

Free or Basically Free Seattle Activities for Young Kids

For Hot Days

Pathways Park in Laurelhurst has several sets of creatively designed baby swings, toddler slides, a turf field that doesn't get muddy, a sensory garden, and a small water play area where kids can pump water and watch it run down various paths.

Greenlake Park and **Wallingford Playfield** in north Seattle, **E. C. Hughes Park** in White Center, the **East Queen Anne Playground**, and the **Van Asselt Community Center** in Beacon Hill all have wading pools open on summer days above 70 degrees. Call the hotline (206) 684-7796 for that day's schedule.

Jefferson Park, **Judkins Park**, **Georgetown Playfield**, and **Northacres Park** all offer spray parks for families to cool off in the summer. Typically they are open daily May to Sept.

If your kiddos aren't old enough to enjoy Seattle Center's International Fountain, you can also go for water romps in **Seattle Center's** Fountain of Creation, Kreielsheimer Promenade, and Center Steps Plaza.

Regal Theaters across the city offer \$1 movie tickets to weekday morning shows as part of their **Summer Movie Express** program.

If you're looking for shade, there's plenty in Ballard under **Salmon Bay Park's** giant Douglas fir trees. The big sandbox is stocked with toys from the neighborhood.

At **Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden** you will find a series of water features, including ponds and waterfalls that empty into a 100-foot stream.

Head over to the **Kraken IcePlex** and perch on the second story to watch teams or classes practice skating.

Exploring The Outdoors

In the southeast corner of the **Picardo P-Patch** in Wedgwood, you'll find the children's garden which includes a whimsical climbing-bean teepee.

Kruckeberg Botanic Garden in Shoreline is very welcoming. There is a beautiful driftwood climbing structure, a children's play area, hidden boardwalks and sculptures, and pets are allowed.

White Center Bike Playground at Dick Thurnau Memorial Park is a dedicated space for kids to learn and practice biking skills. The playground features various terrains and obstacles, making it a fun and safe environment for young cyclists to develop confidence and coordination.

There is an impressive children's garden at the **Danny Wood Community Gardens**, as well as chickens to watch and secret paths to wander.

At **Kelsey Creek Farm** in Bellevue, kids love visiting with the cows, horses, bunnies, chickens, sheep, pigs, and more.

The **New Gnome Trail** in Maple Valley is a short, fun hike is sure to please younger kids. The trail is full of hundreds of gnomes and other figurines — look for toadstools, butterflies, and more.

There is plenty of space to roam in Volunteer Park, but kids particularly enjoy visiting the pair of giant **camel statues** that sit at the front door of the Asian Art Museum.

Creative Playgrounds

Powell Barnett Park in the Central District has a big playground packed with things to climb and spin on, a tricycle maze, and broad shade trees. The bathrooms are in a whimsical building that looks like a castle.

Whale Tail Park in Alki provides an ocean-themed playground with a play structure shaped like a sand castle, a climbable boat, a whale's tail sculpture, and sand play area.

Wilburton Hill Park in Bellevue provides a giant train themed playground for little kids.

Seattle's new **Waterfront Park** has free family-friendly events going on all year round, and kids can play on the Overlook Walk's new playground.

Phyllis A. Needy Houghton Park in Kirkland has a fully fenced play area including swings, rideable plastic cars, and a sandbox full of donated plastic trucks.

Tucked into the back of the Woodland Park Rose Garden is a **sensory garden** full of noise making instruments and various plants all safe to touch. Kids might also love the koi pond and fountain.

A Change of Scenery

Seattle Meowtropolitan Cat Café in Wallingford has a lounge where you can schedule an appointment to play with cats. Or you can watch the cats for free through the large windows.

It's only \$8.50 to spend the afternoon on the mini-golf course at the **Interbay Golf Center**. They let you take as many extra balls as you need in case a few get lost.

The **Center for Wooden Boats** in Seattle offers free one-hour rowboat rentals on Lake Union year-round. Reserve yours in advance and take your family for a boat ride.

