

SUMMER FUN

Friendswood Concert in the Park (Free)

Very fun and family oriented. Prizes are given out during intermission. All concerts except where noted will take place at Stevenson Park, 1100 S. Friendswood Dr., in the Gazebo. Concerts begin at 7:00 p.m., and end at approximately 9:00 p.m. Bring your blankets, lawn chairs, refreshments, dinner and/or a snack and sit back and enjoy an evening of fun and family entertainment sponsored by the City of Friendswood, Community Services Department. Go to www.friendswood.com/COF/parksrec/Concerts for the 2009 schedule.

League City Concerts in the Park (Free)

Concerts begin on May 30, 2009 and will be held on Saturdays at the League Park Plaza. Concerts begin at 7:00 p.m., and end at approximately 9:00 p.m. Bring your blankets, lawn chairs, refreshments, dinner and/or a snack and sit back and enjoy an evening of fun and family entertainment sponsored by the City of League City Parks Recreation Department. Email William.morris@leaguecity.com or call 281.554.1195 for the 2009 schedule.

Visit a Local Pet Store (Free)

The kids love the pet stores and it is absolutely free and educational. Below are some of our favorite spots.
Rainforest Pets League City – small but has some really cool reptiles, birds, small mammals, very kid-friendly
Pet Place – take Beamer north, past the hospital, in the corner of a strip center - really fun, lots of critters, dogs, birds, lots of aquatic critters. A bit crowded but very kid-friendly.

Get cool at a local library (Free)

Enjoy the A/C while browsing the books. Check out a wide variety of VHS and DVD movies absolutely free!!! Libraries have all sorts of programs available in the summer. They all have different story times, shows, programs, book clubs, etc. for the kids, tweens, and young adults. Check with one of the libraries listed below for details.

Friendswood Library (281) 482-7135 www.friendswood.lib.tx.us
Helen Hall Library (281) 554-1111 www.leaguecitylibrary.org
Clear Lake City –Freeman Branch Library (281) 488.1906
Parker Williams Branch Library (281) 992.3416

Visit Maas Nursery in Seabrook (Free)

Right off of Toddville road which is the road that runs along side Galveston bay from Kemah bridge. This nursery is really an interesting place to explore. It's hard to explain but it's well worth a visit. Afterwards, on the same street, is a great park on Galveston bay. This park has pretty nice trails, a pier, playground equipment, picnic tables and is a fun place to explore.

Do something good for the environment or for someone (Free)

Pick a park or safe street area and pick up trash. Volunteer somewhere.
Visit a retirement home on a regular basis. Bake cookies for a neighbor.
Have fun in the kitchen with your kids by baking cookies with them...they'll love it. Don't worry about making a mess....it'll clean up easily!!

Get really cool at one of the public pools

Friendswood City Pool by Stevenson Park - good shade, nice big pool, very inexpensive, great baby pool area – check out hours/cost at www.ci.friendswood.tx.us/
Webster City Pool 101 Pennsylvania Avenue 281.316.4137
Clear Lake Rec Center Outdoor Pool – waterslide, fun water play place, separate diving pool 16511 Diana Lane (281)488-0360

LaPorte Wave Pool at Cedar Park off of Fairmont, shaded and fun!
Pearland City Pool at Independence Park - big pool, cheap, has a little waterslide

Free Days at the Museums

Here is a quick list but a more detailed list of each museum is described in more detail below.

The Children's Museum is free on Thurs. 5 - 8 pm.
The Health and Science Museum is free on Thurs 2 - 5 pm.
The Museum of Natural Sciences is free on Tues after 2pm (Main Exhibit Hall only).
The Weather Museum is free on Thurs 12-4.
The Buffalo Soldier Museum is \$2 M-F 10-5 pm, Sat 10-4pm.
The Printing Museum is free 10-5 T-Sat.
The Museum of Fine Arts is free Th 10-9 pm.
The Ship Channel Boat Tour is free.

