



Adventuring in the Concrete Jungle

From sandy beaches to amusement parks to camping beneath the open sky—there are classic family vacations that speak to parents’ sensibilities, with the promise of picture-perfect memories. Bright lights, big city may not always be a prominent theme on that list, but cities—both large and small—cater

to children of all ages, with a seemingly endless list of things to see, do, eat and explore. And, parents are sure to find plenty to enjoy, too.

With careful planning and a little patience you may just find that cities offer up the ultimate playground, complete with all the makings for a perfect family getaway.

BY TRISHA BOYER

Chicago

In 2018, Mayor Rahm Emanuel proudly announced that Chicago welcomed more than 55 million visitors the previous year. Stretched along glistening Lake Michigan, it's no surprise this friendly Midwestern city, brimming with cultural activities and wide expanses of green space, is such a popular destination.

Why it Works for Kids

Anyone who's traveled with kids knows that navigating a city with tiny legs or strollers can pose a major obstacle to fun. Chicago may be America's third largest city, but it's laid out in a grid, and broken up into neighborhoods that are easily navigated on foot. Throw in a super efficient (and easy to understand) bus system and a free trolley, and families have plenty of options to get from A to B. The "L" (elevated train) is also simple to use. With transportation out of the way, the biggest challenge will be choosing what to do.

Millennium Park



Where To Stay

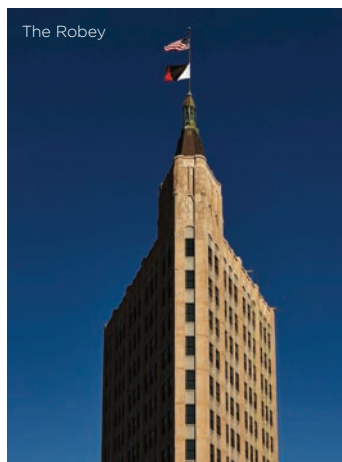
Lincoln Park is so picturesque and family-friendly, that it's pretty amazing to have an option where you can live like a local.

Hotel Lincoln, a Joie de Vivre Hotel, has a funky vibe and puts you in walkable distance from both the park and lake.

If you want to stay in the heart of it all, the luxurious **Palomar Chicago**, a Kimpton Hotel, lands you dangerously close to the American Girl and Lego stores inside Wa-

ter Tower Place—plus, a year-round indoor pool hits the spot.

Wicker Park is a destination in its own right. This hip neighborhood should be on your list to explore, and it's easy enough to get back and forth to the city. If you're traveling with older kids, the newly re-modeled **The Robey** has various bunk bed configurations in their ultra-modern annex lofts, which accommodate families nicely.



What To Do

Explore Lincoln Park (all ages).

Chicago's largest green space, Lincoln Park sits on more than 1,200 meticulously landscaped acres, directly to the west of Lake Michigan, in its namesake neighborhood. Surrounded by tree-lined streets flanked with handsome brick row houses, boutiques, and restaurants, the area offers plenty of places to grab a bite close by. Located within the park, Lincoln Park Zoo is always a winner. This free, family-oriented experience is home to more than 1,100 different animals, ranging from turtles to polar bears. The "Butterfly Haven" is worth the price of admission to the zoo's neighbor, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, too.

Visit the Museum Campus (all ages)

Located in Grant Park, Museum Row is home to three of Chicago's most notable museums: The Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, and Adler Planetarium. Divide and conquer based on children's ages and interests, or slip away to explore Grant Park, the city's celebrated downtown green space, where you can admire grand fountains and statues.

Hop down the Navy Pier (all ages)

Sure it's touristy, but if you have kids in tow, it's a destination that packs a punch. There's a giant Ferris wheel, a hands on children's museum (ages 10 and under), carnival fare, plus beautiful views of Lake Michigan and the skyline everywhere you look. If it gets to be too much, you can escape the pier and sink your toes in the sand on one of the nearby beaches. Stay up past sundown and you'll be rewarded with a spectacular fireworks show (seasonally, Wednesday to Sunday).

