



A Parent's Guide to Downtown Norfolk

March 16, 2018 By Stephanie Harris

Downtown Norfolk is a great place to spend some quality time with your kids. There are various activities, arts venues, shopping, and delicious food waiting for your family.

Check out some of the highlights for the area below. If I missed your favorite spot to go with the kiddos, tell us about them in the comments!

Fun

American Rover – For families with a little more mature kids, you can set sail on the American Rover.



image | Rover Cruises

First Fridays – The city offers a street party experience every first Friday of the month from April to October. This is a great time to meet up with other families and enjoy live music.

Hurrah Players – If you have a budding actor, this is the place for you all. Not only does the Hurrah Players put on family-friendly shows, they offer classes throughout the year as well as fantastic summer camps that focus on stage presence, musicals, and more.



MacArthur Mall – MacArthur Center Mall offers a large Regal Cinema, various food vendors, and shopping for the whole family. During holidays, they bring in a hopping bunny, Santa, and they offer ice skating outside in the winter as well as periodic carnival rides and activities.

Mermaid Sculptures – They don't call it the Mermaid City for nothing! If your kids love looking for mermaids around town, check out the interactive map to help find the fun sculptures.

Pagoda Garden – A wonderful place to take your family to look around, relax, or even get great pictures of your kids, the Pagoda Garden is a free, open space. Kids can see Koi in the pond and check out different plants. It's a great place to bring a book or just sit and chat with your loved ones.

Selden Market – Shop, eat, and enjoy artwork at the Selden Market. The kids can help you eat some huge donuts, and you can grab a coffee while you enjoy.



Seven Venues – By checking the calendar, you can see awesome events for locations such as Chrysler Hall, The Wells Theatre, Scope Arena, and more. These locations offer great national and local acts that would be great events to take your kids to.

The Norva – While this location is often full of acts for adults, from time to time, there will be an artist or group that is perfect for older kids, and other times, even for younger kids.

Town Point Park – During the more temperate parts of the season, Town Point Park hosts various events that are fantastic for families. In October, there is a special event, the Children’s Festival, which is focused on those kiddos solely. You can see what is going on through Festevents.

Push Comedy Theater – One of my favorite places in the NEON District, this comedy club offers a little something for everyone for a low price. There are shows set up for young kids, pre-teens and teens, as well as adults. Sometimes, they even offer free children’s shows. The Push also offers fantastic classes for improve for young children. In the summer, they offer summer camps. You’d be surprised how much your child will learn from this awesome group.



Spirit of Norfolk – If you'd like to take some time for a special family-friendly cruise and meal, check out the Spirit of Norfolk. You can enjoy a cruise around the Norfolk waterways, a buffet, and even a DJ and dance space with your kids.

The Plot – Situated in the NEON District of Downtown, The Plot is an open space that hosts various events for the community. There are always kid-friendly activities at these events.

The Tide – This may sound a bit crazy, but ride the Tide! If you have kids that love trains or transportation in general, they may enjoy riding the Tide light rail. Our boys loved it. Kids also ride for free. In the evening, make a pit stop to the MacArthur stop to play around the light and sound sculpture.

Tidewater Community College Roper Performing Arts Center – A great way to see shows Downtown with the kids is to visit the TCC Roper Performing Arts Center for plays, musicals, ballets and more.



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Food

Benny Damato's – If you have a large family who loves pizza (and who doesn't love pizza) get ONE pie from Benny Damato's. These pizzas are so big, we almost couldn't fit it in the car to sit flat. Watch your kids' eyes pop out of their heads when they see the size of these tasty pizzas.

D'Egg Diner – A great place to start your day, or have your lunch, there are many adult and kid-friendly items at the Downtown D'Egg Diner.



Gourmet Gang – The perfect place to stop in for a bite, or even grab and go while you're looking around downtown. One wrap can feed two little kids.

Granby Street Pizza – Pop into this restaurant for a sit-down, casual dinner with various offerings (not just pizza). Our family has many different pasta preferences and we can all leave happy from here.

Grilled Cheese Bistro – Did somebody say CHEESE?! These aren't your typical grilled deliciousness sandwiches either. If your family loves cheese, this is the place to go and share a meal. Each sandwich is quite filling. This is a very cozy restaurant, so if you have a toddler that is known to get up and run around, you might want to get take-out.

Istanbul Gyro Kebab – A small restaurant, this place has delicious gyros and low prices for combos. You can sit and dine in or take out.



Lamia's Crepes – Looking to share something savory? Something sweet? Pop into the tiny Lamia's Crepes. There are various kid-friendly options and the crepes are big enough to share.

Rama Garden – If your kids love Thai food, our family’s pick is Rama Garden. You can pick your heat levels, and many meals are big enough to share.

Rowena’s – Skip the pretend tea set play and pick up the real deal at Rowena’s. These tasty treats will keep you returning.

Sushi King – This chain offers all you can eat menu ordering. If your kids eat like ours do, sometimes you just need to go here. They offer more than just sushi (such as soups, hot food, etc.), and they do offer a little lower price for kids. Are your kids in sports and starving after a game? Take them here to refuel.

Education & Museums

Cannonball Trail – Maybe a walk is on your schedule for the day? Check out the self-guided Cannonball Trail and mix exercise with history for those thinkers you’re raising.

Chrysler Museum of Art and Glass Studio – This FREE museum is a delight for parents and kids. You can go many times and not even see it all. The museum even offers periodic family activities and fun Third Thursday events. Head over to the glass museum to take a class, make something special, or watch a demo. Even the glass studio offers something appropriate for kids.



d’ART Center – located in the NEON District section of Downtown, this non-profit

community art center offers classes, events, exhibitions, and camps. Our son did a summer camp there and is already eager to return.

MacArthur Memorial – Do you have a budding history buff? Take him or her to the MacArthur Memorial.

Nauticus – Lovers of sea history, marine adventures, and more should spend the day at Nauticus next to Town Point Park. While you're there, grab tickets to explore the USS Wisconsin.

Norfolk Southern Museum – If your kids love to choo choo and whoo whoo, take them to the Norfolk Southern Museum.

Police and Fire Museum – Stop into this little museum to learn all about police, fire, and rescue in Norfolk.

Prince Books – Who doesn't love to shop books with their kids? This local place is a gem.

Slover Library – Do not miss a trip to the Slover Library. This beautiful building has beautiful architecture, and great floors for kids and teens. There are even gaming rooms, computer rooms, and play areas.

St. Pauls' Episcopal Church – Maybe our family is a bit strange, but we enjoy checking out historic churches and graveyards. You can read about the history online, but you should go to find the cannon ball stuck in the wall.