Cheap Eats

Pappa John's Monday Night Carryout special 5.99 Large 1-topping
Sonic Tuesday Night 5 sonic burgers for \$5; Some locations: ½ price drinks (2-4pm)
The Main Event – Mon-Thur For every large pizza purchased (approx \$15) you receive a \$10 game card.

KIDS EAT FREE:

Some kids eat free with an adult purchase. Some eat free or get a free dessert if they sign up for the restaurant's birthday club either at the store or online.

Denny's – Tuesday and Sat., Kids eat free after 4pm (2kids/adult)
IHOP – 4-10 p.m. daily, on NASA Road 1 near El Camino Real, (281) 282-9253
Starfire Grill – Monday, near Petco on Bay Area at Space Center Blvd., (281) 488-8203
Texas Roadhouse – Tuesday night, near Wal-Mart on I-45, (281) 461-3800
Black-Eyed Pea – Tuesday night, Hwy.3 at Bay Area, (281) 338-2571
Mr. Gatti's Pizza – Monday/Tuesday– Free Lunch buffet free for kids under 5 per adult
Chubaca's Steaks – Tuesday, Saturday buffets, (281) 554-8000
James' Coney Island – Wednesday night, on Bay Area near Diana, (281) 286-7600
Burger King – Birthday Club
Sonic - Birthday Club
Cold Stone Creamery – Birthday Club
Baskin Robbins – Birthdsy Club
Boston Market – Birthday Club, on Bay Area near Highway 3, Kinko's, (281) 280-9898

Putt Putt Fun House Daily Specials www.puttputtfunhouse.com

Funday Monday- 10:00 am to close \$10/person
16 tokens, 1 attraction, drink, unlimited putt-putt
Ten Buck Tuesday - 10:00 am to Close \$10/person
20 Gameroom/Batting Cage Tokens, 1 attraction, Unlimited Putt-Putt® Golf
Wacky Wednesday - 10:00 am to close \$8.50/person
12 Gameroom / Batting Cage Tokens, 1 Attraction , Unlimited Putt-Putt® Golf
Family & Friends Night - Every Thursday from 6:00 to Close
2 to 4 people can play for only \$35.00 + tax \$5.00 for each additional person
16" one topping pizza - 4 unlimited 16 oz. soft drinks,
20 Gameroom / Batting Cage tokens, Unlimited Putt-Putt, 4 Attractions
Super Saturday - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm \$10.00/person
Unlimited Putt-Putt® Golf , Two Attractions, 16 tokens, drink
Sunday Fellowship Night - 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm \$10.00/person
3 Hours of Unlimited Play! Putt-Putt® Golf, Laser Tag , Bumper Boats, 3D Motion Theater, Rock Climbing Wall

Local Churches Summer Programs (minimal fee or free)

Most churches have a variety of programs including Vacation Bible School (VBS). If there is a church near you that you are interested in and they don't appear on the list below, give them a call and find out what great things they have planned.

Friendswood United Methodist Church 204 W. Edgewood

Has day and evening VBS (usually around \$15), Creative Arts Camp, Reading Camp, and a Sports Camp. Check out their website at www.friendswoodumc.com or call 281.482.7535

Gloria Dei Lutheran located in Nassau Bay, just across from NASA has activities to offer ranging from Mad Science Camps, Drama and Music Camps, Upward basketball and Soccer Camps and free family fun nights, kids clubs and much more. They also have a VBS (\$20). Check out their website at www.gdlc.org or call 281.333.4535.

First Baptist Church of Friendswood located at 111 E. Heritage Drive near the Friendswood Post Office has VBS. Check out their website for details at www.fbcbkids.org or call 281.482.7573.

Hope Lutheran Church located at 1804 Friendswood Drive has VBS and usually cost around \$10. They also usually hold a music camp too. Call 281.482.7943 for details.

