

## Your Summer 2016 Play List: Top Things to Do This Summer for Seattle-area Families - ParentMap

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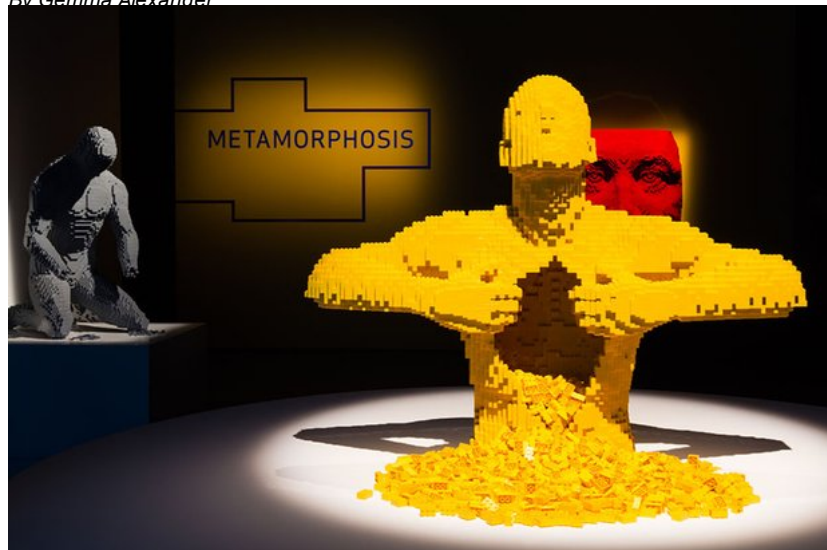
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# Your Summer 2016 Play List: Top Things to Do This Summer for Seattle-area Families

From new attractions to best-kept-secret outings, what to put at the top of your summer bucket list

By Gemma Alexander



The Art of the Brick exhibit at Pacific Science Center. Photo courtesy Pacific Science Center  
Seattle is called the Emerald City for its trees, but there's much more than firs and cedars here to inspire wonder and joy. This summer brings a forest of new attractions for residents and visiting families alike. Here's your roadmap to summer fun in every direction.

### 1. Lego design: [The Art of the Brick Pacific Science Center](#)

**May 28–Sept. 11 • 200 Second Ave. N., Seattle • \$9 in addition to admission**

Opening in May at Pacific Science Center, *The Art of the Brick* exhibit by artist Nathan Sawaya displays a collection of artworks made exclusively from one of the most beloved toys in the world. Named one of CNN's top 10 global must-see exhibitions, it's the world's largest display of Lego art.

**Pro tip:** While you are at Seattle Center, be sure to visit the epic [Artists at Play playground](#) that opened last summer.

### 2. Local superhero: [Bruce Lee exhibit](#)

**719 S. King St., Seattle • \$9.95–\$14.95, kids 4 and under free**

The Wing Luke Museum's second installment of *Do You Know Bruce?* — a three-part exhibition devoted to martial artist and film star Bruce Lee — focuses on the part of the story people love best: Lee's groundbreaking role in film and media. See the largest display ever of The Green Hornet toys and collectibles and behind-the-scene photos from sets.

**Pro tip:** If kids are old enough, consider booking a spot on the three-hour [Bruce Lee's Chinatown Tour](#) (\$25.95–\$45.95), which includes access to the museum, lunch and a visit to the site of Lee's first martial arts studio.

### 3. Must-see new museum: [Holocaust Center for Humanity](#)

**2045 Second Ave., Seattle • Suggested donation \$5–\$10**

The Holocaust Center for Humanity museum in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood opened last fall. Visiting the museum takes a little planning; it is only open on Wednesdays and on first and third Sundays, and reservations are required. But the museum's child-friendly approach to teaching a difficult subject is well worth the effort.

**Pro tip:** Learning about the Holocaust is heavy work, so don't plan too much for the day you visit. Instead, bring a picnic and walk to nearby Bell Street sidewalk park.



Photo: Light Rail | [Lee LeFever CC](#)

#### 4. Ride the light rails: [New Link light rail extension](#)

**Fares vary; kids ages 5 and under free**

Summer is an ideal time to explore the city via its just-extended 19-mile light rail line. You can now travel between downtown and the University of Washington in eight minutes, giving you lots of time to explore neighborhoods along the way. See this guide to a number of fun [light-rail itineraries](#).

**Pro tip:** Kids up to age 5 ride free (with paying passenger).

#### 5. Global-issue-trotting: [Gates Foundation Visitor Center](#)

**440 Fifth Ave. N., Seattle • Free**

The Gates Foundation Visitor Center is essentially a free, highly interactive museum on global issues that even small children can learn from. Starting in June, families can play with interactive portraits in two new exhibits.

**Pro tip:** Pair with a visit to the EMP Museum, located just across the street at Seattle Center.

#### 6. Read all about it: [Third Place Books at Seward Park](#)

**5041 Wilson Ave. S., Seattle**

The third place in the famously community-building Third Place Bookstore chain will be open in Seward Park (in the old PCC location) by this summer. With free parking, a children's area, up to 20,000 titles in stock, a café, full restaurant and a bar, Third Place Seward Park should have an immediate following from everyone in the family.

