

Great Places to Go with Children

Anne Champion

Inexpensive trips within an hour of Thousand Oaks

This list was created to accompany a talk and slide presentation given by Anne Champion as part of a lecture series entitled "Parent Talk".

The series was created by the Conejo Valley Adult School, Parent Education Program as an opportunity for the parents of all children to strengthen their parenting skills. Speakers from around the country are featured.

Lectures are held in Thousand Oaks monthly, October through May. Tickets can be obtained by calling (805) 497 2761.

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Before you go, there are a number of things you can do to get the most out of your visit:

- Know your children (and yourself) and look for places that they (and you) are interested in. There are more places to visit than time to visit!
- Destinations that are usually geared for the older child can be more toddler friendly at advertised special events where they go all out. Examples: Civil War Reenactment at the Stagecoach Inn, and Rawhide Western Roundup or Fourth of July celebrations at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.
- Call ahead. Reconfirm opening hours and days as some routinely close on Mondays. Ask for directions as they know the various ways people have gotten lost. Ask about special/educational events and ask about times to avoid (i.e. large school groups) and cost of admission, parking, family membership. Ask if/when they have free admission. Many museums have one free day/month.
- Look up web site, especially of the major museums, as often there will be materials on the exhibits.
- Get a good map and use it! Check for traffic delays. Caltrans <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/roadinfo/index.htm>. Los Angeles freeway speed map: <http://www.traffic.maxwell.com/la>
- Buckle children up correctly in car seats that are appropriate to size/maturity. Many parents don't realize that at least 80% of child safety seats are incorrectly used, and that 95% of children who should be using boosters are not. Unsure of fit? Contact SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. at (800) 745-7233 or <http://www.carseat.org>. Get a group together and request a presenter from SafetyBeltSafe.
- Consider getting a membership to AAA, Automobile Club of Southern California, for breakdowns, discounts on admission, free maps and tour guides. Thousand Oaks branch: (805) 497-0911.
- Consider getting a cellular phone for emergencies or to call ahead for further directions if lost.

When you arrive:

- Investigate the perks of family memberships and ask where else the card can be used (called reciprocal agreements). Some museums allow you to visit first and you can apply the cost of your admission towards a membership at the end of the day. Membership allows flexibility of more, shorter, visits. Also members get monthly newsletters.
- Ask at museum entrances if they have kid materials such as self-guided tours or question sheets.
- Have fun. Let the child take the lead. Don't rush them to see everything; come back another time.
- Don't stay too long. You want your child to have good memories of the visit, so they will be excited to come back.

Be on the lookout for new places to go. There are several good sources of ideas for trips:

- Newspapers - 'Today' listings for local, often free, events. T.O. Star and LA Times are best.
- Web sites: <http://at-la.com>: a comprehensive list with over 40,850 links. Click on "Tourism" then click on "Museums and Historical Sites", <http://www.happenings.com>: web site of the free magazine.
- "Happenings Magazine", "Recreation Program Guide of Conejo Recreation and Park District", "Parent Pages", "Arts Scene", "LA Parent", "Los Angeles Family", "Ventura County Parent", and others at the free pamphlet racks at Borders, CRPD offices & doctors offices. Look for coupons.
- Books: Be warned - information can quickly become outdated.
 - "Around Los Angeles with Kids" by Lisa Oppenheimer/Fodor's, 2000. Pocket size book.
 - "Field Trips & Events Made Easy" by Carol Lambert, 1999. A locally published pamphlet of inexpensive field trips in Ventura, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. Available at Borders.
 - "Southern California for Kids" by Kay & Tom Sanger, 1990. Outdated, but has a real kid perspective on destinations. Pick one up if you see it at a garage sale.
- "Community Access" pages in the telephone book.
- "Family Fun", "Sunset" or "Westways" (from the AAA) for destinations further afield.
- Other parents - friends, neighbors, parents at toddler classes or parents on the web.
- Moms' groups usually have regularly scheduled field trips. There are several local groups. Look in the "Ventura County Parent" for current phone numbers for these support groups.

Destinations

Phone for directions, opening times and current admission prices. Assume adult admission costs are under \$10 unless stated otherwise. Children under 2 are often free.