Heritage Park Baptist located at 2732 FM 528 has VBS and is usually free. Call 281.482.4729

Baybrook Baptist located at 15775 Hope Village Rd. has evening VBS and is usually free. Call 281.996.1316

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church located at 1207 Winding Was has Vacation Bible School and is usually free. Call 281.482.7630

Visit a Local Parks (totally free)

Get out early one morning a week before the heat gets unbearable and checkout some of our great parks. Explore, play, picnic, fly a kite, hike, sweat, feed ducks, birdwatch, etc. Here is a list of the parks we like to visit frequently and some things that you can do at each park. Enjoy!

Frankie Carter - off of 2351 by Blackhawk – a great park for exploring, playing and exercising, a half mile to a mile shaded trail right off the walking track by the soccer fields, shaded playground equipment, 5 different playground areas, great for bike riding or walking, tennis courts

Resoft – towards Alvin, off of I35 between 2351 and 528 - great park for flying a kite, feeding ducks, walking around a nice size pond, and playing on a unique playground where the tunnel slide goes thru a hill and where there are still old fashion merry-go-rounds!

Challenger – off of 528 by I45 - great trails and raised walkway through the woods to Clear Creek, great playground equipment, big pond for fishing, a big hill for running up and down, a Mother Earth sculpture on the trail that is a shaped like a pregnant woman lying down, boat ramp, short pier by Clear Creek

Bay Area – down Bay Area Blvd, past Space Center Blvd.– wonderfully shaded, multiple play areas, pond for feeding ducks, boat dock, tennis courts, small Japanese garden area which is fun to walk thru, a pretty long walkway over the water

Stevenson – in Friendswood, by the fire station – small but close by, the younger kids love the castle shaped playground and the sand!, tennis courts, basketball court, walking trail

Rustic Oaks Park: In League City, Right on Bay Area Blvd. into the Rustic Oaks Subdivision. Left on Orange Blossom. This park features a small pavilion, volleyball court, tennis courts, practice fields, fishing pond, trails, playground equipment and bird viewing areas.

Go for a hike/adventure www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Check out our awesome state parks that aren't too far away like Sheldon Lake, Brazos Bend, Huntsville, Galveston Island. Pack a picnic, bring bikes if you can, and have a great outdoor, nature day!! Below are some information about the parks we've been to.

Sheldon Lake - close to I-10 and Beltway 8 East – A great place to go fishing with the kids (they supply the poles and bait), to go birdwatching, to see some alligators, and to just explore the area. This spot is really neat and very rewarding with kids because you are pretty much guaranteed to see some wildlife!

Brazos Bend – about 45 minutes from here past Alvin – a beautiful park with lots of big trees, play areas, biking and hiking trails, camping, great birdwatching, alligators, etc. You will have a great time at this park, for sure!

Huntsville – a 2000-acre park located 6 miles southwest of Huntsville, Texas. The park offers camping, hiking, biking, boating, guided horseback trail rides, fishing, swimming, boating and boat rentals (including paddle boats, canoes and flat-bottoms without motors) and 19 miles of hiking & biking trails. Facilities include picnic sites, RV sites, tent campsites and screened shelters. Really a great place to camp or just visit for a day!

Anahuac Wildlife Refuge - Located on East Galveston Bay approximately 1.5 hours east of Houston. Take exist #813 (TX 61 / Anahuac Exit) off Interstate 10 East to get there. Check website for more details. 34,000-acre refuge set aside for migratory bird species, including songbirds, snow geese and 27 species of ducks and a variety of wildlife may be observed. The refuge also provides opportunities for boating, freshwater and saltwater fishing, hunting, canoeing and nature study. Three fishing piers and two boat ramps are located on the refuge.

Learn how to play Chess

The Space City Chess Club meets most Friday evenings at 7:00 where you can play in tournaments or just find a partner and play. Every Friday they do something different so call or email them to find out the schedule. It's very interesting and chess is a great game for the brain! There is a beginners class that starts at 6:30 p.m. They will teach you and your kids the basics of chess and how to play. For more information about the club, including our meeting location and directions, visit www.spacecitychess.com

Help your child participate in a Kiwanis Kids Triathlon

The Kiwanis Kids Triathlon Series allows young athletes ages 7 to 12 to experience the fun and excitement of triathlon. It's a morning of friendly competition and physical activity that can lead to a lifetime of fitness. The cost is about \$20/triathlon. The 2007 race schedule will include 5 races and will begin in May and end in September. The final schedule is still in work so please check www.kiwanishouston.sunrise.org in May.

