

OUT + ABOUT/CITY ADVENTURES

From Murals to Sculptures: Explore Seattle's Outdoor Art Scene With Kids

Get your free urban art fix with a side of vitamin D

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER) |

PUBLISHED ON: MARCH 26, 2025



PHOTO: courtesy of explorekirkland.com

When the sun starts coming out in spring, Seattle-area families can't wait to get outdoors after months of [indoor rainy-day play](https://www.parentmap.com/article/indoor-activities-seattle-bellevue) (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/indoor-activities-seattle-bellevue>). But the trails and campsites are far from warm and dry. Fortunately, in Seattle, you can discover great art on the side of the road as well as in buildings. This spring, plan a free, outdoor urban-art adventure, when you can enjoy the sunshine while it lasts, knowing that getting warm and dry is just a coffee shop away.

City of sculpture

Let's start with the obvious: One-third of Seattle Art Museum is located outdoors, accessible to families (and leashed pets) for free 365 days a year. [Olympic Sculpture Park](https://www.seattleartmuseum.org/visit/olympic-sculpture-park) (<https://www.seattleartmuseum.org/visit/olympic-sculpture-park>) marks the north end of the downtown waterfront, covering 9 acres with nearly two dozen large-scale and site-specific sculptures. These works are

joined by paved paths that snake between PACCAR Pavilion on Western Avenue and Pocket Beach at the south end of Myrtle Edwards Park. Market at the Park, the café inside the pavilion, is closed until May 26, but you can pack a picnic if the weather is fine, or plan to warm up with a snack at nearby Cherry Street Coffee House on First Avenue.



Seattle Art Museum in downtown Seattle. Photo courtesy of seattleartmuseum.org

You could fill your entire springtime just planning day trips to find the [Thomas Dambo trolls](https://www.parentmap.com/article/giant-trolls-thomas-dambo-seattle) (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/giant-trolls-thomas-dambo-seattle>). Dambo's massive public art project combines Scandinavian and Coast Salish traditions in six whimsical, gigantic troll sculptures scattered around the region. Each unique, named sculpture has a backstory with an underlying environmental message. Seekers can find them in Ballard, West Seattle and Issaquah, and on [Vashon Island](https://www.parentmap.com/article/easy-day-trip-vashon-island-kids-families) (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/easy-day-trip-vashon-island-kids-families>) and [Bainbridge Island](https://www.parentmap.com/article/bainbridge-island-ferry-day-trip-families) (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/bainbridge-island-ferry-day-trip-families>). There's even a troll in Portland.

Explore the sculptures of the city one neighborhood at a time with the [Seattle Public Art Map](https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Arts/Downloads/WalkingTours/PublicArtMap_Web.pdf) (https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Arts/Downloads/WalkingTours/PublicArtMap_Web.pdf), which is divided into 10 areas: South Lake Union, the Waterfront, Belltown, Denny Triangle, Pike Place Market, Central Business District, Pioneer Square, Chinatown–International District, SoDo and Seattle Center. (Don't forget to look for Seattle Center's [temporary art installations, on view](https://www.seattlecenter.com/explore/arts/art-installations) (<https://www.seattlecenter.com/explore/arts/art-installations>) through the end of April.) You can tailor your own itinerary using Seattle Office of Arts & Culture's [searchable online collections](https://seattlearts.emuseum.com/collections) (<https://seattlearts.emuseum.com/collections>). The walkable [Fremont neighborhood](https://fremont.com/art/) (<https://fremont.com/art/>), with more than 50 pieces of public art (including its own famous troll under the Aurora Bridge and the iconic J.P. Patches sculpture) is another great spot to explore.

Outside of Seattle, visit [Kirkland's outdoor sculpture gallery](https://www.explorekirkland.com/things-to-do/arts-and-culture/public-art/) (<https://www.explorekirkland.com/things-to-do/arts-and-culture/public-art/>) (and if you've got a few thousand dollars to spare, buy one of the pieces), or browse public art throughout King County by using [4Culture's website](https://www.4culture.org/public-art/browse-public-art/) (<https://www.4culture.org/public-art/browse-public-art/>). (use the search function to find works in your town).



Olympic Sculpture Park. Photo: JiaYing Grygiel

Mural mayhem

Do206 maintains a [guide](https://do206.com/p/your-guide-to-seattle-public-art-and-murals) of primarily murals (but also statues and other works) that mixes publicly owned and publicly viewable art, with an emphasis on works that are quirky and/or community centered. Visit Seattle has [another mural guide](https://visitseattle.org/blog/murals-aplenty/), and with almost no overlap with Do206's guide. If whimsy is your style, [Henry spotting](https://www.parentmap.com/article/exploring-seattle-public-art-with-kids-henry-murals) has entertained local families for more than 15 years. Nowadays, you can take a [Henry mural tour](https://www.henry.art/), visit artist Ryan Henry Ward's gallery and pick up a smaller-scale work on canvas, or even offer up your own garage door to participate in his "1,000 Sasquatch Heads" public art project. If you're seeking a more varied guided tour, look no further than [Street Hues](https://www.globalfamilytravels.com/book-seattle-street-art-tour), a small-group walking adventure exploring Seattle's graffiti, sticker bombs and more "traditional" spray-paint, brushwork and stencil pieces, while the guide discusses topics such as ownership, power and identity in public art.

Last year, the [Hope Corps Downtown Mural Project](https://visitseattle.org/things-to-do/arts-culture/visual-arts/hopcorpsmuralproject/) commissioned local artists to create 36 new murals in neighborhoods from Belltown to SoDo. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) blog has created a self-guided walking tour for Belltown, and you can use the project's online map to find the rest of the new murals and plan your own neighborhood explorations. Predating the new murals, the city's [neighborhood art guides](https://www.seattle.gov/arts/experience/maps-and-apps) are still useful for finding all kinds of public art works.

