

10 of the best children's holiday activities

From woodland trails and getting creative with clay to trips on board Concorde there's plenty going on for the little ones over the summer. **Andrea Pinnington**, author of several books about children's activities, brings us a few suggestions



B&Q kids' workshops,

Various locations

Do you find yourself wishing that your parents had taught you some practical skills when you were younger that you could now pass on to your own children? Well, if DIY leaves you cold and you would like your kids to be more adept, then take them down to your local B&Q for one of their DIY workshops this summer. These offer both parents and children the opportunity to enjoy making something together, ranging from planters and bird boxes to mug holders, with step-by-step demonstrations on how to create them from scratch. You are then left off the leash to have a go on your own under the guidance of their DIY experts. With more than 15 workshops to choose from, and the chance to learn new skills such as sawing, drilling, gluing and nailing, they could be a diverting way to spend a few hours. Suitable for seven to 11-year-olds, children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

• Tel: 03330 143098 / Web: diy.com



The Gruffalo Trail,

Alice Holt, near Farnham

If you go down to the woods today, you may just get a surprise. For lurking in the fabulous forest of Alice Holt, near Farnham, is a giant Gruffalo sculpture. This marks just one of the Forestry Commission's Gruffalo Nature Trails to celebrate the iconic book's 15th anniversary. The self-led trail is targeted at children aged from two to six years, and you can pick up a special activity leaflet from the Café on the Green, which is open from 9am to 5pm. At around one-and-a-half miles, the trail is manageable for most families and there are activities to complete along the way: from building a home for your favourite animal to creating a piece of Gruffalo ground art. No booking is required but it would be worth checking out further details online at forestry.gov.uk/gruffalo. You might even discover why the forest is called Alice Holt as well!

• Tel: 01420 520212 / Web: forestry.gov.uk/gruffalo



Ceramics Cafés,

Farnham, Hersham and Kew

The summer holidays can get so hectic that it makes a nice change to do something peaceful - and what could be better than something creative such as painting pottery? Especially when it's nowhere near your new wallpaper! There are quite a number of pottery cafés around in the Surrey area and one of the best is the Ceramics Café, which has franchises in Farnham, Hersham and Kew. Here you can create something personal that can make a great gift or that is equally lovely to keep for yourself. The staff guide you through the process whereby you choose the item you want to paint, create your design and then hand it back to the staff to be fired in the kiln. Most items are ready for collection a few days later. It's a fun activity that usually appeals to a wide age range and it won't set you back a fortune either. There's a session fee of £2 per person and most of the pottery costs between £5 and £15.

• Tel: 01252 727555 / Web: ceramicscafe.com



Godstone Farm and Playbar,

Godstone

This children's adventure farm and farm was named 'Papapapas' Best Family Day out two years in a row. Compared to other children's farms, it offers good value for money with a £7.50 entrance fee for everyone except the children who go free. It cleverly offers small-scale enough for everyone to see and do. This includes everything from tractor rides to an array of indoor and outdoor activities as well as tractor rides and equipment. There are also places you can buy your food on Friday evenings. In the summer, the farm keeps a small-scale adventure playground, hosts competitions and fires up a huge bar. There is also a wealth of summer activities put on the week including pony grooming and

• Tel: 01883 742546 / Web: godstonefarm.co.uk

Brooklands Museum,

Weybridge

If you haven't yet visited Brooklands Museum, then you have a real treat in store. It calls itself "the birthplace of motor sport and aviation", which indeed Brooklands was, but somehow this doesn't quite convey the richness of the experience and the impressiveness of the exhibits. These range from giant racing cars, motorcycles and bicycles to an unparalleled collection of aircraft bombers and the only Concorde with public access in south-east England. Many of the exhibits are in working order and there are a lot of cockpits to explore. The entrance fee is good value at £25 for a family ticket and it is free for



the under-fives. What is more, during the school holidays, there are vintage car rides available for the heady sum of a one pound donation and regular activities for children laid on from Mondays to Fridays. Having said that, this is a place that is just as enjoyable for the grown-ups as it is for the children. You'll need to book ahead though if you want to go on the highly enjoyable Concorde flight experience.