Thousand Oaks, Westlake and Newbury Park

General

1. Stagecoach Inn Museum
51 South Ventu Park Road, Newbury Park. (805) 498-9441.
Several historic structures including a windmill, schoolhouse (where kids can pull the cord to ring the school bell), an adobe house and a Chumash hut. There is a nature trail and an adjacent playground with a stagecoach. Watch out for special events including civil war reenactments. Under 5 free.
2. Oakbrook Regional Park/Chumash Interpretive Center
3290 Lang Ranch Parkway, Thousand Oaks. (805) 492-8076.
This center is set on several hundred acres once occupied by the Chumash. There are nature walks and guided tours. Watch out for special events held here like 'Pow Wows'.
3. Children-oriented performances at the Civic Art Plaza or Arts Council Center.
Throughout the school year there are many excellent shows available and it is hard to keep up with all the offerings. Recommend browsing the Civic Art Plaza web site: <http://www.ci.thousand-oaks.ca.us>
Conejo Valley Adult Education Kids' Concert Series. Nancy Frawley (805) 492-2522. Target: preschoolers.
Ventura County Superintendent Concert Series. Brian Bemel (805) 646-8907. Target: 5 years and above.
Community Entertainment Series. Ramona Brandes (800) 266-3077. Target: Variety from 3 years and above.
Young Artists' Ensemble. Art Council Center (805) 381-2748. Target: 5 years and above.
Whitfield Youth Theatre. (805) 379-0696. Occasional shows. Target: 5 years and above.
4. O.K. Kids Club & The Oaks Mall
In front of East Robinsons-May, Oaks Mall. 222 W. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks. (805) 495-2031.
10:30 Thursdays. Live children's shows. Visit pet store, Macy's talking tree and the rocket in Warner Bros.
5. Concerts/Events at California Lutheran University
During the school year. Music Dept. at CLU. (805) 493-3305.
Free evening concerts are held in CLU's beautiful Samuelson Chapel with pipe organ. Programs long- can sit at back or in balcony & leave when kids tire. Watch paper for Santa Lucia, Kwanzaa, and Scandinavian festivals.
6. Kingsmen Shakespeare Festival
Summer, outdoors, CLU. Drama Dept. (805) 493-3415. <http://www.kingsmensshakespeare.org>
Professional Shakespeare in the park. Can be a bit scary. Come early and have a picnic dinner. Donation.
7. Story times/special events/summer reading program at local libraries
Thousand Oaks (city), 1401 E. Janss Road. (805) 449-2660. Calendar 'Friends of Library': <http://www.ftol.org>
Newbury Park (city), 2331 Borchard Road. (805) 498-2139.
Westlake (LA county), 4371 Park Terrace Drive. (818) 865-9230.
Throughout the school year most libraries offer high quality story time programs and special events. Also look out for used book sales. Pick up a monthly calendar of events. Go to the library more often than the mall!
8. Story times, music and much more at local bookstores and toy stores
Borders, 125 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. (805) 497-8159.
Barnes & Noble, 160 S. Westlake Blvd., Thousand Oaks. (805) 446-2820.
Zany Brainy, 111 S. Westlake Blvd., Westlake Village. (805) 449-4277.
Story times, special children's events, kids book clubs, music, poetry, chess clubs, author signings and summer reading programs. Drop in and pick up schedule of events and browse racks of free magazines.
9. Conejo Recreation and Park District classes/special events.
155 E. Wilbur Road, Thousand Oaks. (805) 495-6471. <http://www.crpdp.org/parks>
Recreation program guide comes out 4 times per year. Classes for all ages. Talk around with other mothers to find good classes and teachers. Take in free concerts in summer and free seasonal events through the year.
10. Thousand Oaks Police Department
2101 E. Olsen Road, Thousand Oaks. (805) 494-8239 or (805) 494-8267.
Do a group tour of the T.O. Police Dept. At fall/spring open house see SWAT, bomb squad and K9 unit.

11. Local Fire Stations
Drop into your local fire station and arrange a tour for your family or a group. The fire station across from the Oaks mall is a good one for the enthusiast as it is home to the local ladder truck.
12. Other occupational - type/social consciousness raising visits
Get a group together and arrange for tours of a dentist, a courtroom, a tree nursery, grocery store, post office, or radio station. Visit programs for the less fortunate. Volunteer to feed the homeless through a multi church effort coordinated at St. Paschal's (805) 496-0222, visit and donate to the Manna Food Bank (805) 497-4959, donate clothes/toys to Sarah's House for women in need (805) 581-1910, or visit residents in local nursing homes.
13. Thousand Oaks Transit (T.O.T.)
(805) 449-2477. For those transportation enthusiasts, take a ride on one of T.O.T. buses. Under 5 ride free.
14. Municipal's Service Center's Open House
May. 1993 Rancho Conejo Blvd., Thousand Oaks. Public Works, (805) 449-2491.
Call in April for a reservation. Up close look at street-cleaners, backhoes, cherry pickers, sewer pipe video equipment, welding, electric cars and go for a ride on a bus through a bus wash. Free.
15. Brett's Tropical Fish Store
2655 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. (805) 373-8511.
Come in and see tanks upon tanks of beautiful freshwater and saltwater fish.
16. Car washes
Try both the driverless and drive through. May be scary for the very young.
17. Kids' Club at Home Depot
500 N. Ventu Park Road, Newbury Park. (805) 498-2278.
First and third Saturday at 10am. Come and make a small free project. Ideal to have one parent per child.
18. Farmers' Market
East end of Oaks Mall parking lot, 222 W. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks.
On Thursdays between 4 and 7 there is a Farmers' market with the usual offerings.
19. Two Winds Ranch
4801 W. Potrero Road, Newbury Park. (805) 498-9222.
Reduced rate pony riding for fives and under, parent leads. Wear a bicycle helmet.
20. National Parks Service Visitor Center
401 W. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks. (805) 370-2301. <http://www.nps.gov/samo>
A few nature displays at this information center and bookstore. Pick up a copy of "Outdoors" which outlines the local schedule of led hikes, campfires and other nature programs. Great views of Conejo Valley.
21. Conejo Gem & Mineral Club Monthly Meeting
Arts Council Building, 482 Greenmeadow Avenue, Thousand Oaks. (805) 527-3448.
Members meet on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30pm. Special program for children. Interesting field trips. Also the club hosts an annual rock and mineral show in May with beautiful displays, a kids' silent auction, and a kids' room with pyrite panning, fishing and grab bag booths. Admission to show is free.
22. Spectating at Amateur Sports
Stimulate interest in sports by attending amateur sports games. Try local playing fields and CRPD centers where one can drop in and stay a short time.
23. Summer Swimming
Aquatics section, Conejo Recreation and Parks District. (805) 495-4674.
Recreational swimming is available afternoons and some evenings at local high school pools. In addition to regular pools, there are shallow pools where preschoolers can touch bottom at all times and learn to be comfortable in the water. Under 2 free. Season family pass for about \$80.
24. Congregation/Religious family activities
Most religious groups organize family social activities throughout the year for members. Start thinking of the community you want around your child through the teen years. Summer is a good time to start your search.
25. M.O.P.S.
Bethany Church, 200 W. Bethany Ct., Thousand Oaks. (805) 495-7029.