Triathlon is an exciting sport for young athletes because it involves three activities that every child enjoys - swimming, cycling and running. Kids swim, bike and run the following distances:

7-9 year old boys/girls swim 50M, bike 1 mile, run ¼ mile.

10-12 year old boys/girls swim 100M, bike 2 miles, run ½ mile.

Hang out at Kemah Boardwalk www.kemahboardwalk.com

A fun place to go where you can spend lots of money or you can go and not spend much at all by enjoying the scenery, exploring the different tanks at the Aquarium restaurant, watch all the different boats go by, enjoy an awesome sunset, play in the water park and window shop.

Rock the Dock - every Thursday evening starting May 7th thru August 27th – 6:30pm – 10:15pm

Enjoy a great mix of musical talent for free

Firework Fridays - every Friday in June at 9:30

Local Stores with free activities

Lakeshore Learning www.lakeshorelearning.com

Free Craft Activities for Kids (Ages 3 and Up)

Every Saturday! 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Entertaining, creative activities are great fun for parents and children alike! Just bring your imagination—we'll provide the rest!

Barnes and Nobles

Free story times for preschoolers on Wed. at 11 and Sat. at 2pm
American Girl Book Club - first Sat. of every month at 4pm
Junie B. Jones Book Club - Saturdays at 4:00 pm

Borders www.bordersstores.com

Check out their website to find out about current events.

Michael's 1019 W. Bay Area Blvd. 281.316-2143

Michaels offers free arts and crafts workshops/classes for kids and families. Call or stop by for a listing of what is available.

Home Depot

Kids Workshops are free "How-To Clinics" designed for children ages 5-12. The workshops are offered on the first Saturday of each month between 9:00 a.m. and noon at all The Home Depot stores. Children accompanied by an adult construct projects from pre-fabricated kits. The kits are designed to be both educational and practical.

Armand Bayou Nature Center (\$) www.abnc.org

Experience first hand how Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) is working to preserve the wetlands prairie, forest and marsh habitats surrounding Armand Bayou. Visit this astonishingly beautiful part of the Texas Gulf Coast and "reconnect with nature". Visitors can learn about our plant and animal inhabitants, bird-watch, hike on the Nature Center's trails or view our live animal displays of snakes, spiders, hawks and bison. A visit to the Center's Martyn Farm will take you back in time to late 1800's farm life in Texas. Before you leave, make reservations to see the beauty of Armand Bayou on the "Bayou Ranger", an electric pontoon boat, or in a guided canoe tour.

Houston Arboretum & Nature Center (Free) www.houstonarboretum.org

By Memorial Park, approx. 30 minute drive, bring a picnic and enjoy the shade of the trees. The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center (HANC), one of the first nature education facilities for children in the state of Texas, provides services to nearly 200,000 visitors annually. It is a 155-acre non-profit urban nature sanctuary located on the western edge of Memorial Park. Visitors can enjoy over 5 miles of nature trails, including forest, pond, wetland and meadow habitats.

Downtown Houston Totally free and really cool!

Park at Sam Houston Park near downtown, visit the Heritage Society Museum (www.heritagesociety.org) for free and then explore the downtown tunnels to the JP Morgan Chase Tower building at 600 Travis and to the Wells Fargo Building at 1000 Louisiana. We did this during the holiday break and it was great! We did the museum, ate at Hard Rock Café downtown, and then explored the tunnels and went up in the observation towers. It was pretty neat and I felt very safe.

The Chase Tower is the tallest building in Houston and the 4th tallest in U.S. Its' sky lobby (observation deck) is located on the 60th floor and can be accessed via the express elevators located in the main lobby. The Wells Fargo Plaza is the 2nd tallest building in Houston and has an observation deck on one of its' floors.

