

# out of dodge

Just for the day?  
Maybe more?  
15 great ideas to  
help you get-  
away this  
summer



writer: laurel thomas

*Okay, get packing! Nothing spells boredom like s-u-m-m-e-r, so we've rounded up some fun places to take the family for a refreshing change of scenery. For your added convenience (we're thoughtful that way), we've divvied them up by distance, so plan your gas and tantrum budget accordingly.*



## DAY TRIPS (UNDER 150 MILES)

**St. Francisville, LA** Step back in time to visit several historic sites as well as sprawling plantations. A haunted one—the Myrtles Plantation—conducts nightly mystery tours that older children will enjoy. The ghost hunters among you can opt to stay in one of the 'haunted' rooms. For

the faint of heart wishing to spend the night, there are other fun places to stay, including the Barrow House Inn B & B. Summers in St. Francisville bring special attractions, including The Day the War Stopped, a commemorative event of the Civil War, and the Feliciana Hummingbird Celebration. [www.stfrancisville.us](http://www.stfrancisville.us)

**Folsom, LA** A real safari is just an hour or so away in Folsom. At the Global Wildlife Center, an open train traverses through 900 acres of scenery. Make sure you purchase feed or corn for the journey—the family bucket size is your best bet—to feed some of the wildlife you encounter. Kids might even get the chance to pet some giraffes and bison. [www.globalwildlife.com](http://www.globalwildlife.com)

**Percy Quin State Park in McComb, MS** Foster fond childhood

memories while learning about nature and observing wildlife.

Amid the park's natural beauty, kids can swim in the pool or lake, fish, and even bike. Additionally, the park offers picnic areas, a playground, and a boat launch. Families can rough it by pitching their own tents or can go the more leisurely route by renting a comfortable cabin. Also available onsite are a laundry facility, a bath house, a convenience store, and golfing. [www.stateparks.com/percy\\_quin.html](http://www.stateparks.com/percy_quin.html)

**Houma, LA** Among the swamps of Houma, families can rent a small fishing camp at Carol's Camps on Falgout Canal. Hotels and bed and breakfast inns are also available, some with French-speaking proprietors. During the summer there are many events scheduled including fishing rodeos, horse shows in June and August, free concerts, and the Down Da Bayou Festival in June. Families can tour swamps and museums in Houma, as well as visit the St. George Observatory in Schriever. [www.houmatourism.com](http://www.houmatourism.com)



## WEEKEND GET-AWAYS (150-250 MILES)

**Natchez, MS** This antebellum town is filled with beautiful parks and mansions to tour. Take an historic buggy ride or scenic drive along the Natchez Trace. During the summer, you can sign up your kids for Pioneer Week: The Way It Was or Civil War adventure camp. Don't miss out on the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and the Indian mounds.

For lodging, check out the Wilkins Town House, featuring great period furnishings. [www.natchezms.com](http://www.natchezms.com)

# If you could come up with a really funny quote, like from somebody famous (Zsa Zsa?) that would go really, really well here! Something about getting out of town!

**Laurel, MS** From the welcoming Laurel Inn Bed and Breakfast to the delightful Historic district, a visit to Laurel will be steeped in southern hospitality, tradition and charm. There are many places to visit here: Landrum's Homestead and Village, a living history museum; historic homes; Trapper's Gator Farm; and the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art. Check out the Lonesome Pines Memorial Red Cross Bluegrass Festival in June or the Blues Bash in August. [www.laurelms.com](http://www.laurelms.com)

**Vicksburg, MS** This historic town boasts many museums, including the Coca Cola museum and the Yesterday's Children Antique Doll and Toy Museum. There are numerous tours and attractions, including gardens and historic homes. Check out the Art Park at Catfish Row, which boasts splash fountains and play areas. Kid-friendly lodging may be found at Bryn Rose Inn or The Corners Bed & Breakfast Inn. [www.vicksburg.org](http://www.vicksburg.org)



## GREAT BEACH DESTINATIONS

The Gulf Coast offers plenty of family-friendly destinations, all competing for your attention with their gorgeous white sand and warm, clear water. We highlight three of our favorites here.

