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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****WISCONSIN FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES FOR A FUN-FILLED SUMMER BREAK**

**MADISON, Wis., (June 17, 2013)** – School is out and summer is here, but it will all be over before you know it. Don't let your kids waste a moment indoors, plugged into their electronics, when you can be out having fun together. Wisconsin is home to dozens of family-friendly travel options that take adventure and learning to a new level... just keep the "learning" part to yourselves and don't tell the kids.

**WISCONSIN'S "NATURAL" WATER PARKS**

Man-made water parks like the ones in the Dells sure are fun, but this summer, try a natural one. Rent tubes and float your way down the Lower Wisconsin River at [Wisconsin Riverside Resort](#) in Spring Green. The resort will drop you off one, two or three miles up stream where you can drift your way back to camp. Riverside Resort also offers canoe and kayak rentals. More tubing fun can be had on the Apple River in Somerset. Several outfitters include [Apple River Hideaway](#) and [Apple River Family Campground](#).

You can also explore Wisconsin's most massive river on a boat cruise down the mighty Mississippi. In La Crosse and Prairie du Chien board the [Mississippi Explorer](#) for a family-friendly boating adventure. Cruises give riders an up-close-and-personal view of water and wildlife centered around the ecology of the Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Or, board a traditional paddle wheeler like the [La Crosse Queen](#), a modern-day replica boat from the late 19th century.



*Family Tubing on the Apple River  
Photo courtesy of Brian Malloy*

**JOIN THE CIRCUS**

Step right up and see the greatest circus museum on earth (we may be biased). [Circus World Museum](#) in Baraboo is a National Landmark site with original buildings of the Ringling Bros. From big top circus performances complete with elephants and trapeze artists, to magic shows, the summer is the ideal time to visit. Don't miss the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show July 27-28, which features a rodeo, sharp shooting Annie Oakley and a host of other Western characters.

For a dazzling display of horses, tricks, and equestrian artistry, visit the [Dancing Horses](#) show in Delavan. Prior to these spectacular dinner (or lunch) theater performances, your kids will have a blast at the [Animal Gardens and Petting Zoo](#) next door. At this 40-acre venue, you can visit the baby animal barn, wildlife exhibit with native Wisconsin animals, a deer park, and the interactive petting zoo. You also can't leave without meeting Echo the singing parrot, featured on the show "America's Got Talent."

## **BE A NATURALIST FOR A DAY**

Now that your kids are out of the classroom, experience science and nature in the field at a Wisconsin nature center. The [Urban Ecology Center](#) in Milwaukee is an outdoor oasis of environmental fun. With three locations in the Milwaukee area, the center is open to the public for ecological learning through classes, activities and daily visits. On Saturdays, your kids will love the reptile feeding hour, or the 40-foot climbing wall. Purchase a membership and get unlimited access to kayaks, bikes and camping equipment.

The [Myrick Hixon EcoPark](#) in La Crosse is surrounded by the La Crosse River Marsh, making it an ideal location to explore the hundreds of miles of hiking and biking nearby. This environmental park also features a variety of “playscapes.” Wild Water is the place to cool off on a hot summer day, where kids control the flow of water by experimenting with locks and dams. Forest Scramble is a vertical playground of canopy walkways, tree houses and netting structures.

The Wisconsin State Park system also offers a program for kids. Ask for a [Wisconsin Explorer Program](#) booklet at a state park and you’ll find nature activities, scavenger hunts, games and hikes to try. Complete the tasks and earn your very own collectible patch from the DNR. You can also view a [list of events and nature programs](#) happening every day at parks all around the state.

## **BE INSPIRED BY ARTS & CULTURE**

Summer means chalk drawing on your driveway, but watch chalk art reach new heights at a chalk festival. Artists of all ages and abilities will transform entire streets, downtown areas and parks this summer in [Wausau](#) (July 13-14), [Eau Claire](#) (Aug. 3) and [Glendale](#) (Aug. 17). Gaze in astonishment as a two-dimensional chalk drawing takes the form of a three-dimensional cliff, your favorite superhero character or a famous painting. At Wausau’s Chalkfest, kid-friendly chalk drawing takes place from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. for kids to explore their artistic side.

Culture is best appreciated when it can be experienced. Bring your family to an authentic Native American pow-wow this summer. Eleven sovereign tribal nations reside in Wisconsin. The state’s largest American Indian cultural event is the [Indian Summer Festival](#) in Milwaukee. Held Sept. 6-8, the event includes a competitive pow-wow, music on five stages, dance troupes, craft demonstrations and a marketplace. Also check out the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Nation annual [Honor the Earth Pow-Wow](#) in Hayward July 19-31.