Both buildings are open to the public during the working hours of 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. You can get an awesome view of the city of Houston.

Other downtown options

Sesquicentennial Park off of Bagby - buffalobayou.org
Allen's Landing 1001 Commerce Street - buffalobayou.org

Houston Library
Memorial Park – a great park for hiking and exploring!

Herman Park www.hermanpark.com

Free stuff to do there....

Enjoy the many ducks and birds around McGovern Lake....Have a picnic under a shaded tree.....Hike the 2 miles of trails....Roll down the hill at Miller Outdoor Theatre...Walk thru the Japanese Garden.... Admire the many rose gardens at the Houston Garden Center....Cool off at the water playground...Play on the playgrounds

Things that cost

The Train (\$2.50/person) The Zoo (check prices www.houstonzoo.org)

Miller Outdoor Theatre - Free www.milleroutdoortheatre.com

Miller Outdoor Theatre offers the most diverse season of professional entertainment of any Houston performance venue, and it's all FREE! Classical music, jazz, ethnic music and dance, ballet, Shakespeare, musical theatre, classic films, and much, much more are included in this year's outstanding line-up. Relax in the covered seating area or enjoy a pre-performance picnic on the hillside. All performances at Miller are family-friendly!

Houston Symphony – Sounds Like Fun!

The centerpiece of the Houston Symphony's Education & Outreach program, Sounds like Fun! offers children an entertaining first encounter with classical music and lays the groundwork for further classical experiences. All concerts are free, and no tickets are required. Be sure to come 30 minutes early so the kids can play musical instruments at the Instrument Petting Zoo!

TOURS (Some tours require advance reservations.)

KPRC TV CHANNEL 2 STUDIO

Get a behind-the-scenes tour for a group of 6-20. Children must be ages 10 and up. Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. Must request a tour via form at www.click2houston.com/station/9684984/detail.html (713) 222-2222 There are blackout dates listed on the website, so plan for this one.

HOUSTON HOBBY AIRPORT

Tours are 1-1/2 to 2 hours during normal business hours. Children must be age 7 and up and in the 3rd grade. Tours are limited to 24 people. 21-day notice is required by submitting a request to Zelika Momirovic at hastours@cityofHouston.net or call (281) 233-1233.

HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Visit the local fire station on Space Center Blvd. Get a group together and schedule a tour 30 days in advance to allow time for them to prepare. Bring your bike and register it. To schedule a regular visit, contact HFD Community Relations at (713) 495-7900 www.houstontx.gov/fire/community/tours.html

WORTHAM THEATRE CENTER (DOWNTOWN HOUSTON)

Group tours. 501 Texas, (713) 546-0231, www.houstontx.gov/worthamcenter/general.htm

PORT OF HOUSTON BOAT TOUR

Free 90-minute tour of the Houston Ship Channel aboard the Port of Houston Authority's M/V *Sam Houston*. No food, drinks, backpacks, or large purses may be taken aboard. A free drink is provided during the trip. Bring photo ID for everyone age 18 and up. Arrive ½ hour before the tour. (713) 670-2416. Advance reservations are required. For details/tour times/directions, see www.portofhouston.com/samhou/samhou.html

KUHF 88.7 FM RADIO STATION (CLASSICAL MUSIC)

Tour KUHF at the LeRoy and Lucile Melcher Center for Public Broadcasting (UH main campus, 4343 Elgin). Reservations required. (713) 743-0887. Call for times.

KUHT CHANNEL 8 - HOUSTON PBS TV STATION

One-hour tour includes a visit to the technical operations and studio areas. Tours are Monday and Friday. Children must be at least 7 years old. Groups limited to 25 people. LeRoy and Lucile Melcher Center for Public Broadcasting (UH main campus, 4343 Elgin). (713) 743-8418 for reservations.
www.houstonpbs.org/site/PageServer?pagename=edo_tours

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE (LEAGUE CITY/DICKINSON)

Learn how radar works, how the weather warnings you see on TV are sent out, and how weather is forecast. Children must be at least 8 years old. On Highway 646 east of I-45 (1353 FM 646, Dickinson) Look for the large round radar ball. Call (281) 337-5074 for tour information. .