• Tel: 01932 857381 / Web: brooklandsmuseum.com



Surrey Wildlife Trust courses,

Various locations

Do the school holidays involve endless attempts to drag your children away from screens of one sort or another and into the great outdoors? If so, or if your children are naturally nature nuts, Surrey Wildlife Trust is here to help. They have drawn up a comprehensive wild play programme over the summer holidays that involves a range of activities from building dens and cooking on campfires to teaching bushcraft skills. The sessions are divided into different age ranges with something for everyone within the two- to 16-year-old age group. For specific events, it's best to check their website as booking is often essential. Their reserves are also great venues for general play, nature spotting and lazy summer picnics. Find out more about Surrey Wildlife Trust on pages 90 and 91.

• Tel: 01483 795440 / Web: surreywildlifetrust.org



Hampton Court,

East Molesey

Some summer days out are just geared towards the children, leaving parents holding half-eaten snacks on the side of packed playgrounds. One destination that's suitable for the whole family is Hampton Court Palace, which is the most magnificent building, steeped in a history that most children will study at some point, with beautiful grounds. There are free family trails to help you explore the palace that are available at the information centre, plus audio guides, costumed tours and presentations as well as the world-famous maze. What is more, on Saturday August 9, there's a special family fun day experience taking place, focusing on Georgian food, fashions and pastimes with drama and storytelling workshops.

• Tel: 0844 4827777 / Web: hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace

Outdoor treasure hunts,

Various locations

The National Trust has published a list of '50 things to do before you're 11-and-three-quarters' and something called geocaching is one of them. Geocaching is a type of outdoor treasure hunt using GPS-enabled devices. In short, participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the container (cache) hidden at that location. When you've found it, you sign the log book and leave something in it for the next person to find. This summer, the National Trust has teamed up with Garmin (the mobile GPS device company) at Polesden Lacey, near Dorking, so that visitors can try out geocaching.



You can collect one of their devices from the visitor reception or the white welcome tent between 10am and 4pm daily. Actually, you don't have to be under 11-and-three-quarters - it's great fun whether you are seven or 70 and you can choose your level of difficulty by accessing the geocache website online at geocaching.com. You'll be staggered by how many things are hidden all over Surrey.

• Tel: 01372 452048 / Web: nationaltrust.org.uk



Theatrebugs Holiday Workshops,

Various locations

Theatre workshops are a great way to build a child's confidence and there are a number of excellent companies that offer holiday courses such as Stagecoach and the Guildford Shakespeare Company. There's also one called Theatrebugs that takes place in a number of venues throughout the summer including Claygate, Farnham, Godalming, Oxshott and Weybridge. Aimed at children aged from three to seven, each course is a week-long lasting three hours a day and costs £120. During that time, little ones can enjoy singing, dancing, arts and crafts and dressing-up as pirates, fairies, superheroes, or maybe even kangaroos! By the final day, they are ready to put on a fantastic show!

• Tel: 01483 882244 / Web: theatrebugs.co.uk



Kidspace,

Croydon

An award-winning indoor play centre and party venue, Kidspace in Croydon provides great entertainment for kids whatever the weather. Discover their Toddler Village, 40ft climbing wall, sky-trail, go-kart track and the enticingly named Thunderball City. They also have four exciting slides (including an 8m-high black hole - no lost kids here, though!), cargo nets, rope bridges, tunnels, vertical mazes, cannons galore, a lightening cube and lots more. For grumbly tums, there is the Pod Pizzeria. Kidspace was voted Mamas & Papas Best Soft Play Venue for South London in 2012 and 2013. * For the chance to win tickets to Kidspace, visit the Surrey Life website at surreylife.co.uk.

• Tel: 01708 768003 / Web: kidspaceadventures.com

Join us online...

For lots more inspiration for great family days out in the county this summer, pay a visit to the Surrey Life website at surreylife.co.uk



Find out more: Author Andrea Pinnington writes children's nature books designed to help parents get children outside in the summer. For more information, pay a visit to the website: finefeatherpress.com



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