Cheat Sheet

Eat: etta (grown-up spot close to The Robey where kids are genuinely welcome); Pequod's Pizza or Lou Malnati's Pizzeria (for Chicago-style pizza); Big Star (Mexican street food and margaritas); Honey Butter Fried Chicken (quick-service fried chicken and craft drinks); Revival Food Hall (food hall with loads of options); Floriole Cafe & Bakery (for gorgeous French pastries and other treats).

Do: Museum Campus, Lincoln Park, Navy Pier, Cloud Gate Sculpture (the "Bean") in Millennium Park, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Botanic Garden, Museum of Science and Industry, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago beaches, Chicago Children's Theatre, catch a Cubs or White Sox game, and take some time to get to know Wicker Park/Bucktown neighborhoods.



St. Louis

Perhaps best known for the iconic Gateway Arch that stands majestically beside the Mississippi River, St. Louis is spread over 66 square miles, and is made up of nearly 80 distinct neighborhoods. You'll need a car to uncover all its nooks and crannies.

Why it Works for Kids

Indoors and out, St. Louis offers activities the entire family can enjoy, and it's less than a five-hour drive from Nashville. Located west of the city, Forest Park, a lush, roughly 1,300-acre park, is home to some of the Gateway City's most popular attractions. Park your car and hop on the trolley—it's a fuss-free way to navigate the area. Beyond the park, this "Big Small Town" offers plenty of other discoveries, too.



Where To Stay

Within walking distance of **Forest Park**, **The Cheshire** boasts a unique mix of Midwestern warmth coupled with English-inspired décor. Complimentary breakfast, daily coffee and tea service, an outdoor pool and courtyard, and themed suites, like the "Romeo and Juliet," make this hotel a family favorite.

The **Moonrise Hotel**, located on the bustling **Delmar Loop**, transports guests out of the city and into space. This pet-friendly boutique hotel, outfitted in a mod lunar theme, complete with robots, rocket ships, and a giant moon on the roof, is a fun place for kids to rest their heads.

Located at the corner of **Forest Park** and less than 10 miles from **Grant's**

Farm, **The Chase Park Plaza Royal Sonesta** offers a luxurious, kid-friendly experience at reasonable rates. With three onsite restaurants, a Santé fitness center, outdoor pool, cinema, and cribs and high chairs at the ready, this is a solid choice for those wanting to be pampered.



What To Do

Explore Forest Park Attractions (all ages)

With half a dozen cultural stops, including the phenomenal St. Louis Zoo and St. Louis Art Museum, plus restaurants, historic landmarks, and a natural landscape punctuated with scenic falls, water activities, and wetland nature reserves, it's easy to spend a whole day in Forest Park. As an added bonus, many of the museums are free, making it an affordable way to spend the day.

Ride through Grant's Farm (all ages)

The 281-acre ancestral home of the Busch family (think: Budweiser) is the backdrop for an open-tram journey across a farm where the iconic Budweiser Clydesdales, buffalo, elephants, camels, kangaroos, donkeys, goats, peacocks, and many other animals roam. Up close animal encoun-

ters, shows, and camel and carousel rides round out the agenda.

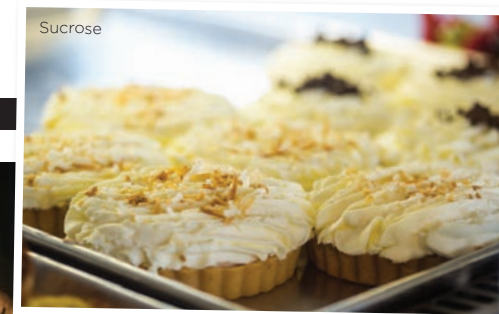
Marvel at City Museum (designed for all ages, but children over 5 will get the most out of it)

Housed in what was previously the 10-story International Shoe Company, the sprawling 600,000-square-foot City Museum is a destination you have to see to believe. Children can run, climb, crawl, and slide (there's a 5-story slide and a 10-story slide) their way through a variety of architectural structures and tunnels, which are composed of an eclectic collection of repurposed industrial objects. Tennis shoes are a must and knee pads are sold at the museum shop. Parents take note: If you're planning to follow your kids, you'll want to heed those recommendations, too.

