

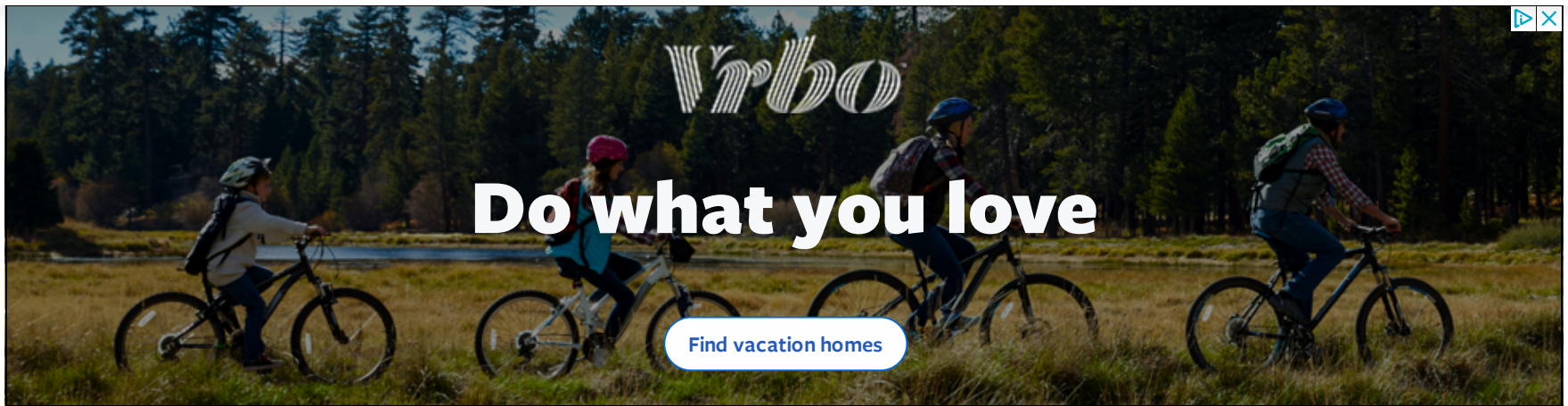


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10 Ridiculously Cheap Summer Family Vacations for 2020




BY JUDY KOUTSKY 
December 18, 2019



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Many of us assume summer is the most expensive time to travel, especially since the kids are out of school. But there are plenty of ways to enjoy a summer vacation while keeping costs down. Free and low-cost activities abound throughout these destinations, all of which make great cheap summer family vacations.

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1. Nashville, TN

[Nashville](#) offers an amazing array of inexpensive, family-friendly activities, from the splash pad and playground at Cumberland Park to the the Nashville

Greenways, where you walk, bike and skate in the great outdoors. Kids will love the one-of-a-kind cars at the low-cost Lane Motor Museum; the Parthenon, which hosts Kidsville (with story time and crafts) on Saturday mornings, and of course, the Taylor Swift Education Center at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Stay at the recently opened Drury Plaza Hotel Nashville Downtown, where rates include free hot breakfast; the 5:30 Kickback with complimentary beverages and snacks; and access to the indoor/outdoor pool. Rates start around \$229 per night in the summer.

Recommended Hotel: [Drury Plaza Hotel Nashville Downtown](#)

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\$207 Hotels.com	VIEW DEAL →	Trip.com \$220 → Agoda.com \$186 → FindHotel \$219 →

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2. Cape Cod, MA

A beloved summer vacation destination for families, [Cape Cod](#) offers exciting activities and affordable accommodations. In East Dennis, families can spend the day on popular beaches such as Harborview and Mayflower (free to enter). Due to East Dennis' harborside location, the beaches are especially friendly to little travelers during low tide. After a day in the sun, families can compete in fun go-kart races (\$8 per ride), bounce on the trampolines (\$7 unlimited access) or the Bounce House (\$4 unlimited access), or hit up the batting cages (tokens start at \$1.50) at Cape Cod Cartwheels. We recommend a stay at Sesuit Harbor House, a resort-style, 21-room B&B. Families will love playing on the 2.5-acre lawn with the resident goats (Brownie, Lloyd Jr. and Lola!), swimming in the pool, making S'mores in the new fire pit, and competing in lawn games. Sesuit Harbor House summer rates start at \$179 a night.

Recommended Hotel: [Sesuit Harbor House](#)

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3. Charleston, SC

A relaxing and affordable destination that celebrates all things Americana, [Charleston](#) is rich in history and activities for families. Along with

an abundance of multi-generational activities such as sunset sailings on the historic harbor and visits to the South Carolina Aquarium, it offers kid-specific fun such as the Children’s Museum of the Lowcountry. Those looking to enjoy a free scenic walking tour can visit iconic Waterfront Park and Patriot’s Point, where you’ll see the historic USS Yorktown, the Old Exchange & Provost Dungeon (one of the city’s oldest buildings), and Charlestowne Landing, the birthplace of the Carolina colony. If you’re looking for a good, reasonably priced hotel, check out the HarbourView Inn (rates start at \$209 per night), which offers tons of complimentary perks (hello, afternoon cookies!) and family-friendly packages.

