

## 10 Money-Saving Ideas for City Vacations

Plus the 5 best cities for urban family trips  
By Laura Sullivan, *Parenting*

Once you've got children, the idea of a city vacation goes from sounding glamorous to overwhelming. But the hassle is small if you plan it right. And the perk is big: enough excitement and variety to keep all of you happy. "In the past ten to fifteen years, there's been a revitalization of city living, and that's helped visitors, too. There are more kid options on menus, more kid-friendly neighborhoods to stroll through," says Donna Airoidi, editorial director of [Travelmuse.com](#). Here's how to make the most of your urban escape.

**Do your research.** At [Frommers.com](#), search the city name plus "kids" for lots of straightforward info. Then move on to [Gocitykids.com](#). Click on the city you want (it covers more than 50!) and find insider tips on fun things to do. Another online stop: [Tripfilms.com](#) lets you choose your destination and watch films, both professional and amateur, made of that locale. Films are updated continuously; at press time, there were 2,500. Even with all that Internet prep, you'll want a good guidebook to tromp around with so you're prepared for spur-of-the-moment choices. We like Fodor's *With Kids* city series.

**Be stay-over savvy.** Yes, city hotel rooms are tiny and pricey. So check out [HomewoodSuites.com](#). You'll likely find that your gang can spread out in a mini-apartment for roughly the same price as squeezing into a closetlike hotel room. It has locations in major metro areas across the country. The clincher: A hot breakfast's included. [EmbassySuites.com](#) is another option.

**Take the train (or bus).** Most cities have sites that plan routes for you, so no need to fork over for taxis because you're afraid of getting lost. [Hopstop.com](#) is ideal for the biggies, but for smaller cities, Google the name of the city plus "transportation authority" or "trip planner."

**Freeload!** Many museums have free admission one day a week; check the website. For example, almost all the San Diego museums are gratis on Tuesdays. Another trick to see more for less scratch? Bundle attraction entrance fees. At [Citypass.com](#), you can buy a book of tickets for the most popular draws in any of 11 cities for about half what you'd pay if you bought them at the gates.

**Give in to wanderlust.** Unplanned city experiences are great -- a drum circle breaks out in the park, a street performer picks you out of the crowd, or you spot Sarah Jessica Parker! Ethnic neighborhoods are good to start in. Search out an Italian festival or a bustling Asian market.

### Need ideas?

We all love NY (and Chicago and DC), but here's the scoop on lower-profile cities worth your time:

**San Diego** ([sandiego.org](#)): Maybe you know about the stellar zoo and its pandas. But what about: a sleepover on a naval aircraft carrier; Balboa Park, the country's biggest urban cultural park; postcard worthy beaches? Legoland California is there, too.

2. **Toronto** ([seetorontonow.com](http://seetorontonow.com)): It's a tough call: the Hippo, an amphibious tour bus that rides right into Lake Ontario, or standing on the glass floor at the top of the CN Tower. Do both! Just save time for the Royal Ontario natural history museum. Thanks to the bounty of interactive exhibits just for kids, it'll be a blast even for museum-phobes. It's also sparkling clean and easy to manage with a stroller.
3. **Miami** ([gmcvb.com](http://gmcvb.com)): The Loews Miami Beach resort has a cool kids' program (plus a massive freeform pool and easy beach access). Venture out to swim with the dolphins at the Seaquarium, take a safari tour at Jungle Island, and spot gators in the Everglades.
4. **Indianapolis** ([indy.org](http://indy.org)): Grab a behind-the-scenes tour of the iconic raceway. The Children's Museum of Indianapolis is the world's largest (*psst*: It's more of a mind-blowing educational entertainment complex than a museum). Make and eat your own ice cream at the 320-acre Traders Point Creamery, a unique urban organic dairy farm.
5. **Boston** ([bostonusa.com](http://bostonusa.com)): Take a ride in one of the famous Swan Boats in the oldest public gardens in the U.S. Baseball fans can test their trivia knowledge during a tour of Fenway Park. And for those American-history students, there's Paul Revere's house, the winding Freedom Trail, and the U.S.S. *Constitution*, a Navy ship that dates back to 1797.