

Fun FREE family finds

Busy mum Leonny Atmadja reveals her favourite family days' out – at next-to-nothing prices!

As much as kids love school holidays, the thought of keeping them occupied can be overwhelming for many parents. Rather than reaching for a DVD, check out these great ideas for quality family time – admission is free unless otherwise stated.

NATURE

Mangrove Walk at Sungei Buloh

Wetland Reserve Enjoy a leisurely walk, observe the enchanting flora and fauna and join a free, guided tour through the peaceful mangroves. Allow two to five hours.

301 Neo Tiew Crescent. Tel: 6794 140. Open: Mon-Sat 7:30am-7pm, Sun & PH 7am-7pm. Guided tours: Saturdays 9:30am & 3:30pm. Tickets: Adult \$1, child \$0.50.

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve Allow three hours to explore this lush 164-hectare reserve boasting more species of trees than the entire North American continent! Suitable for older children, you're sure to be wowed by nature as you trek through the jungle on clearly-marked paths. Spot animals including exotic birds, monkeys and flying lemurs, as well as unique plants such as the insect-eating pitcher plant. 177 Hindhede Drive. Open: 8:30am-6:30pm. Tel: 6468 5736.

Labrador Nature Reserve is the only seaside cliff in Singapore accessible to the public. Pack a picnic, go bird watching, cycling, fishing, trekking, jogging or enjoy the children's playground. You can also explore the underground bunkers used during World War II for an interactive history lesson. Labrador Villa Road, off Pasir Panjang Road. Tel: 6471 7300.

Pasir Ris Park Draw on the wet sand, collect seashells, build sandcastles, toss a Frisbee or go swimming in the sea. Try rollerblading, hire bikes, or visit the playground and children's *kampong* near Carpark E where kids can go *long kang* fishing for guppies with a bucket and net, or feed the ducks. Older kids can explore the newly-improved six-hectare mangrove forest – with boardwalks built into the mangrove bringing you even closer to nature. Spot birds, mud crabs, mudskippers and mangrove trees. Finish with a pony ride at Carpark C. Elias and Pasir Ris Roads.



DISCOVERY

Jacob Ballas Children's Garden is a short distance from Orchard Road, in the Bukit Timah corner of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Kids can appreciate the environment, plants and nature through play and exploration. Pack a change of clothes and towels to enjoy some water play. And take a picnic along to the free entertainment performances on weekends. Singapore Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Road. Tel: 6473 798. Open: 8am-7pm (closed Mondays).

Republic of Singapore Air Force Museum

If your little ones are into all things aviation-related, then this museum is a must. Spread over 10,600 square metres, it has an outdoor gallery and two levels of indoor galleries. Allow one hour to learn about the early days of Singapore's Air Force and the history of aviation. Paya Lebar Airbase, 400 Airport Road. Tel: 6461 8507. Open: Tues-Sun 8:30am-5pm.

Qian Hu Fish Farm With more than 200 species of fish – including South American catfish and the Dragon Fish (*Arowana*) – kids are sure to be entertained at Qian Hu Fish Farm. They can even try their hand at long kang fishing at the farm's Agro-Education Centre. "Fish spa" and guided tours for groups are also available. Agrotechnology Park, 71 Jalan Lekar. Tel: 6766 3995. Open: Mon-Thurs 9am-6pm, Fri-Sun & PH 9am-7pm.

Central Fire Station

Singapore's oldest existing fire station houses the **Civil Defence Heritage Gallery** – showcasing fire-fighting equipment and interactive exhibits. Children will learn about fire safety and can board a real fire engine. 62 Hill St. Tel: 6848 1519. Open: Tues-Sun 10am-5pm.

Singapore Mint Coin Gallery View an impressive collection of coins, medals and medallions from throughout the world. Allow one hour. 20 Teban Gardens. Tel: 6566 2626. Open: Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm.



Go scooting!

Justinna Pank of White and Black Trading shares her favourite scooting spots.

My two older children and husband are absolutely hooked on scooting! We pop our scooters into the back of a taxi and spend most weekends at one of Singapore's many parks, but some are better than others for scooting. Our favourite spot is the **Singapore River**, where the quays are wide and spacious. It's the perfect place for young children to master techniques such as balance and co-ordination and "race" the passing bumboats, while you relax with a latte. On the east coast, older children can pick up the pace and practise skateboard-style scooter moves at **Pasir Ris Park**. And on the west coast, **Labrador Park** offers a wide promenade and plenty of interesting places to explore. The best central spot for scooting is **Bishan Park**, where lush greenery offers plenty of shade from the tropical sun. www.whiteandblacktrading.com

Royal Selangor Pewter Museum Discover the origins of pewter and watch as it's shaped into a variety of objects. View a private collection of more than 75 antique items, from oil lamps and intricate Chinese lanterns, to pewter-making tools centuries old. Allow 30 minutes. 3A River Valley Road, #01-01 Clarke Quay. Tel: 6268 9600. Open: Daily 9am-9pm. Tickets: \$2. **E**

TOP TIP

Buy a shockproof digital camera so your children can capture memories and create a scrapbook on a rainy day.



Leonny Atmadja is a keen writer and photographer, who shares parenting, art and craft tips and her daily experiences of being a busy mum-of-two at www.oureverydaythings.com

Do you have a Singapore Secret you'd like to share? Send details (700 words) plus images to mjones-white@acpmagazines.com.sg and you could be published in an upcoming issue of The Finder!