

Virtual Outings and Field Trips for Seattle-Area Kids and Families

By Gemma Alexander

Most parents have put a lot of energy into limiting their kids' screen time. But not all screen time is created equal, and [unusual times](#) call for unusual methods.

We are all getting better at [creating enriching experiences at home](#), but kids and adults eventually want to get out of the house. Of course, there are still lots of [things you can do in nature](#), but if you're craving a culture fix, here are some mostly local, mostly free virtual outings.

Use the arrows above the image to “get out of the house” from your perch on the couch.

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Thanks to technology, you don't have to give up enriching museum visits, even when the buildings are closed. Some museums always have extensive digital experiences, others are still expanding their offerings in response to the pandemic. But all of them are worth checking out.

- [Stay Home With SAM](#) is Seattle Art Museum's blog series featuring video interviews with artists and notable objects from the museum collection. Check out the Georgia O'Keefe paintings.
- Pacific Science Center has dedicated a section of its web page to [understanding COVID-19](#) and another with [PacSci-like home activities](#), from videos to social live-streams, Q&As, and suggested activities and experiments.
- [The Museum of Flight](#)'s extensive website includes 3-D self-guided virtual tours and 360-degree panoramas of the interiors of the museum's most iconic aircraft.
- The Burke Museum's new [Burke from Home](#) resources page provides activities for younger kids — such as printable coloring pages and crafts — as well as short videos focusing on individual items in the museum's collection. At two to three minutes in length each, these videos provide a lot more information than just running past the object in the museum — without exceeding young attention spans.
- Living Computers: Museum + Labs states, "To explore our various online offerings, you can access our systems menu interface using a terminal program (such as PuTTY or Teraterm or Terminal.app) to make a connection via the SSH protocol." If that makes sense to you or your tech-minded kid, documentation on the various online systems and a guide to getting started using them can be found [online](#).
- Ballard's [National Nordic Museum](#) has streamable [oral history interviews](#) and digitized highlights of their collections [posted online](#).
- Expecting that museums are unlikely to reopen in time for the planned [Cadence Video Poetry Festival](#), the Henry Art Gallery and Northwest Film Forum are moving the April 15–17 event online.

When you've run out of local museums, remember that many of the world's most iconic museums are always available for exploration, no travel required, thanks to [Google Arts & Culture](#). The Guggenheim, the Louvre, the Uffizi and more are all just a click away.

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Responding to the ban on group gatherings, hometown hero Ben Gibbard (of Death Cab for Cutie and The Postal Service fame) started a living room concert series. Every day at 4 p.m., [Gibbard streams live performances](#) from his couch. During the hour-long sets, he plays requests and stumps for local charities.

Lots of other local and independent artists have come up with the same idea, although most of them aren't performing daily. Local radio station KEXP is keeping track of online concerts in a [calendar on its website](#). (The station also has a huge catalog of live in-studio recordings on its YouTube channel.)

Seattle Symphony is sharing [full concert videos](#) for free. Check the schedule and tune in.



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Virtual Outings and Field Trips for Seattle-Area Kids and Families

Tours, performances and more family “outings” to enjoy from the couch

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER)

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PHOTO: Ahamefule Oluo performing at On the Boards. Credit: Bruce Clayton

Enjoy the show

Local theater [On the Boards](https://www.ontheboards.tv/) (<https://www.ontheboards.tv/>) offers videos of full performas for free on-demand streaming through April. You can find some Broadway musicals on YouTube or subscribe to [BroadwayHD](https://www.broadwayhd.com/) (<https://www.broadwayhd.com/>), and you can even some puppet and kid-focused theater on the [Social Distancing Festival](#)

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BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER)

Seattle-based freelance writer Gemma Alexander focuses on the intersection of parenting and the arts. When she's not writing for "ParentMap," she blogs at gemmadeealexander.com (<https://gemmadeealexander.com/>) and tweets at [@gemmadeettweet](https://twitter.com/gemmadeettweet).

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Unfortunately, local zoos and aquariums are currently closed and mostly offline. But the [San Diego Zoo](#) and the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) have live cams of their most charismatic animals.

The Cincinnati Zoo is running a [Home Safari Facebook Live](#) event each weekday at noon local time (3 p.m. EDT). Each Home Safari highlights one amazing animal and includes a related home-based activity.

Closer to home, [Harbor WildWatch](#) in Gig Harbor has an underwater cam that pairs nicely with STEM-based digital content posted each week.

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Okay, so most of your teens are probably playing networked video games already. But even younger kids can get in on the action by playing Minecraft with their friends on the [Living Computers: Museum + Labs](#)' dedicated Minecraft servers. And if they want to virtually die of dysentery while avoiding coronavirus, they can play [Oregon Trail](#) on an Apple 2 emulator.

Tabletop gamers can still gather their adventuring party on [Astral Tabletop](#). For those who don't already have a campaign running, [Roll20](#) has made a starter D&D game in Critical Role's Wildemount setting available for free.

Bellevue-based [Reality Break](#) escape rooms is posting a weekly solve-at-home puzzle that families can play together.

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Catch a movie

If your family has a habit of going out to see movies at the theater, regular old Netflix can be a letdown. Beginning with “Trolls World Tour,” on April 10, [Universal Studios](#) is releasing new movies to platforms, including iTunes, Google Play, Amazon Prime and FandangoNow, on the day they were scheduled to hit theaters. Expect other studios to follow suit. Stock up on popcorn and soda and watch a new release on Friday night!

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Some elementary school teachers have started hosting virtual story times on their schools' Facebook pages, but if your child's teacher hasn't, there are lots of other places to go for virtual story time.

KidsQuest Children's Museum has virtual story times (and craft projects) on its [YouTube channel](#).

[Songwriting Through Youth Literacy Education](#) (a.k.a. STYLE) will be posting a musical story time each week. Seattle Opera is busy converting its [Opera Time read and sing program](#) for pre-K through second grade into a digital format.

[The Brooklyn Public Library](#) livestreams virtual story time on Facebook daily.

Lots of children's book authors are reading their own books — check social media and author and publisher websites to find out if your child's favorite authors are among them. ([Mo Willems](#) of bus-driving-pigeon fame isn't doing story time, but he is giving weekday art lessons at 10 a.m. local time, Monday–Friday).

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From dance classes to martial arts to music lessons, lots of local extracurricular activities are moving online — as both a way to keep small businesses afloat and to stay connected with students during social distancing. Some are using password-protected YouTube videos, others are livestreaming classes using Zoom conference calls.

If the instructors for your kids' extracurricular activities haven't done so already, reach out to them and ask about virtual classes. These virtual experiences are not as good as being there in person, but they are a lot better than being home alone on the couch.