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) is a Christian moms' group that organizes bi-monthly Friday meetings with a presentation and craft for parent with provided childcare. Approx. \$58/year.

26. St. Paschal's Summer Festival
155 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. (805) 496-0222.
Held in July, it is a delightful small fair with amusement park rides, booths and food. Admission is free and ride prices are reasonable. Come at night and show your toddler the bright lights.
27. Events sponsored by local schools
Even before your child starts school, watch for school sponsored events at your local school such as family picnics, and family fun fundraisers. Keep informed - request to be mailed school newsletter.
28. Conejo Valley Days
April, Thousand Oaks. (805) 371-8730. A week filled with fun activities including a children's parade, a main parade and carnival which can be expensive, even with discounted tickets on family night.

Places to go to walk

29. Westlake "Lake"
The Landing, 32000 Lindero Canyon Road, Westlake Village.
Short walk along the dock to watch the action on the lake, especially the ducks.
30. Oak Creek Trail
Trailhead downhill from the Arts Council Building, 482 Greenmeadow Ave., Thousand Oaks.
Short, flat, shaded walk for toddlers/strollers. Watch out for bees & poison oak and stay on trail.
31. Wildwood Park
West end of Ave. de Los Arboles, Thousand Oaks. A teepee, waterfall, fort (currently fenced off), and Indian caves to discover. Recommended for 4 yrs or older. Water in creek may be unhealthy. Drive into the upper parking lot to be closer to the park center. Watch for parking lot closing times! See Conejo Rec. & Park District brochure for details of guided walks.
32. Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa
4126½ W. Potrero Rd., Newbury Park. (805) 375-1930. From parking lot, walk ¼ mile along a dirt road to get to paved road down Sycamore Cyn. Beautiful vistas. Interpretive Center features Native American events on Sundays. Managed by National Parks Service. Free.
33. Docent led nature walks for younger children
The Children's Nature Institute, (310) 364-3591. <http://www.childrensnatureinst.org>
Docent led, leisurely walks on trails between Santa Monica and Thousand Oaks for infants through age 8. Phone for a schedule which lists kid-friendly walks in this region with driving instructions and pertinent walk information (i.e. strollers or not). Reservations. \$10/family requested. Annual May festival.
34. Ranger led walks with the National Parks Service.
Information, 401 W. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks. (805) 370-230. <http://www.nps.gov/samo>
Pick up a copy of "Outdoors" for schedule of ranger sponsored hikes, campfires and other nature programs.

Playgrounds with restroom facilities

35. Conejo Community Park/Conejo Valley Botanical Garden
Intersection of Dover and Hendrix, there are always kids at this park. It has shade, a creek, grassy hills and a nature trail that goes through the Botanical Gardens. Sporting equipment can be signed out from CRPD office.
36. Conejo Creek North Park
Adjacent to Thousand Oaks Library, it has great equipment but no shade. Good for bicyclists or skaters.
37. Thousand Oaks Community Park
Between Avenida de Los Arboles and Avenida de Las Flores on Moorpark Road, Thousand Oaks. A large unshaded playground with newly installed equipment.
38. Oak Canyon Community Park
Hollytree Drive, at the north end of Kanan Street, Oak Park.
Set in amongst oak trees it is a peaceful park with new play equipment and a neat slide set into the hillside.

39. Park Days for pre-schoolers

Several Mom's Groups schedule regular park days. Check "Ventura Co. Parent" for current phone numbers.

Beach Escapes

40. Carpinteria State Beach & City Beaches

Palm Avenue, Carpinteria. (805) 684-2811.

It's a bit of a drive from T.O. (50 minutes) but I have found it worth it. The shallow slope and gentle wave action give it the reputation of the "world's safest beach". Tide-pools. There can be beach tar, so bring salad oil for removal. Also trains periodically pass through and can be seen & heard from the beach. Several free parking locations on city streets, or consider buying an annual "Day Use" pass for the state parks. Several family restaurants nearby.

41. Sycamore Cove State Beach

PCH near Point Mugu. (818) 880-0350.

Closest beach destination from T.O. It's a 20 minute drive using Potrero Road along a scenic canyon (not for the faint hearted!). We have usually spotted a seal or two in the breaking waves and whales and dolphins on occasion. Not a good swimming beach as it has an undertow and a stream with possible pollutants. Parking fee.

42. Leo Carrillo State Beach

On PCH just north of where crosses Mulholland Highway. (805) 488-5223.

Great tide-pools and interesting rock formations with tunnels and caves to explore. Parking fee.

