

# Best Puget Sound Winter Fun, From A to Z

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# Best Puget Sound Winter Fun, From A to Z

There's something for everyone this Northwest winter

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**EDITOR NOTE:** This story appears in ParentMap's Family Adventure Guide [Winter](#) print edition. [Subscribe today!](#)

Summer gets more than its fair share of love, especially considering our longest (and wettest!) season has so much to offer. We've got a [winter](#)-fun bucket list, with ideas from A to Z, indoors and out, wet or dry. Here are the parks, pools, play spaces and other places that make for the best family adventures a Northwest [winter](#) has to offer.

## A is for arboretum

Not every garden looks best in summer. The [Joseph A. Witt Winter Garden](#) at Seattle's Washington Park Arboretum is alive with color and fragrance, thanks to Daphne, witch hazel, cyclamen and other [winter](#) bloomers. Be sure to rent an Explorer Pack (binoculars, magnifying glasses, activities) from the Graham Visitor Center before you head out. Also, consider taking a free guided family walk on Saturdays from 1 to 2:30 p.m. (not offered in December). With stops for games and activities, the tour is ideal for 2- to 12-year-olds. No preregistration necessary.

## B is for books

When little kids resist reading at home, book it to a story time. Your local library and neighborhood bookstore likely offer options, but to make story time extra special, add chocolate at [Theo's Chocolate](#) in Fremont or try story time on a boat at [The Center for Wooden Boats](#). Also consider pairing a favorite book with a trip to the

theater; this [winter](#), catch “The Little Prince” at [Seattle Children’s Theatre](#) (Jan. 18–Mar. 4).

## C is for cocoa (and coffee!)

Who doesn’t appreciate a hot drink on a cold day? Make sure you get to drink yours while it’s still hot by going to a kid-friendly café. From [Vios Cafe](#) in North Seattle to [Tougo Coffee Co.](#) in the Central District, coffee shops that double as play spaces abound. Get ideas [here](#), too.

## D is for dive

Dive into [winter](#) by visiting an indoor swimming pool. [People’s Community Pool](#) opened in Tacoma last year with lots of kid-friendly features — a shallow swimming area with submerged bench plus toddler-friendly spray pad — and great pricing (\$3–\$4, ages 4 and younger, free). At the other end of the Sound, [Snohomish Aquatic Center](#) has a lazy river, 102-degree pool, zero-depth area and the only surf-simulation machine in the region.

## E is for engineering

[Winter](#) offers the perfect excuse for productive screen time. Check out local [Engineering for Kids](#) programs, [explore 3-D printing](#) or fuel a kid’s passion for Minecraft with a [Coding with Kids](#) class. Does your kid want something more hands-on? Explore Lego Robotics or even Arduino at Redmond’s [Computers and Math 4 Kids](#).

## F is for freebies

Fun fact: Fourth-graders get [a free pass to all national parks](#), while fifth-graders ski for free all [winter](#) at [Stevens Pass](#) and [Mt. Baker ski areas](#).

## G is for gyms

Whether you're looking for a pint-size fire station, bouncy house or just an open space to ride a tricycle without getting muddy, there's an indoor play space to meet your needs. From [Giggle Jungle](#) in Redmond to [Discovery Playtown](#) in Maple Valley, with [a host of Seattle community centers](#) in between, Puget Sound-area families are spoiled with toddler gym choices. We've got even more ideas [here](#).

## H is for Henson

Jim Henson has taken up residence at the [Museum of Pop Culture \(MoPop\)](#), but he's only around for a little bit longer. The *Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited* closes Jan. 3. Don't miss your chance to view original puppets, behind-the-scenes footage and iconic costumes. Plus, try your hand at on-camera puppeteering. [Read our review](#).

## I is for ice skating

Seattle Center's annual [Winterfest](#) features a seasonal skating rink, as does [Bellevue](#). Beat the crowds by visiting the area's year-round rinks at Shoreline's [Highland Ice Arena](#) and the nonprofit [Lynnwood Ice Center](#). [Sno-King Ice Arenas](#) in Kirkland and Renton host

hockey and broomball, while [Kent Valley Ice Centre](#) has indoor mini golf and batting cages.

## J is for jump

Nothing gets the wiggles out like jumping around on trampolines and bouncy houses. Test out fun zones like [Elevated Sportz](#) in Bothell, [Aerosports Trampoline Parks](#) (formerly Trampoline Nation) in Federal Way and [Arena Sports](#) in Seattle's Magnuson Park.

## K is for kayak

During winter, kayakers of all abilities work on their skills during practice sessions hosted by the [Washington Kayak Club](#). The controlled environment of an indoor pool makes it easy for kids to focus and stay safe. The club hosts two weekly sessions at pools between Tacoma and Shoreline; check its website for a list of sessions hosted by other kayak-loving groups, too.

