

LEISURE

Playing the games of summer

There's plenty to do in York Region to keep your children active during the dog days of summer

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For adults, summer vacation is a time for rest and relaxation. For children, summer vacation is a time for little rest and no relaxation.

As a parent, what do you do? Give in to the children, of course. The dog days of summer have arrived, and with them, the challenge to keep the kids content around the house after more than a month of freedom.

There is no need for despair, though. There are plenty of sites and activities in York Region to occupy young minds.

And the best news is many of them are either free, or well below 20 battered Canadian dollars.

Aileen Stewart always enjoys how summer breaks up the family routine. But after a month of exploring a nearby ravine and visiting family and friends, her three children are ready for another change of pace.

That's when we'll drive up to Lake Simcoe and spend the whole day at the beach, she says.

Yes, the time may have come to steer clear of the neighborhood park in favour of more exotic, but close-to-home destinations.

Boyd Conservation Area in Vaughan offers some serious hiking trails guaranteed to tire out even the most energetic children. Kortright Conservation Area is just up the road and offers programs geared to families at 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. weekdays as well as on weekends.

Fairy Lake Park in Newmarket is suitable for walkers, strollers and rollerbladers.

If swimming is high on the agenda, Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in

Stouffville has a beach where the water is chlorinated. An impermeable curtain surrounds the swimming area to prevent chlorine from entering the creek system.

There are also beaches in the region's north end, including Claredon, Young's Harbour Park, De La Salle Park and Maple Leaf Park. All the parks have playground equipment and washrooms, making it worth a summer's day outing.

Just a few kilometres down the road from these beaches is Sibbald Point Provincial Park. It, too, has a large beach, playground equipment and washrooms.

In Vaughan, a new water play area at Wade Gate Park will keep the children smiling.

If the weather turns wet, there are a number of indoors pools scattered throughout the region, including the Georgina Leisure Pool.

The 19-month-old facility in Sutton has a beach area for toddlers, an umbrella fountain, a 25-metre lap pool and a therapy pool. There's also 100-foot water slide.

Richmond Hill's wave pool, meanwhile, is guaranteed to thrill your daredevils.

Many communities are served by parent-child resource centres or play groups. Parents can drop in and meet others while they watch their children play, sing and do crafts.

The Markham-Milliken-Stouffville group is planning summer excursions suited to tight budgets.

A visit to the farm is a great way to

entertain children of varying ages. Puck's farm provides pony rides, hay rides, cow milking, a maze, pig racing and Anthony the Singing Cowboy.

Petting the animals and playing in the straw are offered at Forsythe's farm in Unionville and Round the Bend farm in Kettleby.

At Lionel's Pony farm in Stouffville, children can pet and feed llamas, goats and ponies, among others. Call ahead to make sure the farm isn't closed for a group tour, and to reserve pony rides.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

WHERE TO PLAY

Whether it's fun in the sun or an afternoon walking a nature trail, York Region has many attractions to keep your family entertained during the final weeks of summer.

From the wave pool in Richmond Hill to the beaches of Lake Simcoe in Georgina, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

■ For a list of some suggestions, see page 18.



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