Clearwater Beach, Florida with Kids: Top 25 Things to Do on Your Family Beach Vacation

SEP 26 2012 BY MOMMY

We were recently invited to check out Clearwater Beach, Florida and I jumped at the opportunity since I had never been to Florida’s Gulf Coast. What I found was neighboring towns.

If you love big waves, the Gulf Coast is not for you. What you will find are swaying white powder-sand beaches, gentle waves and water that tends to be a few degrees warmer than the Atlantic on the other side of Florida, making the beaches better for families with young children or anyone who doesn’t need the motion of the ocean.

Clearwater Beach is half an hour from Tampa and two hours from Orlando, so it can also be a good home base for trips to the big attractions like Busch Gardens and Disney World. Playing all day at the amusement parks and coming home to the beach sounds like a great vacation to me.

Clearwater is not a big city like Miami, but there is plenty to do. Of course, you may be happy just lounging in your beach chair and playing in the sand and water. But if you get tired of that, here’s my list of the top things to do with kids in Clearwater Beach on your family vacation. I recommend all the activities on this list, but I’ve bolded the items that are particularly special must-dos:

1. Rent a Fast Car: a road-ready pint sized car and tour the town.
2. Enjoy the mini-carnival atmosphere at Sunsets at Pier 60 with street performers, musicians and crafts for sale.
3. See Winter, the dolphin from Dolphin Tale, at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, see the dolphin show, and learn about marine animal habitats.
4. Take a dolphin cruise. Several run regularly from the Clearwater Marina. Kids might particularly like the shark-themed Hexa Elite or getting wet on the Noz Sergio.
5. Haul in a big one on a half-day fishing expedition.
6. Rent a parasail boat to explore the intracoastal waters and visit Shell Key.

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Or take the Sea Life Safari Eco-Tour, led by the Clearwater Marine Animal Sanctuary, where kids can handle live sea creatures pulled up to nets, see dolphins and look for shells.

8. Test your surfing skills at the indoor flow rider at Surf Style.

9. Explore the Mexican Food Galore District for authentic Mexican food and La Fonda de Los Reyes for delicious Mexican ice cream.

10. Kids over 14 can drive a cart at Jax with a parent or younger children can ride.

11. Go snorkeling at Indian Rocks Beach, 9 miles south of Clearwater.

12. Enjoy free cinema under the stars on Friday and Saturday evenings.

13. Kids will have a blast in the playground and on the inflatables at Circle of Fun (bouncy castle and water slides available for purchase).


15. Stay away for some rollin' sliding entertainment aboard Captain Morgan's Pirate Cruise. Leigh.

16. Stop in for the famous "Indian Summer" sandwiches at Fighting Artichoke.

17. Take to the skies on a parasail.

18. Have a mini putt competition at Captain Shack's Landing adventure mini golf.

19. Go to a game of the minor league Clearwater Threshers.

20. Get around Clearwater for free (but do tip your driver) with the Florida Free Ride.

21. Plan your visit to coincide with the Clearwater Jazz Holiday in October or the Sun 'N Fun Festival in April.

22. Take a day trip to St. Petersburg to visit the Dalí Museum.

23. Then visit the Chinese Gallery at the Meurice Art Center or participate in free family art programs from 10am-4pm on Saturdays (families with kids ages 5-11).

24. Take the Jules Verne to Tarpon Springs to learn about sponge diving and eat Greek food in the Greek village.

25. Hop over to Cabbage Key State Park, an island voted one of the top beaches in Florida.

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