

# 7 WAYS

## *to Explore Your Town Like a Tourist*

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**A**re you in a “fun rut?” You know the signs: your weekends start to all look the same, your date nights stay within a two-mile radius of your house and you’ve got a “been there, done that” attitude about things to do in your community.

### **Maybe it’s time to start thinking like a tourist!**

When you go on vacation, you probably research the area to discover local activities, restaurants, special events, cultural happenings, must-see places to visit and fun-but-affordable things to do. In other words, you think like a tourist. Why not apply the same “tourist strategy” to your hometown? You’ll uncover new restaurants, community festivals, concerts, cultural events and more to keep your family busy for months.

## **Jump-start your fun with these ideas:**

**1. Unusual Tourist Attractions.** If you’ve already visited most of the popular tourist attractions in your own community, you don’t necessarily need to leave town to see something new. Check out <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/> or <http://roadsidetourist.com/> for quirky roadside attractions and off-the-beaten path tourist sites that might be your community’s best-kept secret for a fun family outing.

**2. Farmer’s Market.** What better way to taste what’s in season than to visit your local farmer’s market. Depending on the market, you can watch food prep/cooking demonstrations, sit in on nutrition seminars, visit a barnyard animal petting area, take a market or farm tour, gather ingredients to cook a healthy meal at home, pick up a jar of local honey or freshly canned preserves and support your local farmers and small businesses in the process. To find a farmer’s market in your area, visit <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/>.



**3. Colleges and Universities.** You don't need to wait until your grandkids are college-bound to take advantage of all the happenings on your local college campus. Of course, cheering on your local college football team might already be on your radar. But, you might also want to check out many of the other college events open to the community, such as plays, a cappella performances, concerts, art exhibits, gardening workshops, guest lectures, planetarium shows, fitness challenges, book fairs, improv comedy shows and more. For details about college events open to the public, contact your local community college as well as public and private state colleges and universities in your area.

**4. County Extension Office.** According to the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture website, local extension offices bring vital, practical information to consumers, families and young people. Offerings reflect the community's needs, such as budget-friendly meal planning and food preparation classes, butterfly gardening, county fairs, rain barrel and composting workshops, 4-H Clubs and eco-friendly landscaping classes taught by master gardeners. Contact your county extension office or search here to find yours: <http://www.extension.org/>.

**5. Public Library.** Think beyond summer reading programs and toddler story times (although those are both great options if you've got younger grandkids). Did you know that many libraries offer book clubs, computer classes, small business workshops, teen clubs and special events such as health seminars, book signings, puppet shows, speaker presentations and arts-and-crafts classes? Public libraries offer most, if not all, of these events for free or very low cost to the community. To find your local public library, as well as academic, national, school and specialty libraries, visit <http://www.lib-web.org/>.

*Ready to snap out of that "fun rut?" Then start thinking like a tourist to explore your hometown from a fresh perspective. •••*

**6. Community Events and Festivals.** Skip the weekly pizza-and-Netflix night for a change and head out to a special event or festival in your community. Whether you're looking for a great ethnic/food event (Kielbasa Festival, anyone?), bluegrass concert, antique car show, wine tasting, food truck round-up, Renaissance fair, model railroad exhibit or craft show, you can find events and festivals to appeal to a variety of ages and interests. To find community festivals and events in your area, visit <http://festivalsandevents.com/>.

**7. Museums.** History, science and art, oh my! Local museums bring culture alive in your community, offering a lot more than just their regular exhibits. Museums host a variety of events all year long, such as retro game nights, traveling exhibits, hands-on family days, 3-D IMAX movies, black-tie events, speaker series and much more. Plus, if you join your local museum, it might be part of a reciprocal program through the ASTC Travel Passport Program that allows you to visit 280 museums across the world for free or at a discounted admission. For details, visit <http://www.astc.org/passport/>. Many children's museums offer a similar deal through the ACM Reciprocal Network, which includes 50% off general admission to 200 museums in the U.S. and Canada. For details, visit [www.childrensmuseums.org](http://www.childrensmuseums.org).



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