HOUSTON TUNNEL SYSTEM (DOWNTOWN HOUSTON)

Oldest and largest indoor pedestrian tunnel/skywalk system in the U.S. Self-guided tour. Seven-mile tunnel of shops, restaurants, and just about anything. Connects 55 buildings and three hotels. Connects to City Hall, Theatre District, and downtown's only shopping mall. Get in at many buildings. If you go to One Shell Plaza to enter, there is also a free lobby exhibit of the history of Shell Oil. Open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. www.houstondowntown.com

LUNAR PLANETARY INSTITUTE - FREE FAMILY SPACE DAYS

Third Saturday of the month (10 a.m. - 1 p.m.) - Children ages 5-8 can learn about the space theme of the day through hands-on activities and demonstrations (read books, color pictures, get messy with crafts). Adults must stay with the children. Bring a picnic lunch and eat on the beautiful grounds. Located at the USRA Center for Advanced Studies (CASS) at 3600 Bay Area Blvd. (281) 486-2106 www.lpi.usra.edu

MRS. BAIRD'S BAKERY

6650 N. Houston-Rosslyn Road (713) 996-5032 Talk to Rebecca at x5000
One month notice required. Free 30-minute tour on Wednesday and Thursday at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Children must be age 6 and up. One adult required for every 10 children. No open-toed, open-heeled shoes or jewelry for safety reasons. Long pants required for safety.

GALVESTON DAILY NEWS

Free 30-minute tour about how a newspaper is published. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Call Lynette Tisdale at (409) 683-5217 or email her at lynette.tisdale@galvnews.com to set up a time

HOUSTON FOOD BANK

Free tour showing how the food bank receives, processes and distributes 30 million pounds of food each year. Take them some non-perishable food. 3811 Eastex Freeway (US 59), Sign up online for a tour during the week. One week notice required. Children must be age 8 and up. (713) 547-8609 www.houstonfoodbank.org

Farmers Markets

Check out local flavor at one of these three farmer's markets. I haven't been but it sounds like it would be a cool thing to do with kids and get some groceries while you are there.

Canino's Produce (713)862.4027 Off of I45 and Airline just north of downtown

Very cool field trip. Canino's is a giant farmers' market that has been offering a tremendous selection of fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, vinegars, and even milk and eggs for years. There's no place else in the city where you can buy a farm-fresh produce (in bulk, if you wish) at 6 a.m. any day of the week, year-round. While you are there be sure to visit the authentic Mexican bakery across the street. Open every day 6 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Really big farmers' market

Nassau Bay Farmers Market www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M16053

The Nassau Bay Farmers Market is every Saturday 10am-2pm rain or shine. We are located at 18045 Upper Bay Road Nassau Bay in front of Erma's Nutrition Center. We have local organic produce, herbs, plants, goat & sheep dairy products & meats (subject to availability) and grass fed meats. We also have organic baked goods, jams, fresh & locally roasted coffees, natural Himalayan bath salts, handmade soaps, Organic cotton & earth friendly hand painted clothing, as well as handmade magnetic jewelry and much much more!

Houston Farmers Markets (713) 524-3138 www.houstonfarmersmarket.com

Fresh Veggies, Meats, Milks, Fresh Prepared Foods, Homemade Breads & Sweets, Pastured eggs, Local Honey, Pepper Jellies, Handmade Soaps, Plants - vegetables, herbs, flowers

Midtown Farmers Market [_http://tafia.com/mfm.html](http://tafia.com/mfm.html) (713) 524-6922
locally grown fruits, vegetables & herbs

Froberg Vegetable & Fruit Farm (281) 585-3531 11875 County Road 190, Alvin, TX
Great fresh produce and certain times of year you can pick your own strawberries. Call for details. Fun place to visit.