43. Zuma County Beach

30050 Pacific Coast Highway between Kanan Dume and Trancas Canyon Road. (310) 457-9891.

A favorite among TO moms. Tide-pools. May have undertow. Parking fee.

Parent Talks

44. "Parent Talks"

Conejo Valley Adult Education School. (805) 497-2761.

A series of eight talks on parenting issues, by national and local speakers.

45. "Creative Options"

Women's Resource Center, 60 W. Olsen Road, Thousand Oaks. (805) 493-3345.

Day out for moms at the end of February with free childcare provided by the university preschool. Pre-register.

46. "Celebrate the Family"

Conejo Park and Recreation District/ C.S.A.P.A. (805) 495-6471.

A February Saturday morning workshop on parenting at CLU. Well-organized childcare. Pre-register.

Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Agoura, Calabasas, Woodland Hills, & Malibu

47. Tierra Rejada Farm

3370 Moorpark Road, Moorpark. (805) 529-3690.

Pick your own fruit and vegetables year round. Some large red wagons are available to transport the kids out to the fields. A farm animals zoo, including Clydesdales. Pony rides on some weekends. Group tours.

48. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

40 Presidential Drive, Simi Valley. (805) 522-8444. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu>

Library has a replica of oval office, a piece of the Berlin wall, Reagan memorabilia and special exhibits. More geared towards older children. Take your toddlers to the free family fun days instead. Free under 15 years.

49. Santa Susana Railroad Depot and Museum

6503 Katherine Road, Simi Valley. (805) 581-3462. <http://www.trainweb.org/ssmrc>

An HO scale model railroad and a look at the restored Santa Susana Railroad Depot is a delightful stop. Nearby Santa Susana Park has a winning combination- play equipment with a direct view of passing trains.

50. Strathearn Historical Park and Museum

137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley. (805) 526-6453.

Historic buildings and barns including Chumash, Spanish Rancho and American periods.

No picnicking or playground on grounds. Geared for older child. Guided tours recommended.

51. Ice Skating at Easy Street Arena
131 W. Easy Street, Simi Valley. (805) 520-7465.
Recommended for 4 yr olds and above with skater parent. Consider using a bicycle helmet for safety. Good place to go on a hot summer day. Tuesday night is 'Cheap Skate'. Can spectate for free but wear warm clothes.
52. Bowling at Harley's Simi Bowl
480 E. Los Angeles Avenue, Simi Valley. (805) 526- 4212.
Recommended for 3½ years and older. Request light balls and "bumpers" that fill the gutters. Free introductory games when a bowler's club is joined at no charge. Nice afternoon escape during a hot summer day.
53. Rancho Simi Community Park
Erringer Street and Royal Avenue, Simi Valley.
Large park with a duck pond, swimming pool, and playground.
54. Kid Crafts at Michael's Arts and Crafts Store
1117 E. Los Angeles Street, Simi Valley. (805) 526-0360.
Structured kid crafts on Saturdays. Pick up schedule. First come basis. Fee - \$2-\$3
55. Moorpark College Exotic Animal Compound Shows
Campus Road, Moorpark. (805) 378-1441.
Animal shows for children are done on weekends or by group reservation. Progressively larger animals are brought out and do a variety of showbiz tricks as announcers talk about the animals. Extra charge for a tour of the compound where the animals are housed. Watch for Spring show.
56. Moorpark College Observatory
Observatory, Campus Road, Moorpark. VCAS, (805) 529-7813.
Small observatory that hosts many interesting programs put on by the Ventura County Astronomical Society. Check recorded messages for upcoming events.
57. Moorpark College Special Events
7075 Campus Road, Moorpark. (805) 378-1400.
In April there is a mid-week multicultural day with an interesting program of performing arts and lectures, food and booths. In February there is a day for girls grade 6 –12 to explore careers in math, science and technology.
58. Train watching
Metrolink Moorpark Station, 300 High Street, Moorpark.
Amtrak/Metrolink Simi Valley Station, 5050 Los Angeles Avenue, Simi Valley.
Stay well clear of tracks. Many trains use these tracks and there is not much warning they're coming.
59. Museum and special events at the Naval stations at Port Hueneme/Point Mugu
Port Hueneme Naval Construction Ctr., Ventura Rd and Sunkist St. (805) 982-5163. <http://www.cbcpn.navy.mil>
Point Mugu Naval Air Weapons Station, PCH/Los Posas Rd. (805) 271-1273. <http://www.cbcpn.navy.mil>
The Civil Engineer Corps/Seabee Museum at the base at Port Hueneme is a great place for those 'uniform' enthusiasts, beginning with the guard at the main gate of the base. The museum showcases the Seabee's history and their construction projects around the world. In addition cultural items from many countries are displayed. Also watch the papers/web site for "don't miss" special public events such as "Seabee Days" in June at Port Hueneme, huge annual air show at Point Mugu and occasional tours of visiting ships.
60. Camarillo Airport Complex
Way Point Café, 325 Durley Avenue, Camarillo. (805) 388-1027.
WWII Aviation Museum, 275 Pleasant Valley Rd., Camarillo. (805) 482-0064.
<http://www.confederateairforce.org>
Ventura County Sheriff's helicopter hangar.
Experimental Airplane Association. (805) 383-0686.
Have lunch outdoors at the Way Point Café and watch the planes taxi and take off. Walk north to the hangers and see the Ventura County Sheriff's helicopter up close. Keep walking to the Confederate Air Force's recently enlarged museum, with several WWII planes. Keep walking to the EEA hangar where children 8-17 years can go up in a (regular) plane on 1st Sat. each month or by reservation.
61. Amazing Maize Maze
Corner of Las Posas and Hueneme Roads, Camarillo. (805) 495-5678. <http://www.AmericanMaze.com>
A maze cut out of a 4 acre cornfield around this year's theme of the Aztec Calendar. Plan on an hour or more of walking on stroller friendly ground. Solving the maze is aided by clues along the way. There are free mini mazes

at the entrance. Open June through December with a hiatus in September for setting up second maze design. Adults \$10, children \$7 & under 4 free.