## L is for lanes

Get a classic bowling alley experience at [West Seattle Bowl](#). Or get a taste of modern-day bowling at newer lanes, from [Acme Bowl](#) in Tukwila, which combines bowling with an arcade, to Bellevue's swanky [Lucky Strike](#).

## M is for makers' space

[Wunderkind](#) in North Seattle has both Lego and Duplo stations for kids. Plus, there's a hangout for adults featuring a full-service café

kids. Plus, there's a hangout for adults featuring a full-service cafe (outside food is welcome, too). Shop for recycled art supplies or try an explorative art-making class at [Seattle ReCreative](#). At [SoDo MakerSpace](#), teens can take classes in product design, hardware electronics and fabrication, not to mention workshops with 3-D printers and CNC routers.

## N is for naval gazing

Visit Bremerton's compact waterfront for stroller-friendly boardwalk paths and the awe-inspiring Navy destroyer [USS Turner Joy](#). Be sure to visit the free [Puget Sound Navy Museum](#) while you're in town. Pro tip: Keep your kids engaged with the museum's age-based scavenger hunts.

## O is for opera

Think opera isn't for kids? You'll think again after attending this year's [Seattle Opera](#) season. Rossini's classic Barber of Seville (Oct. 14–28) is a genuinely funny comedy filled with action and color. Later in the season, try *Così fan tutti* (Jan. 13–27). It's Mozart's comedy of manners about two army buddies who disguise themselves to test their girlfriends' loyalty. Updated with pantsuits and cell phones, the characters display some shameless behavior will be all too familiar to teens.

## P is for Pike Place

With summer crowds behind us, Pike Place Market is returned — for the most part — to locals. Recent renovations and an

expansion, [which opened in June](#), offer more options than ever at the Market. Bonus: Much of the good stuff is under cover! More ideas [here](#).

## Q is for Quinault

Get out of the rain of the [Olympic National Forest](#) at [Lake Quinault Lodge](#). Opened in 1926, the lodge has an indoor pool and a lobby fireplace; what it does not have are in-room phones or TVs. Nearby, you'll find [Lake Quinault Museum](#), local ranger station and quirky Quinault Mercantile (half diner, half convenience store, all fun).

## R is for rock climbing

Try rock climbing indoors this [winter](#) before getting your belay on next summer. [Vertical World](#) has locations in Seattle and Redmond, with a new location slated to open farther north by year's end. [Stone Gardens](#) has two locations; the one in Bellevue has a kids' area. If you're looking for specialized kids' programs, try [Seattle Bouldering Project](#) or [Edgeworks Climbing](#) in Tacoma.

## S is for skateboarding

[All Together Skatepark](#) in Fremont is Seattle's only indoor skatepark. As the name implies, all skill levels are welcome, with special classes and skate times for girls and for kids 11 and younger. Check [its Facebook page](#) for updates.

## T is for tropical

When you can't take the chill anymore, take a trip to the tropics — no airfare required. The Tropical Butterfly House at [Pacific Science Center](#) stays balmy at 80 degrees. Plus, 500 new butterflies join the flutter each week! Over at [Woodland Park Zoo](#), try the Tropical Rain Forest exhibit to see ocelots, pygmy marmosets and poison dart frogs while getting warm.

## U is for underwater

Shake things up by swimming with sharks at [Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium](#) in Tacoma. Kids ages 8 and older can don a dry suit to get close to sharks in an underwater cage. You can actually dive with the sharks if you're scuba-certified and 15 or older.

## V is for Volunteer Park

Spot bromeliads, palms, ferns and cacti at [Volunteer Park Conservatory](#). This Victorian greenhouse rests at the north end of Volunteer Park on Capitol Hill and is modeled on London's Crystal Palace. The greenhouse also serves as a repository for restricted orchids, cycads and other plants seized by U.S. Fish and Wildlife agents.

## W is for wings

Explore our state in a state-of-the-art movie experience at [Wings Over Washington](#), which combines mobile seats with an IMAX-like theater screen for a bird's-eye view of iconic Washington landscapes. [Read our review.](#)



## X is for extreme sports

If your kids are climbing the walls, they might as well learn how to do it right. Consider parkour. [Parkour Visions](#) offers classes for kids ages 9–13. Once they've taken a class, kids can play on their own during the open gym on Saturday and Sunday nights. Do they need even more of an adrenaline rush? Reach new heights with indoor skydiving at [iFly](#).

## Y is for yurts

Camping in the rain is a drag, even with a quality tent. Glamping in a yurt is a whole other experience. [Snag an off-season reservation](#).

## Z is for zoos

[Winter](#) is a terrific time to visit a zoo; it's indoors, less crowded and there are new animals. This year, see Woodland Park Zoo's baby snow leopard or the new hammerhead sharks at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

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Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer with two daughters. When she is not writing for ParentMap, she [blogs about books and travel](#) and spends too much time on Twitter.

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