Houston – Museums

The Menil Collection (Free) www.menil.org

This gem of a museum, which began as the privately assembled art collection of the late John and Dominique de Menil, now includes more than 15,000 paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, photographs and rare books.

Holocaust Museum Houston (Free) www.hmh.org

The first institution of its kind in the Southwest, Holocaust Museum Houston serves as a memorial to the millions of people who were imprisoned and killed in Nazi death camps during World War II. A living testimonial to those who died. A place to honor those who survived, and a source of education for present and future generations.

Lawndale Art Center (Free) www.lawndaleartcenter.org

Known for its offbeat art happenings, such as the Hair Ball and the 20th Century Modern Market, Lawndale Art Center displays contemporary works by more than 500 artists each year.

Contemporary Arts Museum (Free) www.camh.org

Housed in an award-winning, all-metal structure that complements the style of art it surrounds, the Contemporary Arts Museum (CAM) offers a variety of exhibits in its two gallery spaces and hosts educational programs for adults and children.

The Art Car Museum (Free) www.artcarmuseum.com

Highlights art cars of Houston, custom-decorated cars with zany themes prominently displayed in the annual Art Car Parade.

Blaffer Gallery (Free) www.hfac.uh.edu/blaffer

The Art Museum of the University of Houston, this intellectually stimulating art gallery often features Texas artists and folk arts.

The Fire Museum (\$) www.thefiremuseum.org

Housed in a retired 1901 fire station that saw the transition from hand drawn to horse drawn, then to motorized apparatus. An exemplary collection of early American craftsmanship relating to firefighting.

Battleship Texas (\$) www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findest/parks/battleship_texas

Housed in a retired 1901 fire station that saw the transition from hand drawn to horse drawn, then to motorized apparatus. An exemplary collection of early American craftsmanship relating to firefighting.

Museum of Health & Medical Science (\$\$) www.mhms.org

The Museum of Health & Medical Science's Amazing Body Pavilion gives visitors an exciting tour through the human body. The exhibit contains huge sculptures of human organs, including a 10-foot brain and a 22-foot rib cage, with more than 80 interactive exhibits.

The Children's Museum of Houston (\$\$) www.cmhouston.org

The highest-attended youth museum in the country, for its size, serving more than 500,000 annually, according to the Association of Youth Museums. The museum features 13 galleries of hands-on, minds-on activities that invite exploration by children, educators and families. Every Thursday is Free Family Thursday from 5-8 p.m. Reduced admission \$3 after 3pm

Houston Museum of Natural Science (\$\$) www.hmns.org

A really great museum for exploring the magnificent natural world. Also home of the Butterfly Center, IMAX, and Planetarium

Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens (\$) www.mfah.org/bayoubend.org

Across town in the River Oaks residential neighborhood, a 1920s garden with an English garden, an Italian garden, a rock garden and a butterfly garden can be toured inexpensively. The house belonged to Miss Ima Hogg and she worked with Ellen Biddle Shipman and Ruth London on the design of the garden.

Galveston Beach

The water may not be blue but the kids have a great time playing and exploring and are worn out by the end of the outing! Check out the pocket parks (small fee) toward west beach for clean showers and restrooms without too long of a walk. You can also park at the very west end of the Seawall for free and walk down to the beach to play or just collect seashells.

Galveston Island Bolivar Ferry (Free)

Of all the things there are to do in Galveston riding the ferry between the east end of Galveston Island and Port Bolivar is a great, fun, free thing to do. You can watch the big freighters coming in and out of the Houston ship channel, possibly see a bunch of porpoises jumping ahead of the boat, enjoy the gulf breeze, or feed the gulls off the stern of the ferry. Directions to the ferry are quite simple. Come south out of Houston on Interstate 45. Stay on it. After you cross the causeway to Galveston Island at mile marker "0" the highway turns into Broadway. Continue on Broadway and as you move East on the island you will observe signs directing you to the ferry landing. Unless we want to go to Bolivar, we just walk onto the ferry. This way we enjoy the ride and scenery but we do not have to wait in the long car lines. Special provisions have been made for walking passengers. Follow the signs to the parking lot. There are signs directing you to the walk on passenger boarding area

Artwalk of Galveston (Free) www.galvestonartscenter.com/artwalk

Art galleries and shops in the Historic District open their doors on one Saturday evening each month from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. to introduce their latest art shows. Check out the website for a map to the museums and details for each art walk.