**Pro tip:** Follow with outdoor time at [Seward Park](#), one mile away, where you'll find old-growth forest, beach, trails, a nature playground and the Seward Park Audubon Center.



Green Lake. Photo: Hammerin Man

## 7. The free play's the thing: [Seattle Public Theater](#)

**Seattle Public Theater at the Bathhouse, youth performances • 7312 W. Green Lake Drive N., Seattle**  
• Free, tickets available one hour in advance of each show

Seattle Public Theater has a long history of putting on startlingly professional productions with student actors for a very attractive admission fee: free. This summer's super lineup includes *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, among others. (Note: Youth performances are free, but donations are welcome.)

**Pro tip:** Bring your crew to a matinee, and then use the rest of the afternoon to explore Green Lake; there's a beach right near the theater, plus a bike path, paddleboat rentals, a wading pool and more.





KEXP's new home

## 8. Music that matters: The new KEXP

**472 First Ave. N., Seattle • Free**

Beloved local radio station KEXP has a new home at Seattle Center, and the best news is that daily in-studio recordings of bands are now free, all-ages shows. It's first-come, first-served to get in, but even if the viewing room fills up, you can still take a tour or watch a KEXP DJ at work in the booth while you sip a drink from the in-house La Marzocco cafe.

**Pro tip:** Check [The Vera Project](#)'s calendar for other all-ages musical activities.

## 9. Sweet story time: Theo Chocolate

**3400 Phinney Ave. N., Seattle • \$8**

Eco-conscious bean-to-bar chocolate factory Theo has just gotten even friendlier. The factory recently added a weekly 45-minute "chocolate story time" tour. Recommended for kids ages 4–7 and their grown-ups, the tour is slightly less technical than the one for adults, includes a story time and comes with just as much free chocolate.

**Pro tip:** If they have them on the day you visit, try the s'mores. You're welcome.



Naturalist Clint 'Showtime' Rivers, Eagle Wing Tours, Victoria. Photo courtesy Pacific Whale Watch Association

## 10: Baby orca boom: Whale-watching tour

**San Juan Islands • Rates vary depending on operator, usually around \$69–\$99**

There has been a baby boom among our resident J, K and L pods, with nine confirmed new calves born in the past year. Take a boat tour through the San Juans and you might be lucky enough to spot one. But even if you don't, harbor seals, porpoises, sea lions, bald eagles and ospreys keep things interesting. Choose an ethical and knowledgeable tour company; membership in the Pacific Whale Watching Association is one credential to check.

**Pro tip:** Consider free land-based whale watching from one of the sites on the [Whale Trail](#).



Courtesy Bellevue Zip Tour

## 11. Legion of zoom: [Bellevue Zip Tour](#)

**Eastgate Park • 14509 S.E. Newport Way, Bellevue • \$49–\$78 • Ages 9 and older**

Just a pinecone's throw from Interstate 90, the Bellevue Zip Tour offers a deep-forest experience. Comprising half a dozen ziplines in a maple and Douglas fir forest, the ziplines are as long as 458 feet and as high as 80 feet above the ground. Zippers travel up to 35 mph between views of Mount Baker and Glacier Peak.

**Pro tip:** Zipline harnesses and sturdy straps keep you safe but can be uncomfortable against bare skin, so dress accordingly.

## 12. Mountain high: [Stevens Pass in the summer](#)

**U.S. Highway 2, Skykomish • Prices vary by activity**

Visit Stevens after snowmelt and find a mountain transformed. Take a scenic lift ride (\$12) to refamiliarize yourself with the landscape in flower, or ride the slopes on wheels instead of sticks (adults \$29–\$35 per day; mountain bike rentals available). You could try 18 holes of Frisbee golf (\$12) followed by lunch at one of the mountain's restaurants, or even hike a sliver of the Pacific Coast Trail, which runs through the pass.

**Pro tip:** Make a weekend of it with \$20 RV camping, or spend the night in Leavenworth, about 40 minutes away.

## 13. Let's get musical: [Leavenworth Summer Theater](#)

**Multiple locations in Leavenworth • \$14–\$32**

During a weekend getaway to the faux Bavarian town, take part in a longstanding theater tradition of outdoor summer performances. Leavenworth Summer Theater is performing one of three family-friendly productions (*The Sound of Music*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *Beauty and the Beast*) almost every weekend this summer. All seats are reserved, and children must be at least 5 years old to attend.

**Pro tip:** From rafting to hiking to sausage tasting, Leavenworth is jam-packed with other family-friendly thrills.

## 14. All-natural adventure: [Kids' Trek Northwest Trek](#)

**11610 Trek Drive E., Eatonville • Admission to park \$10.95–\$21.95, discounts for Pierce County residents and military**

It's go big or go home at this huge, ADA-accessible play space that opened in April just inside the gates of the wildlife park. The half-acre space features a 20-foot-high simulated tree trunk climber with multilevel net; a toddler-friendly "construction zone" with sand and shovels; a long, bendy slide through a dark tunnel; kid-size log cabins; and a bubbling spring with a hand pump.

