

FREE THINGS TO DO IN THE SUMMER

Relax on Miami's Beaches

Miami is adorned with wonderful beaches that lend themselves to a myriad of relaxing family activities, such as people watching, casting a fishing line off a pier, strolling or biking along a boardwalk. Top Miami beaches are primarily found along Collins Avenue, including the sheik Miami Beach-South Beach, and offshore at Key Biscayne. Each beach has its own character. For more information about Florida Beaches, log onto <http://www.destination360.com/north-america/us/florida/miami-beaches.php>

Visit the Cape Florida Lighthouse

The picturesque lighthouse was built in 1825 and is the oldest building found in southern Florida. Families will enjoying a visit to the lighthouse as they troll on the beautiful Key Biscayne's Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park. Free tours of the lighthouse are available daily from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Children eight and older are allowed to climb up the tower and explore the horizon. Families are also welcome to picnic, bicycle, sunbathe, swim, fish, or follow paths of the Key Biscayne Heritage Trail. A \$5.00 fee per vehicle carrying of up to 8 people is charged to enter the park, but tours of the lighthouse are free. It is recommended to call ahead to announce a family visit. For more information, you may call 305-361-5811, or log onto <http://www.key-biscayne.com/capeflorida/index.shtml>

Enjoy the Hollywood Beach Boardwalk

Families can enjoy hours of fun activities at the Hollywood Beach Boardwalk. Miles of beaches and walking trails give parents and children the opportunity for relaxing strolls, bike rides and hours of people watching. There is a thriving beach theatre at the corner of Johnson Street and the Boardwalk, featuring the "Theatre Under the Stars" concert series on Monday nights. Municipal parking is available for a fee. For more information, contact 954-921-3404. Maps and directions can be found at http://www.hollywoodfl.org/parks_rec/hlwd_par.htm

Explore Tropical Park... or your neighborhood park

The park offers multiple opportunities for family recreation. It is located at 7900 SW 40th Street, just off the Palmetto Parkway and minutes from the Miami airport. Take advantage of athletic facilities and fields where you can enjoy just about every sport. View native wildlife like lizards, birds, iguanas, squirrels, ducks and alligators, among others. Tropical Park is a great place to have a family picnic, or celebrate a birthday party. The park has four lakes where you can swim, canoe or go paddle boating. For more information, call 305-226-8315.

http://maps.live.com/localsearch/default.aspx?what=malls&where=Miami%2c+FL&s_cid=ansPhBkYp01&mkt=en-us&ac=false

Tropical park is just one of many parks of Miami-Dade. Parks in your neighborhood some of the same opportunities. For a listing of the parks in Miami-Dade, log onto

<http://www.metro-dade.com/parks/>

Organize a trip to the mall

Trips to the mall can be quite pleasurable when they are taken as a family even when the only goal is to spend time together and explore the aisles and windows. Such trips can be very different from a shopping experience because the focus is on bonding as a family rather than acquiring new things. Parents may comment on what they see and hear from their children's experience. For a listing of the best 10 malls, log onto <http://miami.about.com/od/shoppingservice2/tp/topshopping.htm>

Have a cookout in your backyard

Outside cooking is a wonderful experience, which your family will remember for a long time, whether it takes place in your backyard or in a park, or whether when it is a part of a camping trip. It is an excellent opportunity to cut through the daily routine, give a new exciting twist to the usual chores, and engage the children in collaborative planning, decision making, and meal preparation. You will need to have access to a barbecue grill. For tips, recipes, and advice, on how to organize a cookout, log onto

www.lovetheoutdoors.com/camping/Outdoor_Cooking.htm