62. Paramount Ranch

Cornell Way, Agoura. National Park Service. (805) 370-2301.

A 700 acre park in the Santa Monica Mountains once owned by Paramount Studios and used as film and TV location. Free guided ranger tours.

63. Agoura Animal Shelter

29525 Agoura Road, Agoura. (818) 991-0071.

Come give some love to these unfortunate animals.

64. Simulated rainforest display

Sebastian Corp. Office, 6109 DeSoto Avenue, Woodland Hills. (800) 829-7322 ext. 4881.

Small simulated rainforest/hands-on displays. There is a 45 min. group tour, but need to book ahead.

65. Alice in Wonderland characters

Fry's Electronics, 6100 Canoga Ave., Woodland Hills. (818) 227-1000. Topanga Cyn. exit.

Enormous models of characters from Alice in Wonderland decorate this electronics store.

66. Leonis Adobe and Plummer House

23537 Calabasas Road, Calabasas. (818) 222-6511.

A re-creation of an 1880s ranch, with farm animals. Also an Adobe house and a restored mansion.

67. Fishing at Troutdale

2468 Troutdale Dr. (corner of Kanan Rd. & Troutdale Dr.), Agoura. (818) 889-9993.

Fish for trout at these man-made and stocked ponds. Admission fee & fee per fish caught.

68. Campus Recreation Days at Soka University

26800 W. Mulholland Hwy (& Las Virgenes), Calabasas. (818) 878-3741. <http://www.soka.edu/calabasas>

Guided bird and wildflower walks on certain Saturdays. Free but reservations required. Phone for schedule.

69. Malibu Lagoon State Beach

Pacific Coast Highway at Cross Creek Road, Malibu. (213) 456-9497.

Lagoon full of marine life and birds so bring your binoculars. Beautiful vistas. Warnings on unhealthy water often posted. Adamson House Museum nearby at 23200 PCH.

70. Pepperdine University's Family Fun Series Concerts

Smothers Theatre, 24255 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu. (310) 456-4522. <http://www.arachnid.pepperdine.edu>

Some different offerings than at the Civic Arts Plaza.

Ventura, Oxnard, Fillmore, Ojai and Santa Paula

71. Channel Islands National Park Headquarters

1901 Spinnaker Drive, Ventura. (805) 658-5730. <http://www.nps.gov/chis>

A great free destination with a tide-pool tank full of marine animals plus lookout tower and tours. On your way in, you will pass a beach and the Ventura Harbor village where you can walk along the dock and look at the boats, go for a boat ride tour of the harbor and ride on a carousel. Tour visiting tall ships.

72. Olivas Adobe Historical Park

4200 Olivas Park Drive, Ventura (near Ventura Harbor). (805) 644-4346.

Nice for a brief stop to see the 150 year old ranch house which was the first two story adobe building in the area. There is a cut away of the wall revealing its construction. Watch for special event days.

73. Marina Park

Pierpont Blvd. (South end), Ventura.

On the north side of the Ventura harbor is a beach park with play equipment and grass. There is a large cement boat with a hold-on-tight, overhead track swing from the mast. Watch out for glass in the sand. Free.

74. Ventura County Museum of History and Art

100 E. Main Street, Ventura. (805) 653-0323. <http://www.vcmha.org>

Small well-done museum including Chumash exhibit. Check out the farm implements at the back and the George Stuart historical exhibits. They have a popular summer program for older kids. Free under 16.

