

summer journeys

5 amazing destinations around the country



Minnesota State Fair

Our city is action packed during the summer, but there are many amazing family experiences to be had outside the five boroughs, too. Whether you want to take a road trip or fly, check out our picks for some of the best kid-friendly events around the country that will make the soon-to-be steaming sidewalks of New York seem like a distant memory.

Best Amusement Park

For roller coaster fans, Cedar Point can't be beat. Its main attraction is 16 roller coasters, including some of the highest and fastest in the world. The award-winning park also offers a variety of rides scaled for tots and grade school kids, as well as a water park and shows for the whole family. Like Disney World, hotels are located on the grounds that offer early admission to the park, but there are plenty of places to stay in the immediate area, as well as other attractions.

Cedar Point Amusement Park, Sandusky, OH; open daily from May 12 through September 3; for more information call 419-627-2350 or visit www.cedarpoint.com.

Best State Fair

Old-fashioned family fun is available in abundance at the Minnesota State Fair. There are shows to entertain every age, and this summer's Grandstand per-

formance features country star Brad Paisley and American Idol finalist Kellie Pickler. The Midway and Kidway offer carnival games, and kids will love seeing all the animals, from rabbits to horses. Not for dieters, Minnesota's State Fair is renowned for the sheer variety of foods available on a stick. Minneapolis and St. Paul offer beautiful parks, lakes, and tons of cultural institutions to take advantage of while you are in town.

Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, MN; August 23 through September 3; for more information visit www.mnstate-fair.org.

Best National Park

With stunning views, biking and hiking trails and tons of kids' programming, Zion National Park is a place to get away from the crowds and into nature. Zion's Junior Ranger Program offers activities for kids that are centered around Zion National Park and its unique environment. Families can also take advantage of guided tours, scenic drives, and museums explaining the history of the region. Other parks, like Bryce Canyon, are easily reached. Camp sites and nearby hotels offer a range of lodging choices.

Zion National Park, Springdale, UT; open year-round; special summer programs offered May 29 through September 4; for more information call 435-772-3256 or visit www.nps.gov/zion.

Best Ballpark

What better way is there to enjoy the All-Star Game on July 10th than to actually be there? AT&T Park is one of the best ballparks in the nation. Fans love its location on the Bay and watching home runs splash into McCovey Cove. Kids who are not yet baseball fans adore the 80-foot Coca-Cola bottle with playground slides and miniature AT&T Park behind left field. Before the game, families can take a tour of the stadium, going places that only players are normally allowed, like the warning track and dugout. San Francisco is a wonderful city, too, with amazing dining and plenty of other cultural attractions to entertain everyone.

AT&T (formerly PacBell) Park, San Francisco, CA; games take place March 1 through September 26; for more information call 415-972-1852 or visit www.sanfrancisco.giants.mlb.com.

Best Beach Experience

Every year, the Houston chapter of the American Institute of Architects sponsors a sandcastle building competition at East Beach in Galveston, TX. Approximately 80 architectural firms plan their sandcastle projects for months, culminating in a five hour sandcastle build off. These are the most impressive sandcastles you're likely to ever see: teams pack their sand structures full of engineering elements, including water pumping systems. Sandcastles are judged based on originality, artistic execution, technical difficulty, carving technique, and utilization of the site. Stay at one of many luxurious resorts and enjoy beaches, art galleries, and shopping in Galveston before and after the contest.

AIA Sandcastle Competition, East Beach, Galveston, TX; June 2, 2007; for more information call 713-520-0155 or visit www.aiasandcastle.com. ♦

—By Suzanne Reisman