Inexpensive activities the whole family can enjoy

Family-friendly activities provide great opportunities for parents to strengthen the bonds they have with their children. But finding affordable, fun events the whole family can enjoy can sometimes prove challenging for budget-conscious parents.

- **Head for the beach.** In its National Coastal Population Report examining population trends from 1970 to 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that 39 percent of the United States population lived in counties directly on the shoreline. North of the United States, Canadians know they are surrounded by three oceans and have access to thousands of additional bodies of water, including the Hudson Bay, Bering Sea and Gulf of St. Lawrence. That means access to the water and the beach is readily available for Americans and Canadians who wish to spend part of their staycation with some sand between their toes and the sound of waves crashing on the shorelines in their ears. Make time to visit the beach on your staycation, and you might be able to recreate the feeling of a more traditional getaway.

Staycations have become a staple for families looking to avoid expensive resort vacations. But staying close to home can still be just as fun as traveling abroad.

**Festivals**

Many communities host weekend festivals that offer various family-friendly activities. These festivals may focus on a particular town or cultural history or offer wider appeal, such as an apple festival or a film festival for kids. These festivals tend to cater to families, offering games and possibly even rides kids will love. Adults, too, can enjoy such gatherings, as festivals often invite local restaurants and food and beverage merchants to set up booths and peddle their wares to hungry festival goers.

**Volunteering**

Volunteering provides a unique way for parents to bond with their children while instilling a sense of community responsibility in their youngsters. Volunteering does not cost a dime, and parents can choose activities they feel will teach kids while simultaneously providing an activity they can enjoy. For example, local beach or park clean-up programs can teach kids about the importance of protecting the environment while also allowing them to enjoy the great outdoors.

Many communities offer a wealth of affordable family-friendly activities the whole family can enjoy.

### Inexpensive activities the whole family can enjoy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A staycation</strong> can still include some family fun at the beach.</td>
<td>$129</td>
<td>Inexpensive activities the whole family can enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Go camping.</strong> Just because you’re having a staycation doesn’t mean you have to stay home. Spend a few nights away from home by taking the family on a camping trip. The fee to stay at a nearby campground is negligible when compared to the cost of hotel rooms for an entire family, and you won’t spend nearly as much on food because you’ll need to bring your own to the campground. Camp during the week instead of on the weekends, and you might have more of the campground to yourself.</td>
<td>$129</td>
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**Prepare lunches at home and enjoy a family picnic in the park.**

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*Note: Costs are approximate and may vary depending on location and specific events.*
Summer fun that is close to home

Summer is prime vacation season when travelers take trips to every corner of the world. While faraway destinations abound, those looking for fun can also find enjoyable activities much closer to home. Many communities come alive during the warmer weather, hosting an array of locally driven events. Carnivals or fairs: Carnival or fairs may be formed into bustling carnivals in a matter of days. Parking lots can be transformed into entertaining or an evening of enjoyment for fun can also find a variety of themed rides to games of chance to music. Carnivals often boast a side show of entertainments. From amusement park-style rides to games of chance to music. Summer concert series: Summer concerts series typically begin when the weather warms up, and music may not stop playing until Labor Day. Concerts may range from more intimate affairs that attract a few downtown people to a town square to larger events at beaches and boardwalks that attract thousands of visitors. Food festivals: Various towns close down their Main Streets from time to time to accommodate food festivals that feature a variety of cuisines. Some food festivals may feature one ingredient, such as garlic or cheese, while others may delve deeper and offer broader menus.

Food festivals allow visitors to sample many different treats and may serve to advertise for neighborhood eating establishments. Street fairs: Street fairs also may close down thoroughfares in town. These events usually bring together a variety of vendors selling their wares in an open market setting. You can make a day of touring all of the vendor booths and buying hand-made items from local artisans. Outdoor movies: Local parks frequently host summer movie nights when participants can view a movie on the big screen while under the stars. This can be an informal way to get the entire family together for a fun flick. Films are typically family-friendly and schedules are available well in advance. Bring a blanket and some snacks and enjoy an inexpensive evening together. Many people need not travel far for a little summertime fun, as many communities host fun events throughout the warmer months. Few people would likely say they don’t enjoy traveling. Travel provides an opportunity to experience different cultures, visit idyllic locales and enjoy some time rest and relaxation. But as much as people love to travel, finding more time to do so is not always so easy, even for those people with a sufficient amount of vacation days at their disposal. Oftentimes, finding more time to travel requires some extra and earlier planning. Reconsider when you travel. Building a trip around a long weekend is an easy way to find more time to travel. Consider the holidays that fall on a Monday, such as Memorial Day, Labor Day and Columbus Day. Plan a getaway for these long weekends and you won’t even need to use a vacation day. If you have the vacation time to burn, extend the trip one day by leaving on Friday or returning on Tuesday. By the time your trip ends, you will have enjoyed a three-day getaway without using any vacation time or a four-day extended break during which you used just a single day of vacation time. Planning a week-long trip on a holiday weekend is another way to save a vacation day for later in the year.

