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Little Elm Park's Swim Beach
photo by Chris Fritchie



Livin' Large at Little or No Charge

By Lynda Haschke

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN said there are only two certainties: death and taxes. For North Texans in August, we could add two more to that list: heat and bored kids. If you've found yourself staring at four more weeks of summer and have exhausted your vacation budget, take heart: Frisco is still full of summer fun for little or no impact on your traumatized treasury.

WHEEEE! IT'S FREE!

Yearning for a day at the beach? Pack up the family and the floaties and head west on Eldorado Parkway to Little Elm Park's Swim Beach. Our lakeside

neighbor has transformed the western shoreline of Little Elm Park with an enclosed sand beach area that is off-limits to boat traffic. The beach is open to the public from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. every day. Pets are not allowed and there is no lifeguard on duty, but hey – watching your kids scream with laughter as they splash around is a lot better than watching them scream at each other at home.

Little Elm has also recently opened the Cottonwood Nature Trail, a 1.5 mile hiking trail along the shores of Lake Lewisville. There are two trail heads hikers can access – the first is located at

the end of Lobo Lane across the street from the Cottonwood Sports Complex and the second is located at the end of Hardwick Lane. The heavily wooded trail is laid with wood chips and has numerous lake access points.

A favorite of moms and dads who post regularly on local parenting forums is Frisco Commons at 8000 McKinney Road. Frisco Commons is a 63-acre city park with a mammoth playground, nature garden with walking trails, a stocked pond (for feeding fish, not catching them), water fountain, covered pavilions and picnic areas with grills. Little kids love to wander the nature trails and poke a stick in the scorpion tunnels to see what takes hold...need we mention this activity should be supervised?

Speaking of safety, Frisco Fire Safety Town offers free summer safety programs for K-5th grade kids on five subjects: Basic First Aid, Outdoor Safety, Home & Life Safety, Fire Safety and Bicycle & Wheel Safety. Each program is one hour long and offered four times daily (9:00 and 10:30 a.m., 1:30 and 3:00 p.m.).

Earlier this year, our teenager visited the Frisco Library and surprisingly deemed it "cool," so tell your kids to roll those eyes back in their heads and give it a try. They actually have Teen and Kids sections on their website listing the latest activities. On August 23rd, a Welcome to Kindergarten Storytime program will help you prepare your incoming kindergartner for school.

BIG FUN, SMALL CHARGE

Here's a place where they'll actually encourage your kids to bounce off the walls: Prosper Party Place. With their summer Beat the Heat special, you can take up to six kids and let them have the run of the place for just \$20 on Monday through Friday from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Prosper Party Place features indoor inflatable bounce houses, laser tag and an arcade with all the latest games. Your

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The Burch family at Strikz
photo by Chris Fritchie



\$20 will also get your group a large pizza, a two-liter drink to share, one shaved ice per child and 40 tokens for the arcade. Note: the \$20 price is for one adult, so you may want to draw straws and then treat that "lucky" adult to a spa treatment following the frenzy.

Frisco's Strikz Entertainment Center features tiered pricing for bowling, billiards, laser tag and arcade games depending on when you go. On a weekday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., you can bowl for \$3.95 per person per game; add \$1 to that for anytime after 5:00 p.m. They have a Sunday Special of \$1.95 per game from 10:00 a.m. until noon. If you're looking for an evening activity, Strikz' Cosmic Bowling runs on Friday and Saturday nights from 7:00 until 9:30 p.m. and pricing is by the lane at \$22.95 per hour.

Instead of having the kids climb your walls, let them loose at the Canyons of Frisco for indoor rock climbing. This "indoor rock gym" has more than 30 climbing stations in 10,000 square feet of



*Learning bike safety at Safety Town
photo by Chris Frutchie*

space. Day rates run \$14; gear will cost you another \$8 per child.

Or you may wish to put the kids on Ice at Stonebriar Centre. The NHL-sized rink has a food court and seating area so you can relax and watch the kiddies glide and spin. Admission is \$7 for adults and kids over 9 and \$6 for kids under 9. Skate rental is \$3.

The Frisco Athletic Center (FAC) is a great choice for the active family and monthly family memberships are available for Frisco residents for only \$60. The two-story facility, located at Preston Road and Wade Boulevard, has more than 100,000 square feet of family fitness fun with a large indoor aquatic area with four pools and an outdoor pool with two water slides, a flowing river, a lagoon pool and a large interactive play structure designed for young children.

For those who would rather watch than participate, you can pick up a coupon at Kroger for a Frisco RoughRider's package that includes a free baseball cap,

a coupon for a free hotdog and a general admission lawn ticket for any Monday through Thursday game for only \$7 per person. Plano's Studio Movie Grill has a \$1 child and \$2 adult movie offerings during the summer on Mondays through Thursdays at 11:00 a.m. These are family favorites, not first run features, and change every week.

Take your herd to McKinney's Heard Natural Science Museum to see the "Animals of the World" exhibit featuring exotic creatures from all over the planet. Admission is \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors and kids under 12.

If none of the above activities appeal to your family, you can always teach them something about where they live. The Frisco Heritage Museum, 6455 Page Street, charges only \$8 per family for a wealth of knowledge about Frisco's founding and its growth over the last century. Follow it up with a visit to the Sno-Cone Lady at her new location at 8760 John Elliott Road for an icy treat to beat the heat.

BUILD YOUR OWN VACATION SPOT

With so much to do in and around Frisco you may want to consider building a vacation spot in your own backyard. Cole Frisby, owner of Frisby's Natural Creations, says many Frisco residents are opting to build "water features" in their backyards. "I just finished a waterfall and stream project for a client whose family then pitched a tent and slept in the backyard for three nights," said Mr. Frisby. He noted that building water features – waterfalls, streams, koi ponds and the like – adds 10-15 percent to the value of a home while giving the family a place to relax and refresh year 'round. His projects run from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending on size and complexity.

And remember, school starts in Frisco August 25th, so there are only a few more weeks to get in all this fun.

Lynda Haschke is a freelance writer living in Little Elm. Website references are also listed on page 84.