

Why visit a children's museum? Children's museums are fun, interactive gathering places where families can learn and play with other families. Many children's museums are located in major travel and tourism destinations. They are inclusive, non-judgmental environments where kids can be kids and lifelong learning is nurtured. More and more families visit children's museums each year for unique, face-to-face fun, enlightenment and shared experiences not found in traditional museums or other popular destinations.

Children's Museums and Vacations Adults plan vacations, and while parents and caregivers do their best to build-in activities for their children, many of these activities require adult-like strength, skills or knowledge. That's not the case at children's museums. Peek inside a children's museum and you'll see children touching a variety of textures, stacking blocks, crawling through a tunnel. Say adiós to rigid rules: at children's museums the general rule is: Please Touch! Children's museums produce programs and exhibits that transcend age and experience, and empower children to set their own pace - important features for youngsters who can get overwhelmed by being away from home and exhausted from an action-packed itinerary.

Children's Museums and Lasting Memories Often it's the downtime in between the periods of highly stimulated entertainment that children and families will remember fondly. Children's museums offer a variety of activities, some as simple as pretending to shop at a market. Other hands-on experiences may invite a family to learn about a foreign culture by trying on clothes and costumes native to a people or country. Many children's museums have exhibits that provide families an inside look into the history of the area and the principles of science. Some have new interactive LED exhibits. Children's museums offer opportunities for family learning as well for time to bond with family members.

Welcoming Places Due to the interactive nature of children's museums, most families can participate in exhibits regardless of their language fluency. Many museums provide signage and literature in more than one language. Kids will be delighted to find furniture, props and materials scaled to their size. Additionally, many children's museums create opportunities within exhibits for children and family members who use wheelchairs, or who rely heavily on their sense of sound or touch because of differing abilities.

Make the Most of Your Trip to a Children's Museum *Call ahead or visit a children's museum Web site* By checking-in ahead, you can learn about seasonal programs, exhibits, admission days and costs, as well as if the museum has a café or allows visitors to bring their own snacks and beverages. The size, type of exhibits and operations differ greatly among children's museums, which means each children's museum offers a unique experience. When arriving at a museum, study the map & check the activities.

Let Your Child be the Guide While it may be tempting to nudge your child along so that the family can see every exhibit and participate in every activity in order to get the full "value" of the museum, your child may equate quality rather than quantity as the best indicator of time well spent. So let your children explore the exhibits.

Support Your Child's Learning & Play Styles One way to do this is by asking questions that don't require a yes or no response. Such as: What do you think will happen next? Why do you think it works that way? After you leave, you may find yourselves in a place that reminds you of an exhibit. Use this to reflect with your children about the experience at the museum and how it compares with the present environment. Be prepared for surprising discoveries!