



Photography (clockwise): Geoffrey Lyon, Children's Museum of Manhattan; Tim Hale, courtesy George C. Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits.

# Child's Play

Can't wait to visit the newly expanded National Children's Museum next year in Washington? Round up the kids for some hands-on fun closer to home.

by allison ellis

**Believe it or not, the colorful Cyberchase exhibit at the Children's Museum of Houston helps kids learn math. It's just a fraction of the fun to be had at similar spaces across the nation.**



**MUSEUMS HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE DAYS WHEN** kids were dragged kicking and screaming for a healthy dose of culture. And across America, museums for children are leading the charge. Interactive and hands-on, they now touch boys' and girls' lives in ways you'd never dreamed possible. Together you and your kids can spend the night on a historic submarine, invent and build crazy contraptions or learn about healthy eating by crawling through a giant replica of the human body. With a slew of creative and high-tech experiences on offer, modern children's museums are exciting and surprisingly educational for kids of all ages.

"One of the things I like best about visiting museums with my children is that I get to experience the world through their eyes," says Cindy Richards, GEICO policyholder and editor of TravelingMom.com in Chicago. "Plus, it's a terrific way to bring us all together."

With over 300 children's museums in the United States and the state-of-the-art National Children's Museum opening over the next year in Washington, D.C.—with GEICO as a proud sponsor—we've rounded up some of our favorites.





## Chicago Children's Museum

This is where play and learning connect: Through the National Science Foundation-funded Skyline, kids can build one-of-a-kind skyscrapers using wooden struts and real tools. Dig this: CCM also has a Dinosaur Expedition, where kids can uncover fossils in a recreated Saharan excavation pit.



## Children's Museum of Houston

At the Inventor's Workshop, kids can make their own sodas and invent jewelry that glows. Or they can head outdoors and make a splash exploring the mechanics of hydropower.

### Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

Let your kids try their best to cross the Gravity Room (tilted at a 25-degree angle) without falling down, create a virtual puppet show or take a SmartforTwo car for a test drive. They'll also love making a mess in the bubbling mud pit, oozing with adventure.

### Children's Creativity Museum

At this San Francisco space, kids create multimedia artwork and tinker with smartphone apps, such as the Color Vacuum, which turns mobile devices into color-exploring machines.

## The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

One of the top museums in the country, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis is like its own theme park. Kids experience the art of glassblowing and create their own sculptures in the Dale Chihuly Fireworks of Glass exhibit, or they can ride in the Hot Wheels For Real Speedshop (through Jan. 27, 2013) by customizing cars with decals, wheel covers and more.

### FIND A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM NEAR YOU

Looking for a fun day out with the kids? Visit [ChildrensMuseums.org](http://ChildrensMuseums.org) and search by state or Zip code. Some types of memberships get you great deals on children's museums around the country.

Photography (clockwise from top): © Chicago Children's Museum; Geoffrey Lyon; the Children's Museum of Indianapolis



## SCIENCE ZONE

From the fun and quirky to the all-out nerdy, here are a few spots where your kids can get their science on.

### Children's Museum of Manhattan (New York, N.Y.)

Follow nutrients into the body, crawl through a giant digestive system and pump a huge heart. Called EatSleepPlay: Building Health Every Day, this is an interactive nutrition lesson for kids of all ages. [cmom.org](http://cmom.org)

### Explora (Albuquerque, N.M.)

Try this on for size: Math Moves! puts bodies of all ages to work, teaching about ratio and proportion along the way. [explora.us](http://explora.us)

### Pennypickle's Workshop (Temecula, Calif.)

Stuff, stuff and more stuff! Fans of the *I Spy* books will love this zany space filled with eccentric gizmos, gadgets and hands-on experiments for budding Einsteins. [pennypickles.org](http://pennypickles.org)

### Rocky Mount Children's Museum & Science Center (Rocky Mount, N.C.)

Check out BRAIN: The World Inside Your Head, a blockbuster traveling exhibition that runs until January. [museum.imperialcentre.org](http://museum.imperialcentre.org)

## SLEEPOVER ZONE

Perfect for families and large groups, these overnights start at \$35 per person.

### Dozin' With the Dinos at The Field Museum (Chicago, Ill.)

Kids get the chance to cozy up with Sue the T-Rex and tour ancient Egypt in the dark. [fieldmuseum.org](http://fieldmuseum.org)

### Operation Secret Slumber at The International Spy Museum (Washington, D.C.)

It's classified: Kids take on a secret identity and gather intelligence about real spy skills. [spymuseum.org](http://spymuseum.org)

### Camp Goo at the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Get ready for all kinds of sticky situations: a flashlight tour of the Tar Pits, a museum-wide scavenger hunt and plenty of gooey-good crafts. [nhm.org](http://nhm.org)

### Saint Louis Science Center Camp-Ins (St. Louis, Mo.)

Sleep under the stars! Kids watch an OMNIMAX movie and a planetarium show. Pizza dinner included. [slsc.org](http://slsc.org)

### Wisconsin Maritime Museum's USS Cobia Overnight Education Program (Manitowoc, Wis.)

Go back in time and spend the night on the USS Cobia, a real World War II submarine. [wisconsinmaritime.org](http://wisconsinmaritime.org)

### Air Zoo Overnight Camps (Portage, Mich.)

These aviation- or space-flight-themed sleepovers let your kids' imaginations soar. [airzoo.org](http://airzoo.org)



### Higgins Armory Museum OverKnights (Worcester, Mass.)

Time for knight night! Kids learn all about the Middle Ages and even try on some armor. [higgins.org](http://higgins.org)



**You could win a \$1,000 American Express® Gift Card**

**How do you get the most out of life on a budget?**

Go to [geiconow.com/contest](http://geiconow.com/contest) to send us your ideas for living large on less. You could be a winner\*! Scan this code for details. (Turn to page 2 for how to scan.)



\*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. A PURCHASE WILL NOT INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING. Entry begins at 12:00:00 p.m. ET on 11/1/12. Ends at 3:00:00 p.m. ET on 12/10/12. Open to legal residents of the 50 U.S. or D.C., who are at least the age of majority. All entries must comply with the governing Official Rules for this contest (including the submission requirements) available at [geiconow.com](http://geiconow.com) or by sending a SASE to: GEICO Frugal Fun Contest Official Rules Request GEICO Marketing, Floor 4T, 5260 Western Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. VT residents may omit return postage. There are three (3) rounds of judging in this Contest. Round 1 criteria: Originality (34%); Practicality (33%); and Universality (33%). Round 2 criteria (top 10): Originality (30%); Practicality (30%); Universality (30%); and Public Vote (10%). Round 3 criteria (top 3): same as Round 1. Void where prohibited by law. There are three (3) prizes: the Grand Prize consists of a \$1,000 American Express Gift Card; one (1) second prize, which consists of a \$200 Cabela's Gift Card; and one third prize, which consists of a \$100 Cabela's Gift Card. Total approximate retail value of all prizes: \$1,300. Gift cards are subject to their terms. American Express® and Cabela's® are not affiliated with this contest. SPONSOR: Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO), 5260 Western Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. If you do not wish to receive future mailings from this sponsor regarding sweepstakes or contests, you may have your name removed from the list by writing to Mail Preference GEICO Marketing, Floor 4T, 5260 Western Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, 20815.