Pike Place Market has its own [public art guide](https://www.pikeplacemarket.org/public-art-in-the-market/) to a dozen pieces — from murals to bronze pigs — and that's just the beginning for this art-rich neighborhood. You can't miss [two of the largest murals](https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/seattle-now-has-two-of-the-largest-outdoor-murals-in-north-america/) in North America, but keep your eyes open for three augmented-reality murals installed for the 50th anniversary of the Market. The Seattle Times put together a [Capitol Hill mural loop walk](https://www.seattletimes.com/life/outdoors/sample-seattle-street-art-with-a-short-walk-featuring-capitol-hill-murals/), and HistoryLink has a [downloadable tour](https://historylink.tours/tour/public-art-in-pioneer-square/) of public art in Pioneer Square.



A portrait of Ida B. Wells, a journalist, educator and an early civil-rights leader. Photo courtesy of seattleartmap.com

Although Seattle is hard to beat for murals, there is also a [downtown Bellevue art map](https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/bellevue/Bellevue_Art_Map_Full_Version/c754-4b7f-bbdb-9f66932c9bd0.pdf) (https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/bellevue/Bellevue_Art_Map_Full_Version/c754-4b7f-bbdb-9f66932c9bd0.pdf), and you'll need to take the car if you want to see everything on [Redmond's interactive public art map](https://www.redmondoregon.gov/how-do-i/find-a-city-location/find-public-art/) (<https://www.redmondoregon.gov/how-do-i/find-a-city-location/find-public-art/>) in person. You can plan an outdoor art adventure in smaller cities, such as [Burien](https://wabiburien.org/burien-public-art-map/) (<https://wabiburien.org/burien-public-art-map/>), with its own public art map, or check out [Shoreline's Black History Murals](https://seattleartmap.com/2024/01/02/shoreline-city-black-history-murals/) (<https://seattleartmap.com/2024/01/02/shoreline-city-black-history-murals/>), featured on the [Seattle Art Map](https://seattleartmap.com/) (<https://seattleartmap.com/>) blog. You could even contribute your own public artwork through King County's [bus shelter mural program](https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/metro/programs-and-projects/community-programs/bus-shelter-mural) (<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/metro/programs-and-projects/community-programs/bus-shelter-mural>). In Seattle or farther afield, try using [MASA](https://findmasa.com/view/map) (<https://findmasa.com/view/map>), an interactive map (with a beta version of the app) of street art around the world, or use the [Public Art Archive's searchable database](https://www.publicartarchive.org/search?field=%2A&geo=47.4796927%7C-122.2079218&mapView=onview&mapZoom=12&query=&searchArtworksSort=%7B%22orderField%22%3A%22%2) (<https://www.publicartarchive.org/search?field=%2A&geo=47.4796927%7C-122.2079218&mapView=onview&mapZoom=12&query=&searchArtworksSort=%7B%22orderField%22%3A%22%2>) to find art where you live or wherever you plan to visit.

Kids might especially enjoy the proliferation of art-wrapped signal boxes that offer art at eye level. Mural artist [Desmond Hansen](https://desmondhansenart.wordpress.com/) (<https://desmondhansenart.wordpress.com/>) has painted close to 100 artist portraits on traffic signal boxes (mostly in West Seattle), and as with the bus shelters, all you need is a permit to [paint a Seattle signal box](https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/permits-and-services/permits/signal-box-artwork) (<https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/permits-and-services/permits/signal-box-artwork>) of your own.

All of these guides, maps and apps are great for planning an art-focused adventure, but they still barely scratch the surface of the creative expression found on walls, fences and sidewalks in our region. No matter what kind of outing you're on – even if it's just a walk through your neighborhood – don't forget to look up and around you. You might be amazed at the art you find.

More ways to experience art:

[How to Visit Seattle Museums for Free \(https://www.parentmap.com/article/how-visit-family-friendly-museums-around-seattle-free\)](https://www.parentmap.com/article/how-visit-family-friendly-museums-around-seattle-free)

7 Great Children's Museums for Northwest Families (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/best-childrens-museum-guide-seattle-eastside-puget-sound>)

Exceptional Experiences for Families at Seattle-Area Art Museums
(<https://www.parentmap.com/article/art-museums-seattle>)

Neighborhood Spotlight: Tacoma's Museum District (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/tacoma-museum-district-things-to-do>)

JOIN THE PARENTMAP COMMUNITY

Get our weekly roundup of Seattle-area outings and parenting tips straight to your inbox.

SUBMIT

RELATED TOPICS

PRINT STORIES (/TAXONOMY/TERM/429)

Share this resource with your friends!



(/facebook/#!/info?test=1&https://www.addtoany.com/share#url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.parentmap.com%2Farticle%2Fpublic-

About the Author



BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER)

Seattle-based freelance writer Gemma Alexander works at the intersection of parenting and the arts. You can find her work beyond Seattle's First 1000 Days and Arts 2030 Captures 35A+20 Explore ParentMap at gemmaalexander.com (<https://gemmaalexander.com/>).

Safety Superheroes: Olivia Lippens and Ashley Hay
(/article/moms-for-safe-mercer-island-Olivia-Lippens-Ashley-Hay)

Making Cents: Ideas to Help Kids and Teens Develop Financial Literacy
([/article/financial-literacy-courses-resources-kids](#))

**OTHER ARTICLES BY THIS
AUTHOR > (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-
ALEXANDER)**

READ NEXT



Amazing (and Free) Library Services Every Seattle-Area Family Should



Parents, Do You Miss Live Shows? Is Your Kid a Budding Rockstar? Seattle



Visiting Mount Rainier This Summer? Plan Ahead (/article/mount-rainier-