75. Albinger Archeological Museum
113 E. Main Street, Ventura. (805) 648-5823.
A small museum with artifacts which chronicle 3,500 years of area history. Outside is a display of an archeological dig site, Chumash plank canoe and adobe oven. Donation requested.
76. Mission San Buenaventura
211 East Main Street, Ventura. (805) 643-4318. <http://www.anacapa.net/~mission>
The last mission built by Father Junipero Serra.
77. Monarch Butterflies in Ventura
January/February, Camino Real Park, Dean Drive & Varsity Street, Ventura.
At the far end of the park there is a grove of eucalyptus trees where clusters of butterflies can be seen. Sign up for a Saturday family program with the City of Ventura, Community Services Department (see below).
78. Family and kid programs through the City of Ventura Community Services Department.
Request recreation guide/registration: (805) 658-4726. <http://www.ci.ventura.ca.us/frec.html>
Some great and affordable family programs ranging from tide-pool exploration to a Ventura ‘Chinatown’ program.
79. Adventures for Kids
Bookstore, 3457 Telegraph Rd., Ventura. (805) 650-9688.
Storytimes, special children’s events, author signings and summer programs. Drop in and pick up a schedule.
80. Rainbow Bridge Park
Corner of Valmore St. & Preble Ave., by Blanche Reynolds Elementary School, Ventura.
Wooden castle play equipment similar to “Kids’ World” in Santa Barbara. Can use after school only.
81. Golf-n-Stuff
5555 Walker Avenue, Ventura. (805) 644-7131.
Miniature golf course. Children under five golf free with paying adult.
82. Ventura County Fair
Seaside Park, Ventura. <http://www.vcfair.org>
Held in August, and there is much more to see than the rides. Check out the livestock, the children’s pavilion, especially the wooden toys created with love by “Gene” West, and the fireworks. Save & go on “Family Day”.
83. Blue Heron Water Playground
Lake Casitas Recreational Area, 11311 Santa Ana Road, Ventura. (805) 649-2233.
A wading pool filled with playground type equipment and water spouts galore. Need to pay \$6.50/car to enter Lake Casitas Recreational Area and then \$1.50/hour/child. Call ahead as facility can reach capacity.
84. California Oil Museum
1001 E. Main Street, Santa Paula. (805) 933-0076. <http://www.jetlink.net/~oil>
A small but impressive museum about oil mining. Life size replica of early wood oil well pump. Donation.
85. The Painted Pony Farm
15315 Ojai-Santa Paula Road, Santa Paula. (805) 525-9820.
Visit a family farm and pet and feed the farm animals. Group and summer programs. Call for tours. Suggest wearing rainboots. May not take long to see the farm so plan other places to see.
86. Fillmore Central Park Station & the Mill
Across from City Hall on Central Avenue, Fillmore.
Fillmore and Western Railway Company. (800) 773-8724. <http://www.fwry.com>
On weekends see the Mill or vintage 1920s trains depart from station. 2½ hour train rides are \$16/adult.
87. Fillmore Fish Hatchery
One mile east of Fillmore on Highway 126. Open 7:30-3:30.
Make a brief stop for a self-guided tour of the process of raising rainbow trout at this state facility.
88. Maritime Museum
2731 S. Victoria Ave., Oxnard (C.I. Harbor). (805) 984-6260. http://www.smugglersbay.com/maritime_museum
Local maritime history is depicted with photos and salvaged parts off shipwrecks. There is a large collection of finely crafted model ships. Some hands on displays. Group tours available. Donation requested.

89. Gull Wings Children's Museum
418 W. 4th Street, Oxnard. (805) 483-3005. <http://www.gullwingsmuseum4kids.org>
A hands-on, interactive museum designed for children 2 to 12 offers children an opportunity to discover and learn by experience. Gem exhibit in cave. Model railroad. Space exhibit. Special Saturday events - watch the newspaper. Family memberships available.
90. Heritage Square
715 South A Street, Oxnard. (805) 483-7960. <http://www.ci.oxnard.ca.us/heritagesquare.html>
Eleven restored turn of the century mansions and farmhouses that are now commercial properties. Tours.
91. Carnegie Art Museum
424 South C Street (at 4th Street), Oxnard. (805) 385-8157. <http://www.vcnet.com/carnart>
Small museum with good interactive children's room. Many children's programs.

Santa Barbara

92. Kids' World - Alameda Park
City park at the corner of Santa Barbara & Micheltorena, Santa Barbara.
Named "The Castle" by my kids it is a great place to let the kids run off their energy after the car ride from the Conejo Valley. Crafted out of wood with love, by local volunteers, imagination and hide and seek games abound. Be careful, the layout makes it difficult to keep tabs on kids. Free.
93. Alice Keck Park Gardens
North of Micheltorena Street at Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara (across from Kids' World).
If you can get your kids away from Kids' World, go across the street and see the turtles and Koi. Free.
94. Santa Barbara Mission
2201 Laguna Street, Santa Barbara. (805) 682-4713.
"Queen of Missions" built in 1786. Good for at least one educational visit to see architecture/historical significance. This is not a place that is going to hold younger children's attention long.
95. Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens
1212 Mission Canyon Road, Santa Barbara. (805) 682-4726.
A beautiful spot to let the kids explore trails. Hot mid-day and summer, although there is shade.
96. Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
2559 Puesta del Sol Road, Santa Barbara. (805) 682-4711. <http://www.sbnature.org>
This is my personal favorite. Typical of Santa Barbara, it is small by LA standards but extremely well-done. Includes Chumash, insect, & reptile exhibits. Take in a planetarium show (5 and above), a nature walk and have lunch in the amphitheater. A great value family membership including admission to the Sea Center and many museums across the country as well as keeping you informed of special events.
97. Sea Center/Stearns Wharf
211 Stearns Wharf, Santa Barbara. (805) 962-0885. <http://www.sbnature.org/seacentr.htm>
A part of the S B Museum of Natural History, this is a fun trip starting with the bumpy drive out on the wharf to park (free for Sea Center patrons with validation). The main attraction is a touch tank supervised by UCSB marine biology students, who know their stuff. Afterwards take a walk, buy an ice cream cone, or go fishing.
98. Chase Palm Park
Cabrillo Street, Santa Barbara.
Enchanting new park with a playground equipment boat, a giant shell with water canal, whales that blow mist, gardens, carousel and the periodic siting of trains passing by. Free. There is no parking lot, only room to drop off. Park on Cabrillo St. or at the visitor's center at I Garden St. for a fee.
99. Santa Barbara Amtrak station
State Street & Yanonali Street, Santa Barbara. Amtrak: (800) 872-7245. <http://www.amtrak.com>
Taking the train from to Santa Barbara is fun but expensive. Watch for specials where kids ride free. Satisfy your train enthusiast the inexpensive way by watching the train arrive and depart from the station. Conductors will sometimes let you on the train while it is at the station. Visit the Moreton Bay Fig tree while you wait.
100. Moreton Bay Fig Tree
Monecito & Chapala Street, Santa Barbara.

