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## Affordable family fun: Top 20

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The school year is ending. Too bad the same can't be said of the recession, which is causing some families to forgo summer trips or cut back on expensive entertainment options.

That's a bummer, but it doesn't mean families are sentenced to a summer of boredom. We tapped CincyMomsLikeMe.com and other sources for suggestions of free or inexpensive activities for parents and kids. Here's our list of 20:

- 1 Cool off at Hamilton County Park District wet playgrounds: Parky's Pirate Cove at Miami Whitewater Forest; Parky's Ark at Winton Woods Harbor (pictured); and Parky's Wetland Adventure at Woodland Mound are \$2 per child. Vehicle permit is \$5 a year, \$2 a day. [www.greatparks.org](http://www.greatparks.org).
2. Go camping - in your back yard. Pitch the tent, roast the marshmallows. Nothing like "roughing it" with your bathroom just steps away.
3. Hang out at Fountain Square's big's Family Days, which feature play stations for children ages 10 and under and a performer; 1-2:30 p.m. every Saturday (except July 4) until Aug. 1. Free. [www.myfountainsquare.com/family](http://www.myfountainsquare.com/family).
4. Make regular visits to your local library or children's bookstore and check out the activity schedule.
5. Pedal the Loveland Bike Trail, then stop at Blue Chip Gourmet, 200 W. Loveland Ave., for a sweet treat. 513-697-6610.
6. Stroll Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum. It has 14 lakes, vibrant flowers and numerous state and national champion trees. With many famous Cincinnatians and Civil War soldiers buried there, it's a unique history lesson, too. [www.springgrove.org](http://www.springgrove.org).
7. Hunt for fossils - remnants of the world that existed 440 million years ago - at Sharonville's Trammel Fossil Park. You keep what you find. Free. [www.sharonville.org/fossilpark.aspx](http://www.sharonville.org/fossilpark.aspx).
8. Visit thrift stores and shop for bargains. Also, donate items you're not using.
9. Delve into Northern Kentucky history - and see some weird stuff such as a shrunken head - at Behringer-Crawford Museum, 1600 Montague Road, in Covington's Devou Park. \$7; \$4 children. [www.bcmuseum.org](http://www.bcmuseum.org).
10. Pick a Families Create! program at Taft Museum of Art - held two Saturdays a month for ages 5-12 accompanied by an adult. \$12 (for both); members, \$8. [www.taftmuseum.org](http://www.taftmuseum.org).
11. Gather neighbors ages 5 and up and schedule a free 90-minute tour of Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. (Minimum of 15 people required). Available at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. weekdays. 859-767-3144.
12. Pack a picnic and head to the Loveland Castle, 12025 Shore Drive, Loveland. Open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. \$3. [www.lovelandcastle.com](http://www.lovelandcastle.com).

- 13.** Pick a Monday - when admission is free - to stroll around the lake, six ponds and three wetlands at Cincinnati Nature Center's Rowe Woods, 4949 Tealtown Road, Milford. [www.cincynature.org](http://www.cincynature.org).
- 14.** Bring lawn chairs and blankets and watch movies outdoors. Boone County Parks' Family Movie nights at Boone Woods Park start at dusk Fridays, July 10-Aug. 28. [www.boonecountyky.org/parks](http://www.boonecountyky.org/parks). Also, P&G Movie Night on Fountain Square shows on the big screen at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. Saturdays through Sept. 12. [www.myfountainsquare.com/movies](http://www.myfountainsquare.com/movies).
- 15.** Take advantage of Newport Aquarium's summer family hours: Two kids get in free with each adult who pays full price, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Sunday-Friday, through Sept. 4. [www.newportaquarium.com](http://www.newportaquarium.com).
- 16.** Visit a different park once a week. Beech Acres Park in Anderson Township has an all-inclusive playground with sand and water play for children with and without disabilities. <http://tinyurl.com/lk7y2p>.
- 17.** Enjoy free activities such as s'mores cookouts, workshops, crafts, and a casting pond at Bass Pro Shops, noon-6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through July 5. <http://tinyurl.com/mph453>.
- 18.** Explore the Cincinnati History Museum, Duke Energy Children's Museum, and Museum of Natural History & Science at Cincinnati Museum Center's Free Fridays, 4-8 p.m. June 26, July 24, Aug. 21, Sept. 11 and Oct. 23. [www.cincymuseum.org](http://www.cincymuseum.org).
- 19.** Sit back at Deerfield Stadium 16 in Mason and enjoy selected G and PG films for free at 10 a.m. Tuesday and Wednesday June 16-Aug. 12. <http://tinyurl.com/5fpxk3>.
- 20.** Smell the flowers and herbs in Grandma's Scent Garden, part of Highfield Discovery Garden, 10405 Springfield Pike, Woodlawn. \$4; \$3 ages 2-12. Annual family pass: \$30. [www.discoverygarden.org](http://www.discoverygarden.org).
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