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Bonus: Charleston, South Carolina, is just 30 minutes from the Isle of Palms, where you can enjoy a classic beach vacation at [Wild Dunes Resort](#).

Recommended Hotel: [Harbourview Inn](#)

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\$356 Hotels.com	VIEW DEAL →	Agoda.com \$356 → Hotel Website \$320 →

4. Fort Worth, TX

[Fort Worth](#) is the [perfect Texan getaway for families](#) looking for a memorable and budget-friendly summer vacation. Activities can include touring

the iconic Cultural District, home to five world-famous museums, including the Amon Carter Museum of American Art (always free), The Kimbell Art Museum (free for kids under 6, with half-price tickets available) and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (free for kids under 18; free for all on Fridays). At the Fort Worth Zoo, Wednesdays are half-price admission and toddlers always get in free. Fort Worth is also more accessible than ever before thanks to the TEXRail, a 27-mile commuter rail that extends from Fort Worth to the DFW International Airport. The Omni Fort Worth Hotel offers rates at about \$170 per night, and is perfect for a centralized and comfy place to stay.


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Recommended Hotel: [Omni Fort Worth Hotel](#)

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\$276 Omni Hotels	VIEW DEAL →	Hotels.com \$276 → travelup.com \$281 → Lol.travel \$334 → View All 6 deals ▼

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5. The Finger Lakes, NY

In time for the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, New York's [Finger Lakes](#) will celebrate its role as the birthplace of women's rights with a new, cost-free guide called "[100 Ways to Celebrate Women's Empowerment](#)." Families can start on the list by staying at The Gould Hotel for \$139 a night in Seneca Falls, New York, the location of the first Women's Rights Convention of 1848, Women's Rights National Historical Park (free admission), and the newly relocated National Women's Hall of Fame (\$8/family) in an 1844 knitting mill. Within driving distance are other stops from the "100" list, including demonstrations by women glassblowers at the famous Corning Museum of Glass (free for kids 17 and under), Owego's former home of Belva Lockwood, the first woman to run for president, and the home of Harriet Tubman at her own dedicated national park (tour is \$5 per adult and \$2 for kids 17 and under).

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Recommended Hotel: [The Gould Hotel](#)

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6. Houston, TX

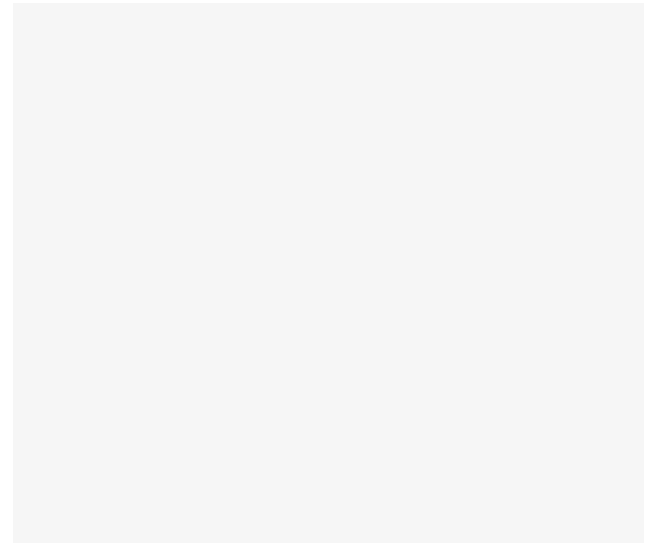
From urban green spaces and inner-city parks, to the city's famous museum district complete with 19 museums (10 of which are always free!), there's so much to do for an affordable vacation in [Houston](#). Visit the Children's Museum of Houston, which features the larger-than-life Human Hamster Balls and an all-new Ropes Challenge Course; the museum is free on Thursdays between 5 and 8 p.m. Another Houston favorite, Discovery Green is a great for everything from family picnics on the lush green lawns to kayak rides at Kinder Lake (\$5), or even mid-day roller skating at the [The Rink](#), Houston's first outdoor roller rink. The Omni Houston Hotel will be beloved by the young ones. Upon check-in, kids receive a [backpack](#) filled with fun, custom items ideal for creating their own city adventure, including [binoculars](#), [tabletop games](#), [activity books](#) and more as part of the Omni Kids Crew program. Littles even receive in-room delivery of milk and cookies on their first night at the Omni Houston. Rates start around \$113 a night.

Recommended Hotel: [Omni Houston Hotel](#)

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\$176
Omni Hotels [VIEW DEAL →](#)

Hotels.com	\$176 →
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7. Cheyenne, WY

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Located just 90 minutes from Denver, the historic town of [Cheyenne, Wyoming](#), offers classic cowboy culture, fantastic museums, and outdoor adventures galore. Cheyenne is home to the Grand Greenhouse Conservatory, which is Wyoming's only public botanic garden. Next to the botanic garden is the free Paul Smith Children's Village, a three-quarter acre site of gardens filled with interactive landscapes such as a natural wetlands, gravity powered water works, a farmers windmill, solar pumps, a "secret garden," arts and crafts, a historic sheep wagon, tipi village, puppet theater and more. Admission to both the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and Paul Smith Children's Village is free. Another fun activity is the Bison Train at Terry Bison Ranch, which offers daily bison train tours to a pasture full of grazing bison, where kids can then feed the bison. You can also see ostriches, camels, and other farm animals. Kids under 12 are \$7. The newly opened Staybridge Suites Cheyenne, located just minutes from Cheyenne's historic downtown, offers complimentary hot breakfast and a heated indoor pool. Suites average around \$150 to \$160 per night.