Just down the road from the Amtrak station. This enormous tree which can shade 1000 people and whose branches span 160 feet was brought by a sailor from Australia in 1877. Free.

101. City Electric Trolleys
Fun way to get from Stearns Wharf to upper State Street. Nominal fare for adults, children free.
102. Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara. (805) 962-6464.
Park free (for 1/2 hour) in adjacent parking lot and go to the top of the 70ft. clock tower and take in the view.
You will want to hold on to your toddler. Also take a peek at the murals in the Board of Supervisors hall. Free.
103. Santa Barbara Museum of Art
1130 State Street, Santa Barbara. (805) 963-4364. <http://www.sbmuseart.org>
Look out for kid-friendly visiting exhibitions. Children's gallery always free (enter through gift shop).
104. Civic Light Opera at the Granada Theatre
1216 State Street, Santa Barbara. (805) 966-2324. <http://www.sbclo.com>
Excellent full-length light opera productions in an historic theater. Not all productions suitable for kids.
Expensive, but reasonable group rates for daytime shows, often with "talkback" afterwards.
105. Santa Barbara Zoological Gardens
500 Niños Drive, Santa Barbara. (805) 962-6310. <http://www.santabarbarazoo.org>
A wonderful small zoo with a train ride, carousel, playground, and several nice picnic spots. Fast food available. Zoo camp during the summer. Good value family membership, and it can be used at LA Zoo.
106. Art from Scrap
302 E. Cota Street, Santa Barbara. (805) 884-0459. <http://www.grc.org/afs>
Make a stop to replenish your craft supplies with unusual and fun recyclables. Saturday morning craft classes.
107. Monarch Butterflies at Goleta
January/February, Ellwood Grove, end of Coronado Drive, Goleta.
Walk on dirt path to right for about ¼ mile and left up hill. Read up on Monarch butterflies before going.

Los Angeles

108. Travel Town
5200 Zoo Drive (in Griffith Park), Los Angeles. (323) 662-5874. <http://www.lacity.org/RAP/grifmet/tt>
A wonderful free admission outdoor museum of over 40 old railroad engines in various stages of restoration.
Here kids can play "engineer" all day long. Indoor collection of vintage fire trucks and on the weekends view an extensive "N" gauge model train layout. Can pay for miniature train ride. Drop in to play or eat lunch.
109. LA Live Steamers
Sundays, 11am-3pm. 5202 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles. Adjacent to Travel Town. (323) 669-9729.
<http://www.lals.org>
Ride on 1/8th size model steam or diesel trains. Children must be over 34" to ride. Donation requested.
110. LA Zoo
5333 Zoo Drive (in Griffith Park), Los Angeles. (323) 664-1100. <http://www.lazoo.org>
Very large zoo that can be overwhelming. Close to the entrance there is a great kids' area called "Adventure Island", with a fun cave exhibit & animal nursery. This is often all we visit. Consider buying a tram pass to see the rest of the zoo.
111. Autry Museum of Western Heritage.
4700 Western Heritage (adj. to the LA Zoo), Los Angeles. (323) 667-2000. <http://www.autry-museum.org>
Children's Discovery Center is now closed (re-opening with a different theme in 2001). However, elsewhere in museum you can be part of a horse chase scene (videotricker) or go to jail. Be prepared to see a lot of guns.
More interesting for older children.
112. Griffith Observatory and Planetarium
2800 East Observatory Road, Los Angeles. (323) 664-6788.
Astronomical and science exhibits more suited for older children however the younger group will like the telescope. Great view over LA on a clear day. Free.

