

Dallas: The Perfect Staycation By Kat Tate

As the year winds down and Thanksgiving and Christmas break fly by, there will be one thought at the forefront of your children's minds: Spring break. As traveling becomes more expensive and children become more restless, a simple yet effective option for an exciting Spring break is often overlooked. Born and raised in Dallas, I have enjoyed staycations on more than one occasion.

The key to a successful staycation is to plan ahead and keep the activities a secret. When planning the perfect staycation, it is wise to browse the internet for specials and events. Dallas CityPASS costs \$48.00 per adult and \$32.00 per child and will get you and your family in to all four locations mentioned in this article. Buy your Dallas CityPASS at www.citypass.com/dallas.

The Dallas Zoo

There are very few things children love more than animals, so why not start your week by visiting the largest zoological park in Texas? Awarded the 2017 Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor, the Dallas Zoo showcases over 2,000 animals and provides several hands-on opportunities for children.

The Lacerte Family Children's Zoo, located to the right of the main entrance, has multiple free and inexpensive activities that will keep your younger kids entertained for hours! Travis & Zach's Birds Landing hosts over 10 species of birds, which your kids can feed for just \$1! The JCPenney Discovery House and A.H. Belo Discover Yard provide games and puzzles that introduce your kids to the wildlife found in their own backyard. Make sure to drop by the JCPenney Discovery House at 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. for animal encounters. The Underzone is a tunnel that guides kids to meet animals that live underground. Of course, no zoo is complete without a petting zoo. The Kresge Foundation Farm houses gentle animals big and

small. Bring back memories of the good ol' days at the Nature Play Space! Inspired by nature, this playground lets children climb over boulders and logs, build forts, and even get a little muddy! But do not fret about the mud- The Stream is a fan favorite, where kids of all ages love to splish and splash around. That being said, it would be wise to pack a towel and change of clothes for this trip.

Additional costs include the \$10 parking fee, rides, and food and beverages. To reduce additional costs, bring your own food and water. The Dallas Zoo is located at 650 South R.L. Thornton Freeway (I-35E) and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.. For more information on planning your trip, visit www.dallaszoo.com.

The Perot Museum

One of Dallas' newest attractions, the Perot Museum features 11 exhibit halls, special exhibits, films, hands-on activities, and live science demonstrations. Moody Family Children's Museum was created with kids 5 years and younger in mind. Take a stroll across Texas, climbing the Reunion Tower, discovering wildlife, and painting pictures. For little (or big) inventors, check out the Texas Instruments Engineering and Innovation Hall. Highlights include designing and building robots, building un-breakable skyscrapers, and a music room! For the athlete in the family, stop by the Lamar Hunt Family Sports Hall and race against pro athletes or even a T.Rex! The T. Boone Pickens Life Then and Now Hall is a must for dinosaur lovers, filled towering dinosaurs, rare fossils and virtual habitats. Paid parking is available under Woodall Rodgers Freeway (Lot B), south of Broom Street and across the street from the Museum. The \$10 parking fee is paid when exiting the lot. The Museum is located at 2201 N. Field Street and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., letting visitors in at specified entry times. For more information, visit www.perotmuseum.org.

Reunion Tower

One of Dallas' most recognizable skyline features, Reunion Tower is the 15th tallest building in Dallas, standing at 571 feet. CityPASS guarantees admission to the GeO-Deck. The GeO-Deck sits at 470 feet and offers "360-degree panoramic views, high-definition zoom cameras, interactive touch screens, telescopes, a free digital photo and an indoor/outdoor observation deck that lets you see for miles in any direction." For gamers, download the Kwest free mobile app. This app enhances the experience using "augmented reality, mini puzzles, and hidden clues!" Reunion Tower is located at 300 Reunion Boulevard. Always check reuniontower.com/explore for opening and closing times as they change daily due to scheduled events or weather conditions.

The Dallas Arboretum

The Dallas Arboretum is more than just a garden, it's a playground built with education in mind (just don't tell your kids that!). The Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden is 8 acres of science, exploration, and pure fun. Named the "Best Family Outing" by *People Newspapers* People's Choice Award in March of 2017, The Adventure Garden hosts over 150 activities with your child in mind. Walk in the Clouds is a safe, treetop adventure that lets your kids, you guessed it, walk in the clouds. At 32 feet, a canopy stretches around a tree, allowing kids to play pretend, jump, and let some energy out! Relive some zoo fun by walking through the Texas Native Wetlands. The trail introduces children to the plants and animals that live in our beautiful state. The Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden is busiest weekdays before 2 p.m.. If you plan to spend most of your time at the Adventure Garden, park at the parking garage located at 8720 Garland Road. From the garage, there is an underground walkway that leads directly to the

Adventure Garden. Outside food and drinks are welcome in all parts of the garden. Save \$7 on parking and purchase online for \$8. All parking is first-come, first-served.

Make this next Spring break your best yet, all from the comfort of home. These are just four of the hundreds of exciting adventures in and around Dallas. Who knows? Maybe this will be the beginning of a fun family tradition.