Cheat Sheet

Eat: Adriana's on The Hill (old-school lunch spot for pasta and sandwiches located on "The Hill," St. Louis's historic Italian neighborhood); The Fountain on Locust (former auto showroom that serves American fare and shakes); Joey B's or Imo's (for St. Louis-style pizza made on a cracker-thin crust with provol cheese); Steve's Hot Dogs and Burgers (casual spot with great mac and cheese); Gioia's Deli (James Beard Foundation, American Classics Award-winner); Sucrose (for Blueprint coffee, tarts, macarons and other treats).

Do: Ride the trolley through Forest Park and check out the museums, Missouri Botanical Garden, Soulard Farmers Market, City Museum, The Magic House St. Louis Children's Museum, The Arch, Citygarden sculpture park, catch a Cardinal's game or a tour of Busch Stadium, and take time to walk through "The Hill."



New York

New York City can be an intimidating place. Of its five boroughs, Manhattan is the most densely populated (also the most densely populated county in the U.S), and is home to more than 1.6 million people. Crowds aside, if you can approach the city by neighborhood—choose a few different areas and make a list of things you want to do—you'll find it easy enough to get your bearings and take advantage of the city's culturally rich offerings.



Why it Works for Kids

The Statue of Liberty, The Guggenheim, the American Museum of Natural History, Children's Museum of Manhattan, Broadway, top-notch ethnic restaurants, and enough green space for kids to run free and stretch their legs: It all makes New York City a totally workable destination, overflowing with new sights and sounds that are sure to keep everyone enraptured between stops. Or, anchor out in Brooklyn and make day trips into the city—many of Brooklyn's neighborhoods are filled with strollers and kids, sharing the wide sidewalks that line the quiet, shady streets.



Where To Stay

Located close to **Central Park** on the Upper West Side, **Hotel Beacon** is in close proximity to several family attractions. One- and two-bedroom suites with small kitchens (and a market across the street) mean you don't have to rush out for every meal.

Nu Hotel lets you live like a local family in stroller-packed **Boerum Hill**. Free breakfast and Wi-Fi, plus loaner bikes, baby bathtubs, toddler step stools, and high chairs upon request, make this **Brooklyn** hotel a great option for those who don't mind hopping on the subway (just a few steps away) to get to Manhattan.

Space and location come at a premium in the city. **Millennium Hilton** in the **Financial District** offers moderately priced rooms (suites are also available) with plenty of space and amenities. The central location and heated indoor pool make it a safe bet for families seeking good value in a convenient location.

What To Do

Take in a Broadway Show (all ages)

Frozen is one performance that's suitable for all ages. For kids over six there are even more choices, like *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*. Although matinees may work better for young audiences, there's nothing quite like emerging from the theatre late in the evening, directly into the endless lights and 24-hour bustle that is Times Square.

Spend a day in and around Central Park (all ages)

Take time to enjoy Central Park, located between the upper East and West sides, and let the kids take a spin on the carousel. The American Museum of Natural History (of *Night at the Museum* fame), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Guggenheim are all close by, and while many exhibits will appeal to older children and adults, they all offer something for all ages. And, Central Park Zoo has enough exhibits and hands-on activities to keep little ones entertained for a day.

Visit a Kid-Centric Museum (all ages)

Children's Museum of the Arts in Manhattan is designed for children ages zero to 12. Here they can delve into a variety of artistic mediums, from paints to animation, inspired by artworks on view in the gallery. Across the river, Brooklyn Children's Museum, which opened its doors in 1899 as the first children's museum in the country, continues its mission to ignite curiosity and encourage life-long learning through exhibits that encourage sensory experimentation and play.



Cheat Sheet

Eat: Bubby's (familiar basics and amazing pies); Burger & Barrel (kid-sized burgers available); Joe's Pizza (NY-style counter service slices); Nom Wah Tea Parlor (a great way to introduce little ones to dim sum); Sarge's Delicatessen & Diner (24/7 classic diner); Cowgirl (Southwestern spot with a sizable kid's menu); Brooklyn Pharmacy & Soda Fountain (old-school soda shop); Milk Bar Bakery (for all the sweet treats).

Do: Central Park, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Children's Museum of Manhattan, Central Park Zoo, Broadway, American Museum of Natural History, The Statue of Liberty, The Guggenheim, The Met, Children's Museum of the Arts, Empire State Building observation deck, and spend some time exploring Brooklyn neighborhoods.

