

Curiosity Busters - Fun Things to Do

By Christine Marek/ San Tan Essentials Magazine/ Word count 1253

What will we do today and where will our curiosity take us? Those questions can send us in different directions with ourselves and our children. And the choices are vast. Answering this quest however depends on what our interests are and how we feel in the moment.

Fortunately, you no longer have to travel far or wait long to find quench your curiosity for something exciting, interesting or unusual to do. Parents, in the San Tan area, are finding that new stores, parks, places, programs and events now exist where there was once only a dirt lot.

Incredibly, for each day of the week, there are curiosity busters to enjoy, see and learn that will amaze the senses.

Day One - CREATE

Sign up for a *Vision Kidz* art program at the Vision Gallery in downtown Chandler. You and your child can learn about a variety of art mediums from professional artists interested in promoting the arts in education. The classes are free with a request for donation and are underwritten by individuals, corporations and grants. Elena Boyd and her seven year old daughter Emily Heller discovered the parent supervised Saturday art classes and make it a point of going on a regular basis.

"I love how I get to learn something different every time I go," Emily said. "Last time I learned batik art and before that we made rain sticks".

Elena, Emily's mom, raves about the programs and suggests that anyone interested needs to register early. "There's a 20 kid limit, and the seats fill up fast so I check the program calendar and register online. I recommend this art experience to everyone even if that means me having to be on a waiting list." Another place to learn and create is the Olpin Art Center, a school for artists of all ages to develop their creativity and artistic skills.

And if you love to ceramics check out the Kids N' Clay Pottery Studio or Mind Over Splatter. Both are open to walk-ins and also offer classes.

Day Two- ENTERTAIN

Be entertained or learn to entertain at the Queen Creek Performing Arts Center. Established in 2003, this emerging organization claims to be the "Best Kept Performing Art Secret" in Arizona which has hosted 851 events to over 310,000 people. The center's mission is to present quality professional theatre to the

community and provide an education outreach and children's theatre programs that nurture and develop emerging talent. Calendar performances include three in September and October. Classes and camps are also available. Entertainment events also occur at the Chandler Center for the Arts offering a several performances planned for this late summer and early fall.

Day Three - PLAY

Playtime can often mean different things of all ages. And every day some new San Tan business is popping up with a new playful idea. For children, today the sky's the limit and remarkably they can enjoy a Victorian tea party, go glam and dress up with their favorite girlfriends or style-a-doll at a nearby hair salon.

If you have a party theme idea, Jennifer's Party Pad, located in Gilbert, will make it come alive.

Indoor play centers are in the San Tan area, too. Places like Makutus Island with its huge 20,000 square foot indoor playground makes it unnecessary to care what the weather outside is like to play. Just bring the kids and let them roam the Disney-like jungle environment. And if parents want a break from the kids but would like Wi-Fi and a café option then Way2Play Café is the ultimate "fun for everyone" answer. The old-but-not-forgotten play favorites that include miniature golf, bumper boats, video arcades and go-karts are also nearby with Fiddlesticks Family Fun Park. Great for all ages, Fiddlesticks in Tempe allows for the entire family to experience playtime together.

Day Four - EXERCISE

San Tan city parks have the market on great places to exercise in various ways. These parks include biking/hiking/walking trails, volleyball and basketball courts, specially designed skate and bike parks, batting cages, tennis courts, miniature passenger trains, fishing lakes, children's play equipment, and large multi-purpose fields for kite flying, soccer and football games.

Skating fun can also be found indoors with places like USA Skateland in Chandler for the roller skating crowd and Polar Ice, also in Chandler, for the ice skaters.

Aspire Kids Sports Center, located just west of the Chandler Fashion Center Mall, is relatively new, built in 2005 and offers exercise fun with their state-of-the-art gymnastics facility. 10 year old Nicholas Elwell trains 12 hours a week at Aspire with his level six boys gymnastics team, the Jr. Sun Devils. "Hanging out and training for gymnastics in this place is beyond cool because they have it all." Nicholas said.

The 31,688 square foot sports center includes the longest “Tumble Track” in Arizona...80 feet! Multiple trampolines, resi-pit and foam pit, channel pit, rod floor and spring competition floor are there, too.

The center also has a 25x50 foot pool, heated when needed to 92 degrees and has a four foot depth with movable swimming platforms for all lesson levels. And preschoolers can enjoy their own “Tumble Bug Jungle” room complete with gymnastics equipment specifically designed for their age group. Other exercise activities occur at this facility such as cheer, dance, yoga, trampoline and tumbling classes. Plus birthday parties and parents night out events are available.

Day Five - EXPLORE

Exploring, the ultimate curiosity quencher, and having fun can be accomplished when you discover the Arizona Railway Museum (ARM) located at Chandler’s Tumbleweed Park. More than thirty authentic and antique railway cars are on display in a train yard setting.

Russell Lassuy, ARM Board of Director member and volunteer, is seeing to the many details that it takes to tell the story of the railway cars and the tracks they traveled.

“We have railway cars that you can tour through and see all the details and functions that went them,” said Russell. “There are also times when our ARM volunteers dress in period costumes that suit the railway cars, which make the tours even more special.”

If bird watching, plant identifying, picnicking and walking in a beautiful high desert setting is your idea of exploring then travel a little out of the San Tan area east to the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum.

Other great places to explore include the Arizona Museum of Natural History, Goldfield Ghost Town, Rawhide Wild West Town and Schnepf Farms.

Day Six- ADVENTURE

Saddle up your family or friends and bring your riding boots for adventure on horseback.

See Arizona from atop a well-trained quarter horse at either Koli Equestrian Center or Don Donnelly Stables. Both offer trail rides, lessons and private parties.

Don Donnelly Stables takes it one step further with Jeep tours as an option or overnight trail rides for the horseback riding “die hearts”.

Day Seven - CELEBRATE

Rest on day seven is important but so is giving thanks and celebration. To do this with style and fun enjoy the many San Tan city events scheduled for late summer and early fall.

Curiously, after all this fun you may want to rediscover your bed.