## **WISH UPON A STAR**

Gaze into the night sky while camping in Wisconsin this summer and you’ll see thousands of stars. But how did they get here? Which ones are planets? Learn the answers to these questions and more with a family trip to a Wisconsin planetarium.

The [Barlow Planetarium](#) in Menasha features 3D shows throughout the summer on the lifestyles of the stars. Family shows are Tuesdays and Thursdays with a monthly Family Astronomy Night held the Saturday evening on or after the first quarter moon (June 22 for this month). Family night offers three fascinating shows, concluding with a view of the actual night sky through the telescopes of the Barlow astronomers. In July you should be able to see Mercury, Venus and Saturn.

In Lake Geneva, the [Yerkes Observatory](#) is home to the 40-inch refractor, the largest lens-type telescope in the world. On Saturdays, the observatory offers free tours that take you into the 90-foot dome. This summer also features evening sessions for families with telescope viewing of the Milky Way, constellations and stars. This takes star gazing to a whole new level.

And we can’t forget to mention the world’s largest rolling mechanical globe planetarium at the [Kovac Planetarium](#) in Rhinelander. It took ten years for amateur astronomer Frank Kovac to build his planetarium, hand-painting over 5,000 stars with luminous paint. It’s open seven days a week, but call ahead for reservations.



*Chalkfest in Eau Claire  
Photo courtesy of Volume One and  
Andrea Paulseth*

## **EXPLORE WISCONSIN'S SECRET CAVERNS**

Thousands of years ago, before cheeseheads existed, caves were forming deep underground in Wisconsin. Today they make for the most fascinating family day trip, especially on a hot summer day (caves stay a cool 50 degrees inside).

[Cave of the Mounds](#) in Blue Mounds is a designated "National Natural Landmark" and is home to dozens of formations, a gigantic underground cavern with rooms, galleries and nooks and crannies to explore. Don't miss the cave's 74th birthday celebration Aug. 2-4, with re-creations of the cave's accidental discovery, tours, gem and fossil digging, and dozens of family activities. The cave is open seven days a week and offers a free family program tour on Fridays at 11 a.m.

More than 70 feet below the ground in Spring Valley, you'll find [Crystal Cave](#), Wisconsin's longest cave at almost one mile in length. An hour-long tour will take you through the rooms of stalactites and stalagmites. Crystal Cave also offers family adventures above ground, including panning for gems and a nature trail.

## **TRAVEL BACK IN TIME**

Turn your car into a time machine and drive your kids to [Old World Wisconsin](#) in Eagle. The recreated farmsteads and settlements show visitors what life was like back in the late 19th century, when European immigrants were beginning to settle in the Midwest. Kids will earn a greater appreciation for their own school with a visit in the one room schoolhouse. Don't miss the "World of Little House" every weekend in July. With activities, look-alike contests, threshing events and games of the time of Laura Ingalls Wilder, it's an entire 1800s experience wrapped into one day.

Turn back the time machine to 1943 and visit the USS *Cobia* at the [Wisconsin Maritime Museum](#) in Manitowoc. It's the oldest World War II submarine in the nation with the oldest working radar in the world. What's more, you can even spend the night aboard the submarine during any of the three family overnights at the museum on July 20, Aug. 2 and Aug. 10. Be sure to visit the new hands-on "Bells & Whistles, Flags & Flashes" exhibit at the museum to explore the various methods used by mariners to communicate with other sailors and vessels.

## **TAKE A TASTE OF WISCONSIN**

Wisconsin is ripe for the picking, fruit picking that is. Visit a pick-your-own farm this summer for a delicious day outside with the family. At [Blue Vista Farms](#) in Bayfield you can pick apples, blueberries and raspberries throughout the summer into the fall. The farm is open June 28 through October 31. Strawberries are ripe around mid-June, so visit a farm with pick-your-own strawberries, like [Carandale Farm](#) near Madison or [Blaser's Acres](#) in Suamico. We won't tell if you sample some while picking.

A taste of Wisconsin isn't complete without our claim to fame – cheese. Feed your epicurious minds with a trip to a Wisconsin cheese factory. Learn the process of making cheese, and meet the master cheese makers themselves. At [Widmer's Cheese Cellars](#) in Theresa and [Carr Valley Cheese](#) in La Valle, free factory tours show you how cheese curds are made. At the end, you can sample some of the delicious squeaky cheese yourself.



*Strawberry Picking at Blaser's Acres  
Photo courtesy of Glenn Sanderson*

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