Recommended Hotel: [Staybridge Suites Cheyenne](#)

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\$183 Hotels.com	VIEW DEAL →	ZenHotels.com \$168 →
		LoL.travel \$163 →
		Agoda.com \$183 →
		View All 6 deals ✓

8. St. Louis, MO

The Gateway Arch in [St. Louis](#) just underwent a \$380-million renovation of its museum and grounds in 2018, so there's never been a better time to visit. The

landmark Forest Park is a must-visit, as it's home to the St. Louis Art Museum, which hosts Family Sundays with hands-on art activities and a family-friendly tour of the galleries (free). It's also home to the Missouri History Museum, which includes Kids Clubhouse Exhibit (free) and the St. Louis Zoo, which is also free. Also, Forest Park will be unveiling a 17-acre experiential nature playscape—the first of its kind in the region—in 2020. At The Chase Park Plaza Royal Sonesta St. Louis, room rates start at \$159, and it often has packages for families, such as the Family Cinema Package, which includes movie tickets to the hotel's movie theater, plus brunch.

Recommended Hotel: [The Chase Park Plaza Royal Sonesta St. Louis](#)


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9. Chicago, IL

[Chicago](#) is great place to visit in the summer, especially with all the free entertainment available. Every summer, Navy Pier offers several free live music

events, as well as its annual Water Flicks, where families can bring their [blankets](#), [lawn chairs](#) and [snacks](#) for a memorable way to watch a movie outdoors. To top it off, Navy Pier sets off fireworks every Wednesday and Saturday evening in the summer (from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend) for families to enjoy. The southeast section of Maggie Daley Park is anchored by a 3-acre free Play Garden, a first of its kind in Chicago. Kids can cool off by playing in the free Crown Fountain at Millennium Park. The Lincoln Park Zoo is free and is a great place to see wildlife in the shadow of skyscrapers. Cruise the Chicago River on a water taxi (\$6), head to city's famed Oak Street Beach (free) and then go on a Chicago Cultural Center Greeter tour, also free and always led by a local.

Recommended Hotel: [Hampton Inn and Suites Chicago – Downtown](#)



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<p>\$179 Hampton.com</p> <p>VIEW DEAL →</p>		<p>Hotels.com \$179 →</p> <p>ZenHotels.com \$157 →</p>

10. Greenville, SC

Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, [Greenville, South Carolina](#), offers visitors a unique blend of traditional Southern charm and contemporary

cool. With countless free annual events and activities in its completely walkable downtown, plus some of the most accessible natural attractions in the Southeast nearby, Greenville is an affordable summer vacation destination. Head out to the ball game with Boston Red Sox Class A affiliate, the Greenville Drive, with tickets starting at just \$7. Stop by Falls Park on the Reedy, an urban park in the heart of Main Street, with a series of falls and the Liberty Bridge—a 345-foot, curved bridge held in the air by a single suspension cable—the only one of its kind in the United States. Hop on the free trolley that runs up and down Main Street to visit more than 120 locally owned restaurants throughout the mile and a half stretch of Main Street. For affordable rates, check into the new Homewood Suites Greenville Downtown; rates start at \$160 a night.

Recommended Hotel: [Homewood Suites Greenville Downtown](#)

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\$176 Homewood	VIEW DEAL →	Hotels.com \$176 → ZenHotels.com \$169 → Lol.travel \$218 → View All 6 deals 

Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in more than 30 publications including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, WebMD, Prevention and Scholastic. Her article topics include health, parenting, lifestyle, psychology and travel. She also works on custom publishing projects and has worked with a variety of Fortune Five Hundred companies including Enfamil, Pampers, and Procter & Gamble. You can view her writing at [JudyKoutsky.com](#) and on Instagram [@JudyKoutsky](#).

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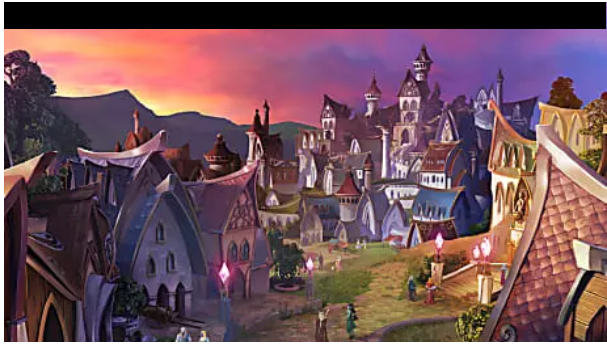


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