**Pro tip:** Arrive at 11 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month for a "Wild Day of Play" guided play session that includes a take-home craft.

## 15. Pedal power: [Mountain biking in Black Diamond](#)

**Black Diamond • Park on the east side of**

**State Route 169, between S.E. 288th St. and Black Diamond-Ravensdale Road • Free**

A recently completed mile-long mountain bike trail in Black Diamond starts right off the parking lot. Just easy enough for your middle schooler and just hard enough to be interesting, it's a perfect beginning track for the whole family. **Pro tip:** Don't miss a post-shred stop at the Black Diamond Bakery for more experienced kids.



Courtesy Northwest Trek



Discovery Playtown. Photo credit: April Chan

## 16. Small-town life: Discovery Playtown

**Discovery Playtown • 26545 Maple Valley-Black Diamond Road S.E., Maple Valley • \$8-\$10**

On a steamy (or rainy) day, head to one of the region's newest indoor play spaces. At Discovery Playtown, kids can try out different real-life roles in a child-size town, complete with play restaurant, grocery store, fire station and animal hospital.

**Pro tip:** Just two blocks away is Maple Valley's premier handmade ice-cream stop, Nutty Squirrel Gelato.



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## 17. Beach magic: [Seahurst Park](#)

**Seahurst Park • 1600 S.W. Seahurst Park Road, Burien • Free**

Seahurst Park is no secret to Burien residents, but offering one of the best >> tide pooling beaches on Puget Sound, views of the Olympics, two playgrounds, a trail system and ample parking, it's a surprise people don't come from far and wide to spend a day here. After a massive beach restoration project in 2014, Seahurst is awaiting discovery by families from all over the region.

**Pro tip:** Check the [Environmental Science Center](#) calendar for all-ages educational events at the park.

## 18. Baseball, fountains and naval ships: [Bremerton](#)

**Puget Sound Navy Museum • 251 First St., Bremerton • Free**

Walk onto the Bremerton ferry at Pier 52 in Seattle and an hour later you'll disembark at the navy town's compact waterfront, with stroller-friendly boardwalk paths and attractions ranging from splash-friendly volcano fountains to the Navy Destroyer USS Turner Joy. A highlight is the free-admission [Puget Sound Navy Museum](#): This summer, it hosts *When Baseball Went to War*, a temporary exhibit that fuses military and sports history, with a look at the ship-based baseball teams that first formed in the 1880s. The stories of Navy baseball players including Yogi Berra, Bob Feller and Ted Williams are highlighted in the exhibit.

**Pro tip:** To keep your kids engaged, use the age-appropriate scavenger hunts provided by the museum.

## 10 great family-friendly fests around Puget Sound



Photo: Dragon Fest

Summer in Puget Sound offers a festival for (practically) every day of the week, but which are worth braving the crowds for? Here are family-friendly standouts.

**1. [Roy Pioneer Rodeo](#):** Get a little bit country at the Pioneer Rodeo in Roy, held twice each summer. June 6–7 and Sept. 5–6.

2. **Seattle International Dance Festival:** For 16 days, artists from around world (and Seattle) will showcase innovative new works at venues in Seattle. June 10–25.
3. **Fremont Solstice Fair:** The Solstice Fair is famous for body-painted cyclists, but at its heart the fair is still a family-friendly celebration of the life-giving properties of sunshine and art. June 17–19.
4. **Seattle PrideFest:** Some of us are old enough to remember Pride weekend as a Bacchanalia, but nowadays Pride is an all-ages way to celebrate love in all its forms, including a family day at Cal Anderson Park. June 25–26.
5. **Timber! Outdoor Music Festival:** Now that Bumbershoot costs an arm and a leg, Timber Fest at Tolt-MacDonald Park in Carnation is a great alternative. Kids under 12 are free. July 14–16.
6. **Dragon Fest:** Lion and dragon dances, traditional Taiko drumming, Korean performances, Filipino dance and, most importantly for snack-obsessed kids, \$3 small plates. July 16–17.
7. **Sandsations:** Drive down to Long Beach for the 32nd annual sand-sculpting contest right along the boardwalk. Marvel at the sculptures, or build something yourself — there are competitions for all skill levels. July 23.
8. **Seattle Art Fair:** It doesn't matter if you don't have the budget to become an art collector. You and your kids can be exposed to great art from all over the world for the price of a ticket (TBA). Aug. 4–7.
9. **Arts in Nature Festival:** This unusual festival at Camp Long in West Seattle mixes performances and participation in arts activities. Aug. 22–23.
10. **CHOMP!** King County's local food and sustainable-living festival at Marymoor Park is an educational feast. Dates are TBA, but last year's festival was in mid-September.