Galveston County Historical Museum (Free) Currently closed due to IKE

Explore Galveston County's rich heritage under the impressive vaulted ceiling of the 1921 City National Bank Building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It really is a beautiful building. A small museum but very informative. Immerse yourself in the culture and traditions of the inhabitants of Galveston County by learning about the 1900 Storm and Recovery, the building of the Seawall, the use and history of Galveston Lighthouses, the Native Americans in Galveston County, the Texas City Disaster and various early history of Galveston County.

Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Research Center (Free) Currently closed due to IKE

www.galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov/seaturtles/

Go check out the turtles and learn what they are doing to try and save them.

Lone Star Flight Museum (\$\$) www.galveston.com/lonestarflightmuseum/

The Lone Star Flight Museum is home to one of the finest collections of restored aircraft and aviation exhibits in the nation. Over 40 restored aircraft are displayed and most are in working condition. The collection includes WWII Fighters, Bombers, Liaison Trainers, and Executive Planes

Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig & Museum(\$\$) www.oceanstaroec.com/

Visitors step on board, tour the completely refurbished jackup drilling rig, absorb the day-to-day excitement of offshore drilling and production, marine transportation, environmental protection, construction, pipelining - all experienced through three decks of videos, equipment exhibits and interactive displays. It's a museum, educational attraction and working drilling rig all rolled into one.

Texas Seaport Museum/ELISSA (\$\$) www.tsm-elissa.org

Share the adventure of the high seas at the Texas Seaport Museum, home of the celebrated 1877 tall ship Elissa. Walk Elissa's decks and imagine the days when daring sailors challenged the world's oceans. In the adjacent museum and theater, witness the story of Elissa's dramatic rescue from the scrapyards and her meticulous restoration.

Railroad Museum (\$\$) www.galvestonrrmuseum.com/

Towering at the head of the Strand, the vast Railroad Museum boasts one of the largest restored railroad collections in the southwest, and one of the five largest in the country, with more than 20,000 railroad items, including more than 40 engines and cars.

Port of Houston Sam Houston Boat Tour (Free) www.portofhouston.com/samhou/samhou.html

Get ready for a spectacular waterborne tour of one of the busiest ports in the world aboard the Port of Houston Authority's free public tour boat. The Sam Houston offers free leisurely 90 minute round trip cruises along the Houston Ship Channel. Embarking from the port's Sam Houston Pavilion, visiting sightseers can enjoy passing views of international cargo vessels, and operations' at the port's Turning Basin Terminal. Measuring 95 feet in length and 24 feet in width, the boat carries a maximum capacity of 1000 passengers with air-conditioned lounge seating and additional standing room on the boat's rear deck.

Sea Center Texas (Free) www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/visitorcenters/seacenter/

Sea Center Texas is located at 300 Medical Drive in Lake Jackson. Lake Jackson is about 50 miles south of Houston and 45 miles southwest of Galveston. Sea Center Texas is a marine aquarium, fish hatchery and education center located on 75 acres in Lake Jackson. The facility opened in 1996 and includes a visitor center with aquaria and exhibits of Texas marine life, the largest redfish hatchery in the world, 36 one-acre fish culture ponds, an outdoor wetland exhibit and a youth fishing pond.

Blue Bell Creamery in Brenham (\$) www.bluebell.com

Guided tours along with a short video about Blue Bell and how they make ice cream are offered. Each tour ends with a complimentary scoop of Blue Bell Ice Cream. Please call ahead to verify times and availability. Reservations are recommended for groups of 15 or more.