



Visiting Portland with Kids

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*This is a guest post from Deston Nokes, a Portland-based travel writer and sixth-generation Oregonian. Deston has raised a daughter and son in the Rose City, and found that their most treasured times were outside and far away from electronic devices. He just authored an iPhone app, *Portland Essentials*, with more than 200 entries about the most awesome things to do in the city. He can be reached through <http://www.destonnokes.com>.*

One visit to Portland and you'll understand why it's called the America's most livable city. With its parks, festivals, waterfront and friendly demeanor, Portland has no peer.

The Rose City is a perfect hub for a family with active children and teens: in little more than an hour's drive, my son and daughter could be skiing Mt. Hood, playing on the beach, or boating in a river. Within Portland city limits, we can hike on dense forest trails, go paddling in a kayak under Portland's famous bridges or pedal along a floating walkway.

Rain? Our winter and early-spring showers are the dues we Portlanders pay to have the most gorgeous greens, most fragrant rose gardens and sunniest summer dispositions. But even if it's wet, the city offers plenty to do indoors.

Take a ride

On a sunny day, take the family for a walk or bike ride along the **Eastbank Esplanade** and **Waterfront Park**. It provides the best view of the city skyline and incorporates the best qualities of its residents: art, beauty and recreation. People ride bikes, jog with their pets or just take a pleasant stroll along the 1.5-mile loop. You can rent bikes at **Waterfront Bike Rentals** in Old Town near the Steel Bridge. It has hybrid, road, cyclo-cross, tandem and children's bikes and trailers. Rental prices include a helmet, lock and bicycle bag. Reservations helpful.



Let your kids explore

No two ways about it: Portland has a terrific zoo. Located in Washington Park and easily accessible by MAX Light Rail, the **Oregon Zoo** allows you to get up close and personal with the zoo's birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Of these, 21 species are endangered and 33 are threatened. Also, the Oregon Zoo is known for its efforts to help breed and rear endangered condors; and it is one of the foremost elephant-breeding facilities in the world. Don't forget to say hello to Packy, the largest Asian elephant in the country. The zoo also hosts summer evening concerts and a seasonal Christmas ZOOLIGHTS celebration.

Next door, the **Portland Children's Museum** will have your kids' heads spinning with a collection of hands-on fun. Exhibits include the Vroom Room, Grasshopper Grocery & Butterfly Bistro, the Clay Studio, the Garage, a Dig Pit and Tree House. Its newest exhibit, Kangaroo Crossing, helps kids experience Australia's outback and Great Barrier Reef without having to jump the equator.



Paddleboarding Columbia River Gorge. Photo Credit Deston Nokes

Paddle a river in the middle of the city

Rent kayaks in downtown Portland and take a guided, calm-water paddle under the city's famous bridges. The adventure along the Willamette River provides a terrific view of the city skyline and wildlife. Perfect for both first-time kayakers and experienced paddlers, the tour takes you around a wildlife refuge and past a blue heron rookery. Kayakers might spot bald eagles and osprey. Kids as young as six are fine, often accompanying parents in a double-sized kayak. Contact **Portland Kayak** for your specific situation, and reservations are required.

Cheer on the Blazers!

No NBA venue is as alive and as kid friendly as the Rose Garden, home of the **Portland Trailblazers**. Portland is the nation's top NBA town when it comes to fan loyalty and thunderous enthusiasm. Trust me: It will be the most memorable outing you and your kids will share. For years, the Portland Trailblazers have fielded a competitive and likable group of players and the staff puts on a great show for the family. It's easily the most rocking ticket in town. The season lasts between October and April — longer if the Blazers are in the playoffs.

Need a hotel? The **Inn at Northrup Station** is a colorful, fun place to stay. All the suite-configured rooms have kitchenettes so you don't have to order room service and it's located in the fun and funky Northwest District. A short, free streetcar ride whisks you to all the sites listed.

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