• Extend business trips. Business travelers who typically travel on Mondays and return home on Fridays can extend those trips to include the weekend preceding or following the trip. This gives you a better chance to explore the city where conferences or client meetings are being held, as business trips typically leave little time to get to know a city or see its attractions. Business travelers can plan family trips around their work trips, giving families a great and often cost-effective way to see various locales. • Use your allotted vacation time. A 2013 study from Oxford Economics found that American workers took an average of 16 days of vacation in 2013, which represented a roughly 20 percent decline from 2009, when workers took an average of 20.3 vacation days. The United States Travel Association discovered a similar pattern, finding that in 2013 workers used just 16 of their nearly 21 days of earned time off. Perhaps the easiest way working men and women can find more time to travel is to make use of all of the vacation days they earn as opposed to letting them fall by the wayside at the end of the year. Oftentimes, finding more time to travel is to make use of all of the vacation days they earn as opposed to letting them fall by the wayside at the end of the year.

How to find more time to travel

• Negotiate with your employer. Many employers have grown increasingly flexible as technology has made it easier for employees to work remotely. Workers who want to find more time to travel should not be afraid to negotiate more travel time with their employers, even offering to work remotely from whichever destination they plan to visit. This can be an especially effective way for parents to extend family vacations in the summertime, as one parent can take the kids in the mornings and afternoons while the other works. Come nighttime, the whole family can still enjoy all the fun of a typical vacation.

Travel is a luxury that even busy men and women can enjoy if they employ certain strategies to create more time to get away.
Planning a night out on the town with family and friends can be a fun experience. Scouring the most popular hotspots and the newest restaurants falls for short of burdensome, and those tasked with such a responsibility often enjoy the opportunity to get out of the house and soak up some local culture. As fun as such planning can be, hosts must consider the needs of all who plan to attend before making any final decisions. The following are a few ways hosts can ensure everyone enjoys a night to remember for all the right reasons.

• Consider finances. Dinner at the hottest restaurant in town might sound like a grand idea, but hosts must consider if such a feast is affordable for everyone on the invitation list. Hot new restaurants or newest restaurants falls far short of burdensome, and those tasked with such a responsibility often enjoy the opportunity to get out of the house and soak up some local culture. As fun as such planning can be, hosts must consider the needs of all who plan to attend before making any final decisions. The following are a few ways hosts can ensure everyone enjoys a night to remember for all the right reasons.

• Choose a location. Whether you’re getting together for a sit-down dinner or just drinks, choose a location that’s easily accessible for everyone on the guest list. Doing so increases the likelihood that guests will make it out. A location that’s near to all also allows both you and your guests to spend more time together and less time traveling.

• Consider the needs of every guest. When planning a night on the town, hosts must consider the needs of each individual guest before making any reservations or concrete plans. For example, if the group includes a guest with a physical disability, then any gathering spot you choose must be wheelchair accessible and have wheelchair accessible restrooms. Another thing to consider is each guest’s lifestyle choices. If one guest does not consume alcohol, then try to organize a night out on the town that involves more than just hopping from bar to bar.

• Solicit ideas. If you’re having trouble planning a fun night for all, solicit some ideas from those you invited. Just because you’re hosting the gathering and acting as the go-to guy or gal for those with questions about the night doesn’t mean you can’t ask some questions of your own. Ask guests what they want to do, and remember that no idea is too outlandish. If you decide to center the night around a particular activity, just make sure it’s something everyone on the guest list can participate in.

• Be specific when sharing information about the night. Once all of the plans have been made, be as specific as possible when sharing those plans. Give an address for each place you plan to visit on the night and encourage guests to make use of their cars’ GPS systems or online navigation websites so everyone gets there without any trouble. Charge your cellular phone right before you head out for the night so the phone does not die should anyone call and ask for last-minute directions or instructions.

Planning a night out on the town is a fun responsibility, but also one that requires careful consideration of a host of factors.

“Find a restaurant where the cost per person is within reason.”

When planning a dinner for a restaurant, paying particular attention to the average cost of an entrée at each restaurant you’re considering. When planning a dinner for a restaurant that’s accessible by public transportation. In addition to finding a central location, hosts also should look for a location with easy access to public transportation. This helps guests avoid sitting in traffic, and it’s also safe when nights out on the town will involve drinking alcohol, reducing the risk that you or your guests will get behind the wheel when it’s safer to take a subway, train or cab.

2 col. (3.625”) x 2”
$129

2 col. (3.625”) x 4.5”
$229

2 col. (3.625”) x 3”
$159

4 col. (3.625”) x 4.5”
$409