Within **Gulf Shores, AL**, check out The Beach Club Gulf Shores. It's a great place for families, with poolside crafts, theme nights, and games. Take the Mobile Bay Ferry to Historic Fort Morgan; in June and July, check out its special candlelight tours. Race enthusiasts should check out the Thunder in the Gulf Powerboat Races in July. Additional, summer long family fun can be found at area horse farms, the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Sea Lab Exhibits, and Waterville USA. [www.gulfshores.com](http://www.gulfshores.com)

A perennial favorite for families, **Destin, FL**, is chock full of fun activities for kids. They can ride go-carts or have fun with mom and dad in bumper boats at the Track Recreation Center (with lots of rides especially for younger children), feed and take pictures with live alligators at Gator Beach, and explore the Emerald Coast Science Center. Families can enjoy dolphin watching, glass-bottom boat tours, and Concerts in the Park (beginning June 5). Two resorts in the area, the Silver Shells Resort and the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, have children's programs, playgrounds, kiddie pools, and family packages. [www.destinfl.com](http://www.destinfl.com)

Although it is known for its beautiful beaches, **Pensacola, FL**, is its own diamond in the rough. The Portofino Island Resort and Spa has several activities for children and access to various waterspouts. There are numerous hotels and some bed and breakfasts closer to the fun downtown area. While there, check out the "Bands on the Beach" every Tuesday, an open house for the Historic Pensacola Village, the Fiesta Sand Sculpture Contest, and the Pensacola Beach Air Show. [www.visitpensacola.co](http://www.visitpensacola.co)



## LONGER ROAD TRIPS (250 + MILES)

**Toledo Bend Lake, Anacoco, LA** Pack up the tent and head to Anacoco's Toledo Bend Lake. In addition to tent and RV sites, there are cabins—for up to six people—available at Toledo Bend Resort. Campers will enjoy spotting various wildlife and, if lucky, will see a bald eagle or two. The area features a beach, marina, and boat launch, and families can partake in canoeing, fishing, swimming and visiting nearby waterfalls, the Hodges Gardens and Fort Jesup. [www.crt.state.la.us/parks/istb.aspx](http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks/istb.aspx)

**The Highlands, NC** Nestled in the mountains and surrounded by breathtaking scenery, the Highlands is an ideal destination for the outdoor enthusiast, offering great canoeing and kayaking, whitewater rafting, fishing, and horseback riding. There are many family-friendly places to visit, including the Fun Factory in the Smokies, Cliffside Lake, Highlands Nature Center, and the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad—featuring Thomas the Tank Engine in July and August. The summer months also feature a Highlands Cashiers Chamber Music Festival and several theater productions. Check out at the Colonial Parks Inn, featuring bed and breakfast rooms as well as an apartment and a cottage available to rent. [www.highlandinfo.com](http://www.highlandinfo.com)

**Gatlinburg, TN** Have a large family seeking fun and adventure this summer? Gatlinburg's perfect, with large cabins—available through A Big Chalet and Abide Above Gatlinburg—featuring amenities such as game rooms, swing sets, and video games. For a smaller crowd, The Lodge at Buckberry Creek is a luxurious retreat. But don't hang out too long in your cabin. There's much to see and do, including Ripley's attractions, the Salt and Pepper Shaker Museum, Camp Thunder, Ober Gatlinburg Ski Resort & Amusement Park, and the Hollywood Cars Museum and Hollywood Wax Museum. There are also outdoor activities such as horseback riding and rafting. [www.gatlinburg.com](http://www.gatlinburg.com)

**Dinosaur Valley State Park, Glen Rose, TX** If you've got a dino-phile in your family, this is the destination for you. Visitors can view real dinosaur tracks—some over a yard long—made by the plant-eating dinosaurs known as brontosaurus as well as smaller tracks made by the carnivorous theropods. The tracks are located in a riverbed, so call ahead to check on river conditions. Kids also can learn about fossils and paleontology at the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, Somervell County Museum, and Creation Evidence Museum. Families can check out Bussey's Something Special Bed & Breakfast Guest Cottages, featuring many amenities and a resident dog. [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

**Tyler, TX** Known as America's Rose Capital and featuring beautiful rose gardens, Tyler, TX, also boasts other attractions that make it worth the drive. Kids will enjoy Harrold's Model Train Museum, the Hudnall Planetarium, Fire Mountain Amusements, and Tyler Skateplex. The town also has a State Park, Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge, and hosts the Kiepersol Grape Stomp & Harvest Festival in August. Children will delight in The Grace Place Bed & Breakfast, a remodeled horse barn which has resident animals. [www.tylertexas.com](http://www.tylertexas.com)

