



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF THE REGNIER FAMILY WONDERSCOPE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF KANSAS CITY

# 72 HOURS IN KANSAS CITY WITH KIDS

*From a children's museum to a Hallmark crafting center to a zoo, this Great Plains city abounds in kid-approved attractions.*

BY LAUREN KEITH

**K**id-friendly attractions span the Kansas City metropolitan area that straddles both Kansas and Missouri, packing in so much fun that families might find it hard to figure out how to divide their time. Here's how to get a three-day taste of Kansas City with the kids.

## DAY ONE

Kick off a Kansas City adventure at The Regnier Family Wonderscope, a 30,000-square-foot children's museum in south Kansas City that's accessible for kids with disabilities. This museum, best suited for the under-10 crowd, knows its place, with

its themed areas playing up some of the city's defining attractions, such as its "City of Fountains" nickname (more than 200 are registered in the city, said to be the largest number after Rome, Italy).

At the museum, kids love to splash around in WaterWorks, a play area with a kid-height flowing "stream" filled with water blasters, plastic ball launches and movable dams. No Kansas City experience is complete without barbecue, and so here imaginary plates get dished up in a play café. Missouri has thousands of caves, and kids can crawl around a series of secret spaces in the

museum. Above, a treehouse that looks like it's been shaken by a Kansas tornado (spot the *Wizard of Oz*-style ruby slippers) and a school bus that sticks out from the side of the building invite more climbing and clambering.

Make time for two of Kansas City's many neighborhood parks worth visiting. The recently renovated Martin Luther King Jr. Park, funded by beloved Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, features a playground with a suspended walkway, climbing area, spinners and towers a short drive east of the Country Club Plaza shopping district. In quirky Penguin Park in



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Let little ones laugh and learn at The Regnier Family Wonderscope Children's Museum (left page), Martin Luther King Jr. Park (top right) and Deanna Rose Children's Farm,

northern Kansas City, swings and slides are interspersed with larger-than-life sculptures of elephants, kangaroos and its namesake 23-foot-tall penguin.

To get up close to real-life critters instead, head to the Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead in Overland Park, about 20 miles from downtown. Younger kids will adore bottle-feeding baby goats, fishing in the pond and zooming down the slides that pop out of barn silos.

When it comes time to bed down, stay in the heart of the action in one of two hotels: the Westin or the Sheraton, both in Crown Center.

Kansas City also has a Great Wolf Lodge, with the brand's signature indoor waterpark and themed suites. It's just off I-70, perfectly placed for a quick zip into downtown.

## DAY TWO

Kansas City has long been a hub of creativity: Walt Disney lived in KC as a kid and took drawing classes at the Kansas City Art Institute. And, Hallmark, the oldest and biggest greeting card company in the US, was founded and still has its world headquarters here. Reserve a day to visit Crown Center (so named for the Hallmark logo), a shopping and entertainment complex

that packs in a huge number of family-friendly attractions. Unleash your kids' inner artist at Hallmark-sponsored Kaleidoscope, a free-to-visit art space where they can make wild creations using paper scraps from Hallmark's manufacturing process and Crayola supplies. The puzzle-cutting machine and dark room of melted crayons have entertained generations of Kansas Citians.

Other kid-centric spots at Crown Center include FUNVILLE, an indoor play area where kids can try out grown-up jobs; LEGOLAND Discovery Center, with rides, a 4D movie theater, virtual-reality racing and a model



Kids will love exploring the extensive grounds of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

PHOTO BY DON IPOCK/COURTESY OF NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART



COURTESY OF SCIENCE CITY

Dive into the hands-on exhibits at Science City.



COURTESY OF WORLDS OF FUN

Worlds of Fun provides thrills for all ages.

Kansas City made from LEGO bricks; and SEA LIFE Kansas City Aquarium, where you can walk through a tunnel of tropical fish, see rescued sea turtles, and even touch sea stars and urchins.

Teens might prefer a visit to the free Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, a world-class institution whose collection spans the globe, including ancient Egyptian coffins and works by Monet, Caravaggio, Georgia O’Keeffe and Aaron Douglas, a native Kansan and a leading artist of the Harlem Renaissance. Outside, a 22-acre sculpture park shows off the iconic 18-foot-high shuttlecocks, a glass labyrinth and summertime mini-golf course.

At the nearby (and still operating) Union Station, a planetarium scans the skies, and Science City spans the

sciences, from digging for fossils and testing the laws of physics from a high-wire bike 30 feet off the ground to an outdoor playground of simple machines, mini-zip lines and climbing structures.

### DAY THREE

The weather in the middle of the country is notoriously volatile, but when the forecast looks good, Kansas City has tons to do outdoors. Occupying 200 acres, the Kansas City Zoo is home to more than 1,700 animals from around the world, including a polar bear, penguins, stingrays and *Lion King* favorites in a large Africa area. A 650,000-gallon aquarium of sharks, sea otters, turtles, octopuses and more is slated to open in September. Getting around the zoo

is almost as fun as seeing the animals; hop on the mini railroad, tram or ski-lift-style “sky safari,” or take a short pontoon boat cruise on the lagoon.

If you’re after rides with more of an adrenaline rush, make a beeline for Worlds of Fun, an amusement park in northeastern Kansas City with dozens of attractions and seven roller coasters for older kids and kids at heart. Planet Snoopy has 20 rides for younger children. Ticket prices include entry to Oceans of Fun, a connected water park with 40 slides and water attractions.

With three days, you can sample the wide range of family-friendly activities that Kansas City has to offer. And when you’re ready to come back for another helping, the Heart of America always has more to serve up.