You don't need to pay for admission to enjoy the entire lower level of the **Seattle Art Museum**. Toddlers will also love exploring the toy-filled terrace outside the museum restaurant and climbing the grand staircase punctuated by Chinese marble statues.

The **Pacific Bonsai Museum**, located in Federal Way, features an extensive collection of bonsai from around the world. Kids tend to be delighted by the tiny trees.

Swanson's Nursery is mostly outdoors, including the children's play house, but they do have a large enclosed greenhouse café and koi ponds perfect for fish watching. Pro tip: kids can ride in the wagons available by the entrance.

Kids can spend ages chasing seagulls and spotting colorful boats at **Fisherman's Terminal** in Ballard, which has free parking and a spot for fish and chips.

Indoor Playgrounds and Play Areas

Tot Gyms and Tot Rooms are available at most Seattle community centers during the fall, winter and spring. Tot Gyms are a warm, dry, place to let your child play with toys, mats, and slides. Tot Rooms offer quieter activities with toys, coloring, and games.

University Village has a covered play area specifically designed for younger children. This small, fully-enclosed playground within the shopping center is best suited for toddlers and preschoolers.

Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park has story time, a discounted children's books section, and a fully contained play area safe for very young kids.

Seattle Gymnastics Academy hosts kids ages 2–5 for a lunch-hour playtime at their indoor playgrounds in Lake City, Ballard, Mill Creek, Burien and Columbia City.

At the **Montlake Terrace Recreation Pavillion** kids will find a cozy playhouse, a ball pit and slides to enjoy. Bonus points for opening at 7 a.m. on weekdays for those early-rising toddlers.

Twinkle Land Play Area Café in Bellevue has a colorful ball pit, slides, tunnels, bridges, trampolines and more. In the DIY zone, kids can make crafts, enjoy a water play table, or a kinetic sand table.

It is \$10 for an all day pass at **PlayDate SEA** in SLU, which includes a three story indoor playground, tubes and tunnels, two interactive dance floors, and a special ball cannon area.

Activities For Rainy Days

The **Tiny Tots** program is a fun way for kids under 5 to interact with the Seattle Symphony. These fun, interactive concerts are approximately 30 minutes. Arrive early for preconcert activities that include a xylophone orchestra, a percussion play area and concert-specific craft.

The **Giant Shoe Museum** in Pike Place is a teeny tiny museum featuring the collection of Danny Eskenazi, a man who became obsessed by giant shoes. You pay a quarter to peer into the stereoscopes and see the giant shoes.

Seattle Public Utilities **North and South Transfer Stations** both offer viewing windows where kids can watch garbage trucks and other fascinating machinery.

The **White River Valley Museum** in Auburn has loads of places to explore, including a kid sized miniature hotel and classroom.

On First Thursdays, the **Wing Luke Museum** has a free admission day which includes a toddler story time, followed by an art activity. Look for the colorful room just for small children tucked in the galleries upstairs.

Bellevue Arts Museum's ground floor is completely free. Check out the show-stopping mobile in the center of the atrium, the community education gallery, or the art activity area tucked in back.

The Frye Museum hosts a monthly program called "Small Frye", where kids can watch storytellers from Seattle Children's Theatre perform in the galleries, then create a project with the Frye's art educators in the studio upstairs.

Couth Buzzard Books in Greenwood has a kid's program every Saturday at 10am including music, stories, and art projects.

Coffee Shops & Restaurants With Kids Areas

Serendipity Cafe in Magnolia has a dedicated kids' play space.

Firehouse Coffee in Ballard has a separate kids playroom full of books and toys.

Makeda and Mingus in Greenwood has a little kid reading nook with dolls and trucks.

Mighty-O Donuts in Ballard has a large play space with kids tables, toys, and books.

Wunderkind in Ravenna is part café/part playroom with giant train and lego tables.

Hill City Tap House in Columbia City has a play area with train tables and a play kitchen in the back.