

Warmer weather getaways

Spring, summer best times to get moving



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Warm weather getaways for families

IMAGE: 1 OF 10



Drumheller's DinoFest: Families will find lots of prehistoric-themed fun at DinoFest in Drumheller, Alta., June 1-3. Events take place around town and at the Royal Tyrrell Museum. (Handout)

Spring has sprung and summer's nearly here. To help you prepare for warmer weather getaways, here are a few fun and family friendly travel ideas.

Drumheller's DinoFest

Western Canada's newest annual, family friendly festival takes place June 1-3 at the awesome Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alta. With rides, games, and perhaps a lot of digging, the Drumheller DinoFest will celebrate ... dinosaurs. Need we say more? See drumhellersdinofest.com.

Animal check ups

The new Animal Care Centre at Florida's Busch Gardens Tampa Bay puts families in touch with the park's veterinarians and their wild patients. Not only will procedures such as surgeries and teeth cleanings be conducted in full view, but visitors can assist in preparing food for the animals, including fruits, vegetables, crickets and mealworms. See seaworldparks.com.

Lightning McQueen & Gang

Cars Land, Buena Vista Street and the Carthay Circle Theatre will debut in June at California's Disneyland Resort, completing the park's five-year expansion. Based on Pixar's Cars movie series, Cars Land is a rendering of Radiator Springs, complete with Flo's V8 Cafe, Ramone's House of Body Art and Radiator Springs Curios. The new Radiator Spring Racers ride is being billed by Disney as "a twisting, turning, high-speed adventure through Ornament Valley and the town of Radiator Springs." Also new: The renovation of Disneyland Hotel with new pools, themed suites and remodelled rooms. See disneyland.ca.

Go glamping

Bingemans Camping Resort in Kitchener has summer camping alternatives for families averse to roughing it. It's called glamping. "We've created an experience that combines the outdoor fun of camping with the comfort of a five-star hotel," Mark Bingeman says. The campground's standard glamping package includes a yurt rental (a tent with floor, hard walls and a door), two queen-size beds with linens, refrigerator, chandelier, a fire ring and picnic table on a site overlooking the Grand River. See bingemans.com.

Family friendly winery

Fielding Estate Winery in Beamsville has taken steps to make its Beamsville Wine Lodge more accommodating for families. "We want parents to feel comfortable bringing their kids into the winery," says Heidi Fielding, the winery's hospitality manager. "Parents are more relaxed when their kids are engaged in a kid-friendly activity." The lodge has been stocked with colouring books, kids storybooks, crayons, treats like gummies and suckers, and sugar-free juice boxes. "By taking simple steps to keep the kids entertained," Fielding says, "we are trying to make it easy for families to stop in when they are on a family trip." See fieldingwines.com.

Single parent savings

With properties in Jamaica and Turks & Caicos, the family friendly Beaches Resorts will run its traditional 2012 Single Parent Fun (SPF) Months from May 1 to May 24 and Sept. 4 to Oct. 31. Single-parent families who book a minimum three-night stay at any Beaches from now through Oct. 25 can take part in a variety of special events and will benefit from a waived single supplement fee of up to \$220 US per night. See beaches.com.

Sea Island nature

New summer programming led by naturalists on Sea Island, a resort off the southeastern coast of Georgia, is designed to spark childrens' interest in nature and ecology. In Sea Island's Coastal Discoveries Program, kids are led on daily adventures ranging from archery and kayaking, to beach eco-labs, fish dissections and gyotaku fish printing. The Survival Skills After Dark program tests kids' survival skills such as building fires, tying knots, pitching tents and reading a compass -- topped off with s'mores, of course. See seaisland.com.

Spider-Man returns

Universal Orlando Resort recently re-opened its Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man attraction, claiming the action is more life-like than ever. New HD film animation has been implemented, along with 3D projection. Visitors can now see details closeup, from flames spewing from Hobgoblin's pumpkins, to movement of characters' muscles and the stitching on Spider-Man's gloves. Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee makes a cameo appearance. See universolorlando.com.

Bus America

In March, Lonely Planet named the Northeastern U.S.A. No. 1 in its Top 10 best value destinations. New York, Boston and Washington DC beat out all the rest mainly because of their bus transport. Megabus connects Toronto with these cities for ridiculously low prices. "Considering most destinations are ped-friendly (with good public transit and walkable city centres), you can hop-scotch across the region without booking a flight or hiring a car." See megabus.com.

Room for all

Located between Toledo and Cleveland in Sandusky, Ohio, Cedar Point's Castaway Bay is a 237-room hotel and 3,500-square-metre indoor waterpark. New this year is an eight-person Combination Suite with four double beds, two bathrooms, a mini-fridge, a microwave, a coffee maker and two screened-in balconies, ideal for extended travelling families. See castawaybay.com.

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