms from the bean into the creamy, dreamy chocolate bar. Your tour guide joins forces with a handsome prince and his dragon sidekick to take guests through a Cacao Tree Greenhouse, a one-of-a-kind Chocolate Museum, a Mystical River of Chocolate and a Bean-to-the-Bar Factory using old-world machinery. Giving the opportunity to create a customized chocolate bar, Chocolate Kingdom is the most unique chocolate experience in North America, and will inspire and amaze chocoholics of all ages. Tours last approximately 45 minutes. Please call to reserve.

407-705-3475

www.chocolatekingdom.com

INDOOR PLAYGROUNDS

They definitely didn't have this kind of stuff when we were kids. Central Florida is home to some really cool indoor playgrounds for the under 6 crowd. These made-by-moms dynamic facilities have free play and organized activities. We definitely recommend checking out all three this summer.

Amaya Papaya in Casselberry

This is where children play and parents lounge. Enjoy one of many play dates, mom meet-ups, classes (for kids and parents) or dance parties that Amaya Papaya has on its summer schedule. Or just go to surf the Net while your kids run off some steam in this giant open play space. Day passes are \$5 (infants) and \$10 (ages 1-6). 3385 S. U.S. Highway 17-92, Casselberry www.amayapapaya.com

Grammy's Indoor Playground in Winter Park

From listening to story time on Grammy's porch to playing house and planting faux veggies, playing at Grammy's is, well, just like playing at Grandma's house (but better)! 4270 Aloma Dr., Winter Park www.facebook.com/GrammysIndoorPlayground

Peanut's Playhouse in St. Cloud

This playhouse has multiple themed rooms, a gift boutique and even an outdoor play space. The playhouse's newest addition is an adorable tea room your little princesses will love. Day passes are \$5 (infants) and \$10 (ages 1-6); babies up to 7 months are free with a paid sibling. 1034 Pennsylvania Ave., St. Cloud www.peanutspayhouse.net



Time for tea at Peanut's Playhouse's new private tea room.

Kids Crew at Oviedo Mall

Join the Kids Crew for only \$5 per year to enjoy awesome activities on Tuesdays in June and July (following the Regal Cinemas \$1 movies), including cupcake decorating, Kindermusik classes, Mr. Richard concerts, arts and crafts, Teddy Mountain and Mad Science Lab! www.myoviedomall.com

PAMPERING

SECRET TREASURE:

Mini Mani-Pedi Chairs

Get your twinkle toes on at this Orlando salon. California Nails in downtown Orlando would be your typical strip mall nail mill except it has these pint-sized Hello Kitty and panda pedicure chairs so little girls can feel oh so special. We think a \$20 mani-pedi (complete with sparkles or a design) is a perfect indoor getaway surprise this summer for your little "doll." 3188 E Colonial Dr., Orlando 407-898-2928

SKATING RINKS

- **RDV Ice Den:** Escape the heat and bundle up for ice skating at the RDV Ice Den. Rinks are open to the public (age 3 and up) most days at various times. Admission for regular skate sessions is \$7. Admission for Friday and Saturday night skate sessions is \$10. Skate rental fees are \$3. 8701 Maitland Summit Blvd., Orlando 407-916-2550 www.rdvsportsplex.com
- **Let's Skate:** With killer themed party rooms (party like a rock star anyone?) and energizing music, a summer birthday at Let's Skate roller rink is a blast. Kids age 8 and under can skate for \$8 Friday or Saturday nights or Sunday afternoons. 14207 West Colonial Dr., Winter Garden 407-614-3812 www.letsskateorlando.com



4. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Who needs expensive ticket prices to have fun? We've got some local hot spots that offer cheap hours of entertainment.



CENTRAL FLORIDA ZOO: A train ride, a super awesome splash pad, zip lines, laser tag and wild animals all in one location. Zoo admission: Adults: \$15; kids ages 3 to 12: \$11; kids 2 and under: free. Separate admission price for zip lines. 407-323-4450 www.centralfloridazoo.org

LEU GARDENS: Wander through this lakeside botanical oasis. Leu Gardens offers free admission the first Monday of the month year round. That day each month, the Orange County Library System's storytelling programs come to Leu Gardens. 407-246-2620 www.leugardens.org

LUKAS NURSERY BUTTERFLY ENCOUNTER: Lukas Nursery has one of the largest native butterfly conservatories in the state. The cost is \$5 per person. Ages 3 and under are free. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. 407-365-6163 www.lukasnursery.com

OLD TOWN: Enjoy strolling this collection of shops and amusement rides. www.myoldtownusa.com

BASS PRO SHOPS: Enjoy Family Camp with free events and workshops throughout the summer. Topics include hiking, camping, fishing, bird watching, archery and animal identification. Visit www.basspro.com for a schedule.

10 CHEAP THINGS TO DO AT DISNEY

Never thought you could do Disney on the cheap? Think again. Try these Downtown Disney free (and nearly free) activities:

1. Sample free chocolate at Ghirardelli.
2. Build and play at the Lego store.
3. Cool down at the splash pad.
4. Go on a train ride.
5. Take a boat ride from one end of Downtown Disney to the other, explore, and then enjoy a boat ride back.
6. Dance and sing to the live performance on the Marketplace Waterside Stage.
7. Build a creative Mr. Potato Head at Once Upon a Toy.
8. Sample Nintendo DS, Wii and Xbox 360 games at Once Upon a Toy.
9. Race a Ridemakerz custom remote control car.
10. Find the Stitch Sprinkler and get sprayed.

ARTS & CRAFTS

LOWE'S: Build a wooden project every other Saturday at 10 a.m. Limited spaces are available; visit www.lowesbuildandgrow.com to register.

MICHAELS: Let your kids explore their creativity while you shop. Only \$2 per child reserves 30 minutes for your creative kid. Sessions are held Saturdays every half hour from 10 to 11:30 a.m. www.michaels.com

LAKESHORE LEARNING: Free kid crafts every Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. 407-260-5531 www.lakeshorelearning.com

THE HOME DEPOT: Get your build on with a free hands-on building project the first Saturday of each month. Classes are from 9 a.m. to noon and for ages 5 to 12. To register, go to workshops.homedepot.com/workshops

THE LEGO STORE: Check out the Lego Monthly Mini Model Build at Downtown Disney Marketplace the first Tuesday of each month beginning at 5 p.m. until supplies last. Children ages 6 to 14 can build and take home a free mini model on a first-come, first-served basis. 407-828-0065



10 ACTIVITIES TO KICK-START YOUR SUMMER

1. Create themed weeks. Match your activities (reading, crafts, games, food) to the theme. Ask your kids for input on theme ideas. We love superheroes, under the sea and dino week.

2. Dedicate one day per week as craft day. Oriental Trading and U.S. Toy in Apopka both have themed craft kits as well as supplies.

3. Stay up late and stargaze. Download a constellation app or visit the library for a picture book to help you identify them.

4. Write letters to grandparents. Ask them to share their favorite summer memories.

5. Make art from the recycling bin. Grab some scissors, tape and paint, and get creative.

6. Set some family exercise goals. List how to reach them, and chart the family's successes.

7. Play in the rain. Have your kids draw pictures about it or write a story about their fun in the rain.

8. Host a Brain Freeze Ice Cream Day. Include an ice cream eating contest — no hands, of course!

9. Host a neighborhood sprinkler Olympics. Include relay races and a silly jumping contest.

10. Host a smoothie class. Invite some friends over, and set out flavor options: bananas, berries, peanut butter, chocolate syrup ... Yum!