113. Holylands Exhibit
2215 Lakeview & Allesandro Way, Los Angeles. (323) 664-3162.
Interdenominational, nonprofit exhibition on the Holylands in a converted house. Visits by reservation only (groups of 10 or more). A 2 hour tour, led by costumed docent, of exhibits including a 2600 year old mummy case. The gift shop has imports from the Holylands. Donation requested. Recommended for older children.
114. Natural History Museum of LA County
900 Exposition Blvd, Los Angeles. (213) 763-3426. <http://www.nhm.org>
Excellent 'Discovery Center' and insect zoo. Large dinosaur section. Need several visits to see it all. Good gem & reptile exhibits. Under 5 free. Parking fee. Reciprocal membership with La Brea Tar Pits.
115. California Museum of Science and Technology
700 State Street, Los Angeles. (213) 744-7400. <http://www.casciencectr.org>
Next to NHMLA, impressive new facility with many hands on exhibits and IMAX theatre. Plan your visit to avoid the crowds. Weekday afternoons are best. Summer programs. Free. Parking fee.
116. La Brea Tar Pits - George C. Page Museum
5801 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. (323) 936-2230. <http://www.tarpits.org>
One of several museums along Wilshire. Features the fascinating tar pits and a display of animals trapped in the pits over the years. As you walk to the museum be on the look out for oozing tar. Under 5 free.
117. Petersen Automotive Museum
6060 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles. (323) 930-2277. <http://www.petersen.org>
Good even for those of us who are not 'vehicle' watchers. A great children's discovery center with hands-on exhibits on mechanical principles, a dress up area and wall mural the children can color. Parking fee.
118. Los Angeles County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. (323) 857-6000. <http://www.lacma.org>
Unfortunately, the free children's center is in a separate building but has good programs including Sat. family events. Membership perks include free tickets to special exhibits which usually have excellent children's audio tours for \$5.
119. Open House at the Hollywood Bowl
Hollywood. July-August. Call for a brochure, out in May, or for tickets: (213) 850-2000.
Multi-cultural music, dance and theater performances followed by arts and crafts workshops for ages 3 to 12. Average to above average in quality. Bring lunch to eat in the Bowl and maybe catch a rehearsal of the LA Philharmonic. Can be very hot. Museum. Under 3 free.
120. The Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles. (310) 440-7300. <http://www.getty.edu>
The tram ride up the hill and looking for fossils in the wall rock make a nice start to the trip. Find the "Family room" with dress up clothes, computer fun, art books and games to check out. A great spiral garden for running off energy. Monthly event calendar mail out. Family workshops. Free, parking \$5 by reservation only.
121. LA Children's Museum
310 North Main Street, Los Angeles. (213) 687-8800. <http://www.lacm.org>
Hands on exhibits for kids including role playing policemen, firemen, & bus drivers, playing with water, recording in a studio, a Mars space adventure and live theater. Expensive parking, a long drive, 'Big City'. Under 2 free.
122. A day in the Historic District of Los Angeles
Metrolink (800) 371-5465. <http://www.metrolinktrains.com>
Metrorail (800) 266-6883. <http://www.mta.net>
Angels Flight funicular railway, Bunker Hill. Connects Olive & Hill between 3rd & 4th. (213) 626-1901.
LA Public Library's Central Library, 630 W. Fifth St. (5th & Flower). (213) 228-7555. <http://www.lapl.org>
LA Conservancy Walking Tours. (213) 623-2489.
Grand Central Market, 317 S. Broadway. (213) 624-2378.
Take a Metrolink train from Moorpark or Simi Valley in the morning into Union Station. Ride the subway (Metrorail). Discover some treasures: Angels Flight Railway at \$.25/ride, LA Central Library tour (pre-book), the tortilla making machine at the Grand Central Market, and many historic buildings. Back home in the afternoon. Tiring with strollers. 'Big City' precautions.

123. Museum of Flying
2772 Donald Douglas Loop North, Santa Monica. (310) 392-8822. <http://www.museumofflying.com>
For the airplane enthusiast.
124. Children's educational programs at Forest Lawn Memorial Parks.
Schedule: (800) 204-3131. 6300 Forest Lawn Dr., Hollywood Hills or 1712 S. Glendale Ave., Glendale.
An unlikely location for a children's field trip! Historical programs are run with actors playing famous people such as Lincoln, Montezuma, or Michelangelo. View parks with replicas of famous statues and buildings. Free.

Pasadena Area

125. Kidspac
390 South El Molino, Pasadena. (626) 449-9143.
A great children's museum with simulated grocery store, TV station, Post Office, dress-up area, climbing frame, some live reptiles/insect displays and arts and crafts. Hours of fun. Long drive (50 miles). Children under 2 free.
126. Jet Propulsion Laboratory
4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena. (818) 354-9314. <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/faq/tours/>
Arrange for a two hour tour of JPL which includes the Spacecraft Museum, the Space Flight Operations Facility (the mission control area) and the Spacecraft Assembly Facility. Recommend for 6 years and above. Group tours need to be booked 6 months ahead. Watch papers for open houses.
127. Huntington Library & Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. (626) 405-2100. <http://www.huntington.org>
Spectacular gardens. Cool off in library/art collection. Children under 13 free. No picnicking.

A few, more expensive and/or far away places to visit

128. Queen Mary
1126 Queen Highway, Long Beach. (562) 435-3511. <http://www.queenmary.com>. Group rates. Parking fee.
129. Mission San Juan Capistrano
131522 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano. (714) 248-2049. <http://www.missionsjc.com>
Spring festival celebrating the return of the swallows.
130. Frolic in the Snow
Frazier Park exit off Interstate-5. Check weather reports (<http://www.accuweather.com>). Carry snow chains.
131. William S. Hart Museum
24151 San Fernando Road, Newhall. (805) 254-4584. <http://www.lam.mus.ca.us/hart>
On your way to the snow stop and have lunch at Hart museum/small zoo. House tours for older children. Free.
132. Postal Service Processing & Distribution Center Tour
28201 Franklin Pkwy., Valencia. (805) 294-7635.
Get a group together and arrange a tour of this huge facility where all of the Conejo Valley's mail passes through. Take a stamped self-addressed envelope and follow it through the sorting process. 6 yrs & up.
133. Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific
100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach. (562) 590-3100. <http://www.aquariumofpacific.org>.
Large new & impressive aquarium. My kids liked the ray 'touch' tank. Parking fee.
134. LegoLand
1 Lego Drive, Carlsbad. (760) 918-5346. <http://www.legolandca.com>
A place where rides require participation & there are many open-ended play opportunities. Miniland features miniature cityscapes. Good shows. No thrill rides. Block family passes are good value. 2½ hr drive.

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